

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 30th August, 1923.

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

QUESTION—STATE IMPLEMENT WORKS, APPRENTICES.

Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Works: 1, Have all the trades engaged in the State Implement Works their full complement of apprentices? 2, If not, will he state what trades are not carrying the full complement, and to what extent?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, No. 2, Blacksmiths, 5 short; moulders 4 short. With the fluctuation of trade, if complement of apprentices filled, it would result in adult workmen having to stand down, and possibly there would not be full work for apprentices, who, however, would have to be kept on.

QUESTION—RAILWAY, JARNADUP-PEMBERTON.

Mr. J. H. SMITH asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Has the Commissioner of Railways taken over the line between Jarnadup and Pemberton? 2, If not, when does the Commissioner propose taking it over?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2, The matter is under consideration, and when certain difficulties have been surmounted arrangements will be made for the Commissioner to take over this section.

QUESTION—PEMBERTON TOWNSITE.

Mr. J. H. SMITH asked the Premier: 1, Has he given consideration to the petition presented last year from residents at Pemberton praying that a townsite be proclaimed at that centre? 2, Has anything been done regarding proclaiming and surveying the townsite? 3, If nothing has been done, can he give an assurance as to when the townsite will be proclaimed?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, No. 3, Yes, at a suitable place as soon as the Jarnadup-Pemberton Railway is taken over by the Working Railways.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION.

Mr. SPEAKER [4.35]: I have to announce that, in company with the mover and the seconder, I have this day presented to His Excellency the Governor the Address-in-reply to his Speech made in opening the present session. His Excellency was pleased to acknowledge the Address-in-reply in the following terms:—

Mr. Speakers and members of the Legislative Assembly: I thank you for your Address-in-reply to the Speech with which I opened Parliament, and for your expressions of loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign. (Signed) F. A. Newdegate, Governor.

WATER AND FIREWOOD PRICES, EASTERN GOLDFIELDS.

Ministerial Explanation.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I wish to make an explanation arising out of a question asked by the Leader of the Opposition last week. In that question, as forwarded to my office by the Clerk of the House, there was but one query, as to the quantity of firewood supplied by the Kurrawang Wood Company. However, as it appears in the Orders of the Day, the question includes also a request for information as to the quantity of firewood supplied by the Lakeside company. The answer I gave related only to the Kurrawang company, supplies from which totalled 126,908 tons. I now wish to add that the supplies furnished by the Lakeside company aggregated 162,187 tons.

BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING.

Message.

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

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 23rd August.

Mr. McCALLUM (South Fremantle) [4.40]: There is not much to be said on the second reading, for the Bill is one for Committee. However, members will agree that the measure is long overdue. Every other State, save Victoria, has had a Scaffolding Act for many years. In Victoria the building trade unions themselves control the situation, as they have done in this State to date. Neither the unions nor the employers find it satisfactory that the position should be left for outsiders to control. The controlling should be done by Act of Parliament.

Mr. A. Thomson: Did you say the employers do not find it satisfactory?

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes. Many years ago the employers joined with us in asking the Government for a Scaffolding Bill. That was back in the days when the Savoy Hotel was

being erected. The Bill is badly needed. No protection has been provided for the lives of men working literally in mid-air and depending entirely on the strength of the scaffolding, or of the gear used in connection therewith. The practice has grown up, particularly in association with high buildings, of using swing stages, a most dangerous gear. Painters especially are called upon to work on those swing stages, their lives depending on a single rope. The Bill does not cover these swing stages; they are not included in the definition either of scaffolding or of gear. It is a serious omission, which I hope will be remedied in Committee. The chief fault I find with the Bill is that, like so many others brought down, it leaves essentials to regulations. This Parliament seems to be developing the practice of passing legislation that leaves everything of importance to the makers of regulations. The Scaffolding Acts of the Eastern States contain each a schedule setting out the regulations governing the scaffolding and gear. There the regulations are dealt with by Parliament; here the Bill actually leaves all that to Government departments. I entirely disagree with legislating by regulation. The regulations should be passed by Parliament and embodied in the Bill.

The Minister for Works: Generally, regulations of this sort are made after consultation with both parties, who are more likely to know what is required than are members of Parliament.

Mr. McCALLUM: I should far sooner have the regulations dealt with in a schedule to the Bill. I disagree with the growing practice of having so much legislation relegated to regulations drawn by outsiders. The practice grew up largely during the war period and no one knew exactly what laws were being enacted. Owing to the emergency, the Government were given power to frame regulations, and this power was exercised to such an extent that the people were deprived of many of the liberties they previously possessed. I am chary about giving any Government a free hand to do as they like by regulation.

Mr. Mann: Any regulation must be laid on the Table of the House.

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes, but it is much more difficult to get an amendment to a regulation than to a schedule of an Act. A schedule would be much more satisfactory; we would know exactly what was required.

The Minister for Works: You could not cover in a Bill more than the main principles. Details must be fixed by regulation.

Mr. McCALLUM: What is possible elsewhere is possible here. The other States have set out the requirements in a schedule to their Acts. I have found it most difficult to define "scaffolding" and to suggest regulations, but this has to be done by regulation and therefore it could be done by schedule. Although this Bill covers a wide score, it does not include swinging stages, which is a serious omission. It does not

deal with men that have to go down wells and depend on stages and ladders when repairing pumps and doing other well work. A large number of plumbers are engaged in such work, and there has been a considerable number of accidents owing to faulty gear. This measure deals only with scaffolding erected 8 feet from the horizontal base. That practically excludes all scaffolding used by bricklayers and plasterers for the erection of single-storied houses. No bricklayer or plasterer would require a scaffolding higher than 8 feet for such a purpose; the usual height is 4 feet or 5 feet. Therefore, this Bill will cover large structures such as warehouses, shops, or two-storied dwellings. Such an omission will nullify the value of the Bill, because it will not cover half the employees in the building industry. I hope the provision limiting the height of scaffolding will be struck out. In South Australia it has been deleted.

The Minister for Works: How could we do that?

Mr. McCALLUM: The South Australian amending Act of 1908 deleted all reference to the height of scaffolding, and the definition now includes any scaffolding at all. The greater part of the work of bricklayers, hod-carriers and plasterers is done on ordinary dwellings. How many accidents have been met with by hod-carriers working on the construction of cottages?

Mr. A. Thomson: How many?

Mr. McCALLUM: I have not the figures.

Mr. Pickering: I could not get any figures.

Mr. McCALLUM: I know of them because of the union having to pay accident funds.

The Minister for Works: How many cases do you get?

Mr. McCALLUM: While I was secretary of the Trades Hall a considerable number of men met with accidents; there were always some cases on hand. Eight feet is a considerable height to which to carry a hod of bricks. A height of 4 feet or 5 feet is bad enough because other men are generally working around and, owing to the danger, supervision is necessary.

The Colonial Secretary: The accidents usually arise from mis-steps.

Mr. McCALLUM: Accidents occur from scores of causes, but the main cause is slight giddiness or sickness overtaking a workman on a scaffold.

Mr. Pickering: This measure will not overcome that.

Mr. McCALLUM: In the Eastern States it is necessary to have a handrail along a scaffold. Over there men are not permitted to work under such conditions as prevailed during the erection of the Post Office, the A.M.P. Buildings, and the Savoy Hotel, where men could be seen clinging like flies to the sides of the buildings and where the slightest giddiness would have meant death.

Mr. Pickering: Do you know the number of accidents directly attributable to scaffolding?

Mr. McCALLUM: Is it necessary to produce cad men before establishing a principle? In the Eastern States a schedule to the Act provides for a handrail at a certain height from the floor of the scaffold and, if a man tumbles over some bricks or other material, he has the handrail to save him from falling on the ground. No such provision is made in his Bill, and there should be protection for the men who are thus risking their lives every day while working for a living. The miner is protected under the Mines Regulation Act. Building trade employees risk their lives every time they mount a scaffold or a ladder, and probably they are exposed to greater danger than a miner because the traffic and noise about them is apt to distract their attention.

Mr. Marshall: There are many things to distract their attention from their work.

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes. Another weakness in the original legislation of the Eastern States has been remedied by the latest amending Act. When it becomes necessary to hold an inquiry, owing to a serious or fatal accident having been due to faulty gear or scaffolding, the measure now before us will include only the gear actually connected with the scaffolding. If there is other faulty gear and a man loses his life, no penalty is provided, no inquiry can be held, and the inspector cannot even report on the case, because of the gear not being connected with the scaffolding itself.

Mr. Teesdale: Is not a ladder part of the scaffolding?

Mr. McCALLUM: No, a ladder is gear, not scaffolding. This morning, as I left the Perth Railway Station, I saw a man painting the parapet of the building next to the old "Sunday Times" office. He had two ladders lashed together with ropes and was working at a height of 30 feet from the pavement. If one of the ladders had broken or the lashing had given way, that man would have had no chance. Yet such an accident could not be dealt with under this measure.

The Minister for Works: Does not "gear" include that?

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes, but where the Bill deals with serious accidents, gear is not mentioned; scaffolding only is mentioned. The South Australian amending Act provides for the reading of "gear" wherever "scaffolding" is mentioned. There the defect was recognised and remedied. I have quite a number of amendments to move in Committee, but only two of them as yet appear on the Notice Paper. The others are now ready to be included in the Notice Paper, and I hope the Committee stage will not be proceeded with until members have had an opportunity to peruse my amendments and ascertain clearly their purport.

The Minister for Works: I shall agree to that.

Mr. McCALLUM: I am glad of the assurance. For many years we have been agitating for legislation to control scaffold-

ing. The city of Perth is growing, and we are erecting higher buildings than ever before. Although there have been a number of accidents, Perth has been remarkably free from serious accidents, considering there have been no regulations. This is due to the unions and employers having frequently conferred. The employers have always shown a readiness to meet the unions and discuss the practicability of providing safe scaffolding and gear, but each side has agreed that it would be better to have a law setting out clearly the exact requirements, so that individuals should not have to incur the responsibility that Governments elsewhere have undertaken. I support the second reading and hope that in Committee the Bill will be amended to make it more suitable to the requirements of the building trade.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [5.0]: I listened carefully to the remarks of the member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) in the hope that he would show some good reason for the passing of this measure. I asked if he could give me any statistics as to the number of accidents that could be attributed directly to defective scaffolding. I have inquired of the Government Statistician and others, and am unable to find any record of the number of accidents from this cause. The hon. member did not say that the accidents he mentioned had been due to defective scaffolding, but that they were due to giddiness. He suggested that a single rail would obviate an accident of that nature. If a man was overcome by giddiness a single rail would not save him from falling. It is not desirable that men who are subject to giddy attacks should be allowed to go on scaffolding.

The Minister for Works: Do you not think a rail would be disadvantageous?

Mr. PICKERING: Yes. There has been a remarkable lack of accidents in this State in connection with the building trade. Regarding this Bill, Sir Talbot Hobbs, of the firm of Messrs. Hobbs, Smith & Forbes, in a letter says—

I have gone through the Bill, and have no remarks to make beyond that I have seen it, and consider it another cause for increasing the high cost of building still further, and the creation of another Government department without, in my humble opinion, anything like compensating advantages.

Mr. Herbert Eales, of the firm of Messrs. Eales & Cohen, in a letter says—

Unless there is a world-wide need for such a Bill, and I have heard nothing of the kind, I see no necessity for its introduction here, and can only assume that pressure is being brought by labour unions to this end. Invariably the scaffolding to be seen in Perth, both in general lay-out, also as regards lashing, wedging and knots, is quite good; although this work is invariably carried out by labourers.

I have spoken to other architects, such as Mr. Ochiltree and Mr. Cox, who have had many

years of experience in this State. They assure me they have never known of an accident here due to defective scaffolding. Every foreman on the job, and every builder and architect, is more or less an honorary inspector of scaffolding. The foreman uses the scaffolding hourly, and the builder and architect at less frequent intervals. Any man who has a knowledge of scaffolding will take every precaution against entrusting himself to defective workmanship. Scaffolding is one of the elementary principles of building, for without scaffolding one cannot put up a building of any size. Practically everyone connected with building must therefore learn the rudiments of scaffolding. The bricklayer is himself an expert in the construction of scaffolding, and the lack of accidents shows that he understands the principles of it.

Mr. Munsie: There was an accident in Perth last week, when a man fell off a ladder and was taken to the hospital. I saw the man fall.

Mr. PICKERING: If the Bill becomes law, and all the suggestions of the member for South Fremantle are adopted, the Government will have to employ an army of clerks and inspectors to see that the provisions are properly carried out. Plasterers have to work from a very small height, and even if they fell from their staging they could suffer very little injury.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I know of a man who was killed after a fall of 7ft.

Mr. PICKERING: It is impossible to guard against every kind of accident. The member for South Fremantle suggests that every bit of scaffolding should be brought within the scope of the Bill. The measure provides that notice shall be given as to every bit of scaffolding that is erected, and the cost of the scaffolding must be shown.

Mr. McCallum: It does not say that.

Mr. PICKERING: This will have to be done by regulation. After all, the sting of the Bill lies in the regulations. The hon. member maintains that no minimum height for scaffolding should be fixed.

Mr. McCallum: That is the law in South Australia.

Mr. PICKERING: Why should we be prevented from making any departure from the laws existing elsewhere? The result of giving effect to the hon. member's suggestion will be to make the cost of building prohibitive. In most buildings where the height is not great, very little scaffolding is erected, but if we carry out the wishes of the hon. member, when we come to paint the exterior of a house, it will be necessary to go in for some expensive system of scaffolding.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is ridiculous. You rarely paint from scaffolding.

Mr. PICKERING: That is so, but the inference to be drawn from the suggestion is that elaborate scaffolding will have to be erected for every little painting, plastering, or other job connected with building opera-

tions. If it is necessary to have inspectors of scaffolding, it must be equally necessary to have an inspection over everything connected with a building in which scaffolding is used. We shall require to have an inspection of masonry, or brickwork, and of every phase of building operations.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You already have an inspection of that.

Mr. PICKERING: Not under statute. In most municipalities and road boards there are by-laws safeguarding the public, such as regulations providing for the safe keeping of the public from falling material. Members would be deceived if they were led away by the rhetoric of the hon. member, who described the dangers of working when traffic was passing underneath. No one on a building takes any notice of the height at which he is working, or of what is happening below. I have been associated with some big works. It is nothing to me to walk about on scaffolding, and I do not trouble to see what is going on below.

Mr. McCallum: And you have the right to speak for the men in the industry.

Mr. PICKERING: I have a right to speak of that phase of the industry with which I am associated.

Mr. McCallum: Fancy the workmen selecting you to speak for them!

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Have you ever fallen from the top of a building?

Mr. PICKERING: No.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I have, but fortunately I fell into a heap of mortar.

Mr. PICKERING: This is the thin edge of the wedge, and will lead to the introduction of other Bills, which will make it impossible to carry on building operations. The cost of building is already high, and we should not add to the cost by measures of this description.

Mr. Marshall: Why do not the architects reduce their fees and give us a chance?

Mr. PICKERING: The architect's fee is the lowest fee charged by any professional man in Australia. It is on the same scale as that which is charged in England to-day. There has never been any increase in the amount since I have been an architect.

Mr. Marshall: And you say you have never fallen from a building?

Mr. PICKERING: No. There is very little danger arising from the use of scaffolding in Western Australia. If we pass this Bill, it will mean the creation of another Government department, or sub-department, and the employment of numbers of inspectors and clerks, if all the suggestions we have heard are put into effect. The cost would undoubtedly be stupendous, and I hope that the House will hesitate before passing the Bill. This is really a machinery measure, and the whole business will have to be carried out by regulation. If the regulations are to be effective, the Institute of Architects and the Builders' Association should be consulted about the framing of them.

Mr. Marshall: Why should they be considered?

Mr. PICKERING: Because they are experts.

Mr. Marshall: Who said so?

Mr. PICKERING: I say so. It is also important to see that our local timbers are used in this connection. Karri poles would make excellent timber for scaffolding, and karri planks would also be good.

Mr. Mann: How does karri compare with Oregon?

Mr. PICKERING: Weight for weight karri is equal to Oregon.

Mr. A. THOMSON: And the breaking strain is considerably more.

Mr. PICKERING: Yes. I am not in sympathy with the measure. If it is passed I hope the Committee will see that the organisations I have mentioned are consulted in the framing of the regulations. The utmost care should be exercised in the framing of the regulations with a view to keeping down the cost as much as possible. We often hear complaints in this House as to the cost of workers' homes. That cost will be considerably increased if effect is given to the suggestions regarding scaffolding.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is rubbish.

Mr. A. THOMSON: It is a fact.

Mr. PICKERING: Who is going to bear the cost of carrying out this law? Is the amount to be collected by the imposition of fees, in the way that building fees are collected, or will it be raised by an appropriation of Parliament, such as is indicated in the Bill? The system of inspection outlined here is altogether too cumbersome. An army of inspectors and clerks would have to be engaged, if proper effect were given to the measure, and the cost would be out of all proportion to the benefits received.

Mr. A. THOMSON (Katanning) [5.15]: I rather regret that the member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) has not made a better case for the Bill.

Mr. McCallum: It is not my Bill.

Mr. A. THOMSON: It was the hon. member's Bill in the first instance, and then it was taken up by the Government.

Mr. McCallum: This was not my Bill.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The hon. member gave notice of motion for leave to introduce a Bill.

The Minister for Works: The Government's Bill had been prepared, and the member for South Fremantle did not know of it.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The Bill has not been requested by either the Builders' and Contractors' Association or the Institute of Architects. I wish to congratulate members opposite on getting their legislation put through by the Government.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There have been several deputations on this subject.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The builder takes a greater risk than the men, and I say that from an experience extending over 30 years.

When the member for South Fremantle was speaking I asked him how many accidents had occurred in Western Australia from defective scaffolding. The imposition of an additional tax—that is just what the Bill means—will involve an increase in the cost of building, for the contractors are not going to pay the tax. They cannot afford it.

Mr. McCallum: Poor bankrupt builders!

Mr. A. THOMSON: The tax must be passed on, and that necessarily means increased cost of construction. Hon. members opposite have had a good deal to say about the enhanced cost of building cottages. The enactment of this Bill will mean a further addition to the cost.

Mr. McCallum: How much per house? Ten shillings!

Mr. A. THOMSON: That interjection shows that the hon. member does not know very much about the subject. A rope costs as much as 10s.

Mr. McCallum: If your gear is in good order, the Bill will not occasion you any cost whatever.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Gear is not mentioned in this Bill.

Mr. McCallum: Look at the definition clause.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The Bill says that regulations are to be brought in, and the regulations will cover everything. The member for South Fremantle stated that the contractors had asked for this measure. I will read to the House from a letter which I have received from the president of the Builders' and Contractors' Association, Perth.

Mr. McCallum: I tell you that they asked for the Bill.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Three or four years ago. The letter says—

The proposed Bill is not required. It is superfluous, and will only add to the cost of buildings, and, besides, it will create another Government department, and God knows there are enough of them already.

The Minister for Works: Is that in the letter?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Yes. I regret very much that a Bill of this kind has been brought in. If the measure is in accord with the will of the House, of course we must submit. However, the measure means the creation of another Government department, at increased cost to the State. I wonder whether hon. members have read the clauses of the Bill. One says that the Government may appoint inspectors.

Mr. SPEAKER: I cannot allow the hon. member to read the clauses.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am not reading a clause, Sir, but am pointing out what the Bill provides. There is a provision that all scantling and gear must be in accordance with the "Act." We do not know what the Act is going to be, because regulations are to be prescribed. In plain English, therefore, the House is asked to create a new department with a blank cheque to harass

the people who are engaged in the daily toil of erecting buildings.

The Minister for Works: It is a wonderful thing that when the Builders' and Contractors' Association had this Bill before them they mentioned none of these objections.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The association merely had a consultation with Mr. Hardwick. The letter further states—

We certainly consider that all one-storey buildings should be exempt.

I agree with that.

No serious accidents have happened in Western Australia through faulty scaffolding, and therefore we fail to see why the Bill is required.

The letter also states that the association consider the time of Parliament could be occupied to better advantage than over this Bill.

The Minister for Works: Both sides had a copy of the Bill, and the Builders' and Contractors' Association did not put forward those objections.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The Minister for Works told the Builders' and Contractors' Association that it was the intention of the Government to bring in a Scaffolding Bill. I commend him for affording the association an opportunity to consider the Bill. I think he showed them consideration just as he showed consideration to our friends opposite. But when the Minister states that he is going to bring in a Bill, it is no use telling him that the Bill ought not to be brought in. What good could the Builders' and Contractors' Association have done by saying to the Minister, "We do not want the Bill brought in"? The association now ask the Minister to agree to certain amendments, which I have here and which I am quite prepared to show to the Minister. Further, I am prepared to show the House the letter I have from the president of the Builders' and Contractors' Association. Let me indicate some of the pinpricks there are in this Bill. An inspector will have the right to enter on any building and say, "I am not satisfied with that building; cease work, and come off the scaffolding." If the scaffolding is dangerous, that is quite right; but surely to goodness we can rely upon the commonsense of men of intelligence. The men in charge of building operations are responsible for everything that happens. The Workers' Compensation Act provides that in the case of an accident—

Mr. McCallum: Five hundred pounds for a man's life!

Mr. A. THOMSON: If the amount were a thousand pounds, it would not be enough.

Mr. McCallum: And yet you object to this expenditure.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I will not allow the member for South Fremantle to put words into my mouth. We are not discussing men's lives.

Mr. McCallum: You are discussing a few paltry pounds as against men's lives.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I have been handling buildings and handling men's lives for years, and thank God I have never had an accident! I never yet knew of a builder who would expect a man to go on scaffolding which was insecure. The small buildings in the metropolitan area and in the country districts are being constructed by whom? By working contractors, who get on the scaffolding and work with the men. This Bill, authorising inspectors to travel all over the country in order to inspect buildings, will mean adding considerably to the cost of construction, because in the case of 90 per cent. of buildings constructed in the country to-day the builder uses for scaffolding the material he is going to use in the building.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Don't you think the department know that? They are not all fools in the department.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I did not say it was so. But we are dealing with the measure before us. We have no knowledge of what regulations the Government or the department intend to call into existence. In my opinion this measure will mean the creation of another Government department. It is all very well to say there will be only inspectors. I have heard the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) say in this House, "Give a man an office, and he will immediately create a department."

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is no danger of that under this measure.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Inspectors and sub-inspectors are to be appointed to go all over the State, and they will be able to tell a builder to cease work. Certainly there is a right of appeal, but if I am a contractor and an inspector who comes to my building says the scaffolding is unsatisfactory, what is the use to me of my right of appeal? If appealing means hanging up the work, the contractor will probably use a few swear words like the Minister for Works occasionally employs—

The Minister for Works: I object to that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Katanning is not in order.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Then I will say, a few swear words such as I occasionally use. In the end one has to submit. No doubt a great deal would depend upon the class of inspector. Probably an inspector must make reports in order to keep his job, and it follows that every building known to be in course of construction is bound to receive a visit of inspection. We may find an inspector travelling 50 or 60 or even 100 miles to a building in the country in order to see whether the scaffolding is correct.

The Minister for Works: I do not think that is likely to happen.

Mr. A. THOMSON: It is possible. Something like that happens to-day. Under the Inspection of Machinery Act inspectors travel throughout the country and visit farms to inspect the machinery. As regards factories

I know that I have three or four inspections at my factory in Katanning.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Perhaps the department realise that you want inspecting.

Mr. A. THOMSON: No doubt. I object to this method of indirect taxation which is proposed by the Bill. Clause 14 I will deal with later. We already have our Factories Act and our Workers' Compensation Act. Under this Bill the contractor is to bear all costs and expenses. A contractor will need to be caught only once, and then he will have to allow a considerable amount for the extra cost of scaffolding.

The Minister for Works: I do not understand your argument. You do not deny that we ought to look after the lives of the men?

Mr. A. THOMSON: I do not, but I say that is done to-day. I hope the House will not agree to the second reading of the Bill, because the measure is not necessary. There is a clause that provides that an abstract of the Bill has to be attached to the scaffold, and there is a penalty of £5 provided if that is not done. The contractor will have to keep a book as prescribed and he is to be liable for any false entries.

The Minister for Works: So he should be.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Quite so, but is it necessary to create another department and put a further tax on men who are honestly endeavouring to make a living? If we had had a serious accident due to faulty construction of scaffolding, I could understand the necessity for the measure, but we have never had an accident of that description in Western Australia, so far as I am aware.

Mr. Davies: You would not wait for one?

Mr. A. THOMSON: No, but that is not an argument in favour of the Bill being passed. There is no necessity for imposing this additional form of taxation.

Mr. Hughes: You want someone to pay the penalty with his life before you will agree to the Bill!

Mr. A. THOMSON: The hon. member has never been on a scaffold in his life.

Member: But he should have been.

Mr. McCallum: You admit that you have been on a scaffold?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Yes, and I am proud of it.

Mr. Chesson: How did you escape the drop?

Mr. A. THOMSON: The scaffold I was on was not of the description the member for South Fremantle has in mind.

Mr. McCallum: You could not have had an expert in knots with you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. A. THOMSON: The Bill means that a man must be capable to a certain degree before he is allowed to put up scaffoldings.

Mr. Pickering: It will mean a new trade.

Mr. A. THOMSON: That is so. At the present time, expert scaffolders are employed in the construction of big buildings and they are paid accordingly. The vast majority of the buildings in the metropolitan area and the country district do not require the ser-

vices of expert scaffolders; they are not in the same category as the large, tall buildings in the city. As to the requirements regarding scaffolding for one-storied buildings, I will guarantee to teach any hon. member of the House how to tie the ropes up in five minutes. It is one of the most simple of things; there is nothing intricate about it.

The Minister for Works: Have you known anyone able to successfully erect scaffolding, who has had only five minutes' tuition?

Mr. A. Thomson: Yes.

The Minister for Works: I have not.

Mr. A. THOMSON: If an individual had any common sense, he could do it. The men going on the scaffold see that it is safe before they will work on it. Clause 24 throws the whole burden of proof on to the contractor.

The Minister for Works: So it should!

Mr. A. THOMSON: I have no objection to that, but I claim there is no necessity for it whatever. When I read the Bill first, I thought that the Government were at last becoming philanthropic and that they intended to provide from Consolidated Revenue the funds necessary for administering the Bill. I had to look through it two or three times before I discovered a small paragraph which provides for a prescribed scale of fees to be paid for the inspection of scaffolding and gear. Any appeal made to a police magistrate means that the costs have to be borne by the contractor.

The Minister for Works: Do you agree with the principle that the contractor should exercise sufficient care of life and limb?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Yes, but I maintain the contractors are doing that to-day. When introducing the Bill, the Minister gave not a single instance of accidents due to scaffolding being faulty.

The Minister for Works: I did not think you needed it.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The Minister could not do it. Even the member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum), who was secretary of one of the building trades unions for years, could not give an instance.

Mr. McCallum: What nonsense! Do you think we keep statistics like that? Talk sense!

Mr. A. THOMSON: Had the hon. member been able to cite a number of accidents of such a description, he would have strengthened his arguments in favour of the Bill.

Mr. McCallum: I told you details were not kept.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The Builders and Contractors' Association say there has been no such accident.

Mr. McCallum: Then they say what they know to be untrue.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I have had 30 years' experience and I contend there has been no accident due to faulty scaffolding. If it is the desire of the House that the Bill shall come into force—I sincerely hope it will not be agreed to—the creation of another Government department and the imposing of further indirect taxation on the people will

have a detrimental effect. The mere fact that the Minister has a Message from the Governor shows that the Bill will impose fresh taxation and drag more money from the pockets of the people.

The Minister for Works: We must have a Message in connection with Bills of this description.

Mr. A. THOMSON: But it means that fresh taxation is proposed, otherwise the Message would not be necessary. The Minister, and also the member for South Fremantle, asserted that the public had to be protected. At the present time the public are protected through the municipalities and road boards because if a structure is to be erected, they carry out the prescribed building regulations. If one goes to the City Council to have plans passed for a building here, the local authorities prescribe the kind of hoarding that must be erected round the building, and if people are to travel under work that is going on, the footpath has to be covered over.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Have there been no accidents under those conditions?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Not in this State. In London one can walk under buildings in course of construction. However, we have regulations already to protect the public.

Mr. Pickering: And they are pretty stringent too.

Mr. A. THOMSON: That is so. The road boards also have their regulations to protect the public, and the local authorities have power to enforce them in the interests of the public, if they think necessary. Besides being unnecessary, the Bill will merely mean adding to the cost of building. I will oppose the second reading and I trust the Minister will withdraw the Bill. If the House decide to pass it, I hope they will at least eliminate from its operations all one-storied buildings.

The Minister for Works: Will you put your amendments on the Notice Paper?

Mr. A. THOMSON: I want to see the Bill thrown out at the second reading stage.

The Minister for Works: You will not see that.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I do not not know if I will succeed.

The Minister for Works: If the second reading of the Bill is agreed to, will you table your amendments?

Mr. A. THOMSON: Certainly. I oppose the second reading.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.41]: I listened carefully to the objections raised to the Bill by the member for Katanning (Mr. A. Thomson). On no single occasion has that hon. member raised his voice in opposition when Bills have been brought forward in the interests of bulls or stallions or anything else in connection with the farming industry.

Mr. A. Thomson: That is absurd.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: On not one occasion!

Mr. A. Thomson: That is absolutely ridiculous.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member, and the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) as well, referred to the powers possessed by local authorities. Those authorities have no power regarding scaffolding.

Mr. A. Thomson: They have power to protect the public.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The local governing bodies have power under existing legislation to compel contractors to erect hoardings round constructional work in the city.

Mr. A. Thomson: And they make the contractor cover the top as well.

Mr. Chesson: Does that protect the public adequately?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Does the member for Katanning know that the local authorities have powers under the Health Act? Yet it has been found necessary to appoint Government inspectors to keep the local bodies up to their duty. Has he discovered that?

Mr. A. Thomson: Yes.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That position can be compared with the one contemplated by the Bill. It will be necessary to have a Government inspector to see that the measure is carried out properly. The member for Katanning complained on the score of expense. At the present time contractors have to provide poles, ropes, planks and so forth for scaffolding.

Mr. A. Thomson: But we do not know what sizes will be prescribed in the regulations. We do not know what the officials will do.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There are as competent men in the Government departments as there are outside. I do not care whether these outsiders are in the Architect's Association or any other body.

The Minister for Works: Hear, hear!

Mr. A. Thomson: I agree with your statement.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The officials know their work well. They are competent to judge what is sufficient for scaffolding purposes. They will use common sense and not take action that will involve expense, or, at least, scarcely any expense.

Mr. A. Thomson: I am glad you used the word "scarcely."

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Bill will mean that scaffolds must be erected in such a way as to protect the lives of the workers.

Mr. A. Thomson: Can you give an instance of where that has not been so?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I cannot, but I will give the hon. member an instance in the city. I know of a woman who had her head cut in Hay-street, and she was walking on the street and not on the footpath.

Mr. A. Thomson: Would a handrail stop that?

Mr. McCallum: Don't be silly!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hoarding was not there. Of course damages had to be paid. There is scarcely an occupation in re-

guard to which steps are not taken to protect the lives of those engaged in it. Have we not mining and other regulations in existence for the purpose of affording protection to those engaged in the occupations affected? The Bill before the House has been introduced, not for the purpose of causing annoyance or inconvenience to those who do erect proper scaffolding, but to provide that those who in the past have not studied the welfare of their employees, shall come into line with contractors and others who have had regard for the safety of their workmen. Unfortunately, there are some men in every calling who will go to extremes in order to save a shilling, and who in doing that will disregard the danger they are creating. Why was there any necessity for the introduction of an Early Closing Act? Because there were those in the community who kept their shops open all night. Laws are passed not to protect the honest man, but for the purpose of dealing with those who adopt unfair and dishonest tactics. That is the object of the Bill we are now discussing.

Mr. A. Thomson: You have not made out any case.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have seen scaffolding on which no person should have been permitted to stand. Let me give one instance. I know of a building which was erected in Melbourne, and the owner of that said that he was going to be his own inspector. He was engaged in the work of inspecting for only two days when he came to grief by falling to the ground.

The Premier: Who knocked him over?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It was the fault of the defective scaffolding. The man was not killed, but he did not go on that building again. Instead of saying that legislation is not required in the State because no accidents have happened, we should give credit to those contractors who have engaged in operations here. But accidents have happened. I am aware that contractors in this State have done all that is in their power to erect proper scaffolding. The hon. member declares, too, that sufficient protection is afforded under the Workers' Compensation Act. What protection is so afforded? A man in the best of health works on scaffolding which is not erected in a manner that should render his work perfectly safe. He falls and injures himself, and receives the munificent sum of £2 per week, on which he must maintain his wife and family. Is that the protection that the hon. member says is afforded by the Workers' Compensation Act? The desire of the Government is that there shall be properly erected scaffolding, and that men who, by their occupations, are obliged to use the scaffolding, shall run as little risk as possible.

Mr. A. Thomson: Do you think that there will not be accidents even after this Bill passes?

Mr. Davies: The Bill will minimise the risk.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the effect of the Bill were to harass any person, I would vote against it.

Mr. A. Thomson: That will be the result.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It will not. It is introduced for the purpose of protecting those who work on scaffolding and those engaged in well sinking and so on. The member for Katanning (Mr. A. Thomson) stated that we had a Coroners Act. He knows full well that the Coroners Act will apply only in the event of a fatal accident. So that if an accident occurs, and it does not prove fatal, he would have it that there should be no inquiry, unless the person who has met with the accident takes proceedings under the Employers Liability Act and goes to Court. There are men to-day who prefer to take advantage of the Workers Compensation Act rather than go to the Court under the Employers Liability Act, and run the risk of losing their case. A Bill of this description will prove of great benefit; it will not hurt any contractor and neither will it hurt any man who is acting straightforwardly, and who intends to erect scaffolding in a manner that will ensure the safety of those who are working for him. There will be required merely the payment of an inspection fee. That is all that will happen in the way of increased cost. No one will object to pay a small fee in connection with legislation of this description. The hon. member is fully aware that there are no means by which scaffolding may be inspected at the present time.

Mr. Pickering: There has not been any necessity for inspections.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But there may be. It is only in recent years that we have had buildings of any consequence erected in Western Australia. Up to that time there were very few that were more than a couple of storeys high. Is it not advisable to afford protection, such as is proposed by the Bill, in the comparatively early stages of building operations, rather than wait until some person has been killed? By all means let us save life if we can do so by legislation. I am surprised that the contractors' association has lodged an objection to the Bill. There is nothing in it which will adversely affect the contractor. He is the man whose sympathy always is—it certainly should be—with the employee.

Mr. A. Thomson: You do not mean to infer that contractors wish to kill their men?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member desires to misconstrue what I am saying. There is nothing in the Bill which will affect the contractor who has any sympathy for his employees. There are, however, some men in this State who will erect anything in the shape of scaffolding.

Mr. McCallum: The speech of the member for Katanning shows what he would do.

Mr. A. Thomson: Nonsense.

Mr. McCallum: You are a callous, cold-blooded individual.

Mr. A. Thomson: I rise to a point of order. I ask that the hon. member be requested to withdraw that statement.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I did not hear it; what was it?

Mr. A. Thomson: He said I was a callous and cold-blooded individual.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Did the member for South Fremantle say that?

Mr. McCallum: I did.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The remark must be withdrawn.

Mr. McCallum: I will withdraw it, but I will tell him outside what I think of him.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Now I will ask the member for Katanning to refrain from interjecting.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I repeat that there is nothing in the Bill that will affect the contractor who is sympathetically disposed towards the lives of his employees.

Mr. Pickering: Do you not think that that has been evidenced in the past?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But in the past we have erected only small buildings. The member for Katanning, when speaking, said that there had been no need for scaffolding in the country but that it might be necessary in connection with some buildings in Perth.

Mr. A. Thomson: I did not say that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member implied it. What he said was that there was not the same necessity for scaffolding in the country as there was in Perth.

Mr. A. Thomson: I do not think I said that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I wrote it down. The hon. member implied by that statement that if the Bill applied only to the city of Perth he would have no objection to it.

Mr. A. Thomson: Don't be absurd. Did I make that statement?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course; I took it down.

Mr. A. Thomson: Don't put words into my mouth.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not doing anything of the kind. It is what the hon. member said. I wrote the words down because I thought the opinion expressed was contrary to the arguments he used when he was speaking against the Bill. It is true that this is merely a machinery Bill. The Government will be given power to make regulations. Though I do not always believe in government by regulations, it would be impossible in a case like this to frame a Bill to suit every class of building. Therefore we must have regulations, and in the framing of them be guided by expert advisers. The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) said that when the regulations were being framed, representatives of the Architects Association and the employers should be permitted to take a hand. The hon. member did not suggest that there should also be representatives of the men who use the scaffolding. Of course not; they do not count. If I mistake not, the architects employed by the Government, or some of them, are members

of the Architects Association. The hon. member is afraid to trust them; he has no confidence in them.

Mr. Pickering: Not at all.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The inspectors of the Public Works Department are tradesmen and know more about scaffolding than does the hon. member.

Mr. Pickering: You are making a personal matter of it now.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not doing anything of the kind. I would prefer any day to have such regulations framed by tradesmen than by architects, and the hon. member knows well that architects as a rule pay very little attention to scaffolding except perhaps when they have occasion to walk on it.

Mr. Pickering: That is not true.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I object to outsiders interfering with what is Government work. I do not believe in outsiders being brought in to do work which Government officers are thoroughly competent to perform.

Mr. A. Thomson: You will make the other poor beggars pay.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No. The Minister is to be complimented on having brought down the Bill thus early in the development of the city of Perth, before any serious accident has occurred.

On motion by Mr. Davies, debate adjourned.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [6.2] in moving the second reading said: This is the usual continuance Bill that has been introduced every year since 1915, when the Act was passed. It is imperative that the Act should be continued, because without it our securities would go by the board. But for the Act, we could assist nobody without the expense of drawing and registering a bill of sale.

Hon. T. Walker: At what season of the year does the Act expire, in December?

The PREMIER: I think so.

Hon. T. Walker: Is it for the full year?

The PREMIER: Yes. The board is taking no new clients other than soldier settlers, who are being assisted to crop. Last year a select committee recommended the closing down of the board and its operations. However, that is impossible, for we have to continue, at all events in respect of those men whose accounts have not yet been cleared. There were 1,797 current accounts with the board at September last. The total clearances number 1,190. Under the section of the Act referring to the payment of rent, the board has 281 accounts.

In its earlier years the board paid rent for a great many people. Those accounts are being cleared from time to time but, as I say, there are still 231 of the old clients not yet cleared.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: A lot of them are soldiers?

The Premier: Yes, the great bulk of them. There have been 70 clearances during the present year. Since the inception of the board, the advances have totalled £7,204,160. The balance outstanding to-day is £1,349,653. The board has done a great deal of very useful work and has enabled a couple of thousand farmers, who otherwise might have been driven off their land in 1915, to stay on their blocks and, for the most part, make good. The clients of the board have produced over six million pounds' worth of wheat since 1915. The securities of the board have not been all one could wish for, because during the war land values depreciated tremendously. However, the value of land has since increased, and so improved the board's securities. I believe there will be a still further increase in land values, and of course a corresponding move in the securities held by the board. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin), who was chairman of the select committee that inquired into the working of the board, will agree that it is impossible to allow the Act to lapse. It is very useful in the settling of the soldiers. But for the Act we should have to take over the movable assets of the soldiers we are assisting. That would be altogether undesirable, being both costly and cumbersome. The Act provides the best possible means of securing the board for the advances made to the soldier settlers. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle [6.10]): I had hoped the Government would consider the advisability of closing down the I.A.B. Of course that might necessitate an amendment of the Agricultural Bank Act. There are on the I.A.B. some people who will never be clear. It would be better if the Agricultural Bank Act were amended to allow the bank to take the value of their properties, and give those persons now clients of the board full freedom in dealing with their crops and their produce.

The Premier: Some of them could not put in their crops.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: To put in their crops a large proportion of the clients of the board are assisted, not by the Government, but by private creditors. If I were a farmer, a client of the board, and owed you, Mr. Speaker, £300; and if at the close of the season I had a surplus of £300, instead of that surplus being paid to you, as it should be, it would be retained by the board for the purpose of putting in my crop next year. So you see, Mr. Speaker, it is not Government money that is being used for the putting in of the crop, but the client's money, for which

8 per cent. is charged. That is the system obtaining to-day. It is not fair. When the farmer has a surplus, it should be paid to his private creditors. Then, if the board thought the farmer's position warranted a further advance, the advance ought to be made out of the board's own funds.

The Premier: You forget that that was arranged years ago.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No. It was the arrangement until, in 1907, it was altered and the matter left in the discretion of the Minister. That is the position to-day. It is unfair that it should obtain for so many years.

Mr. Latham: It looks as if they were going to perpetuate it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Parliament passed the original Act with a view to assisting the farmer and maintaining the credit of the State. The chief purpose was to keep the men on the land, for it was thought they might pull through. The Premier explains that 1,190 of them have pulled through. But while we have done that for the farmers, in a large number of instances small storekeepers have had to go under. That is what I object to.

The Premier: Ever since 1916 they have had cash.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That has been the cause of it.

The Premier: Why?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I will tell the hon. member.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Before tea I was pointing out that the system adopted by the I.A.B. has not been beneficial to the creditors. The Premier interjected, "They have the cash." That is true because, on the change of Government in 1916, the Premier instituted new arrangements for clients under the I.A.B. Instead of doing as the Act intended—

The Premier: They would not have got any cash otherwise. You had better not say too much about that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not afraid to speak of anything connected with this business. The intention was not only to protect and assist the farmers but to protect the persons who had given the farmers credit during the lean years.

The Premier: You are wrong there.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: What was the effect? The Minister gave I.A.B. clients the right to go to their tradesmen for goods, to the men who had stuck to them during the lean years and to whom accounts were owing. The Government were paying cash for the goods supplied. When the system was changed and the cash was paid to the clients instead of to the creditors, the creditors lost their protection. No one has done more to assist the Westralian Farmers Ltd. than has the present Premier.

Mr. Davies: And he gets no credit for it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The creditors' money was devoted to floating co-operative societies and instead of the creditors getting the trade, it went to the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Mr. Latham: How could you control that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: By adhering to the system in vogue prior to the present Premier taking charge.

Mr. Latham: That was practically the same.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It was not. While the farmer required assistance to enable him to remain on his land, he had no objection to his creditors going to the dogs; and numbers of them did so.

Mr. Stubbs: That, unfortunately, is too true.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Westralian Farmers Ltd. became the sole acquiring agents of wheat. They declared a small bonus in the form of bonus shares and the farmers became shareholders in the Westralian Farmers Ltd. whether they wanted to or not. These bonus shares were a kind of insurance. If a man died, his friends got the benefit; if he lived, he got nothing.

Hon. M. F. TROY: He got no help when he needed it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is so. The bonus shares gave the farmers an interest in the Westralian Farmers Ltd., and their interest was used against other traders that had stuck to them during the lean years.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is discussing the principles of the parent Act. If he is merely doing so by way of illustration, he may proceed, but he is departing somewhat from the Bill before the House.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I wished to point out that the Government, instead of continuing the Industries Assistance Act, should introduce a Bill to amend the Agricultural Bank Act, and the I.A.B. should be abolished. If I am transgressing, I shall not refer further to that matter beyond saying that, while the change benefited one section of the community, it operated detrimentally to another. I trust the next Government—

The Premier: There will not be any next Government.

The Colonial Secretary: You are looking too far ahead.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Only a few months. I trust that the next Government will take steps to abolish the I.A.B. The board was instituted to deal with abnormal conditions. Those abnormal conditions have passed away.

The Premier: It could not be done.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It could be done by transferring the accounts to the Agricultural Bank and giving clients of the I.A.B. power to trade as they think fit, subject of course to their mortgage. There are some clients of the board that have no intention of paying and no likelihood of making good, and the sooner we get rid of them the better. The State cannot continue indefinitely to pay people 9s. or 10s. a day plus grants for the purchase of stock, etc., necessary for their farms. By giving them an opportunity to

work in their own way, there will be a better chance of closing the operations of the board. I am not opposed to the board; it has been lenient—

Mr. Latham: Too lenient.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If it is due for any condemnation at all, it is for having been too lenient. There is no necessity for the Government to maintain two staffs of officers. We have the I.A.B. staff and the Agricultural Bank staff working in the same building keeping two different sets of books, and there would be no necessity for it if the Agricultural Bank Act were altered. I hope the next Government will restore the old conditions of trade and deal with these clients under the Agricultural Bank Act. Many of the clients are greatly handicapped; they cannot put in an acre of crop unless an inspector tells them how to do it; they cannot buy a pig without the permission of the board; they cannot order a wheelbarrow unless they first receive the board's approval. These conditions cannot continue indefinitely; the sooner they are altered the better. I am sorry that the Premier has not sought to alter this condition of affairs and close down the I.A.B. before the end of the present Parliament.

On motion by Mr. Latham, debate adjourned.

BILL—REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 23rd August.

Hon. M. F. TROY (Mr. Magnet) [7.41]: At the outset I express my opposition to the Bill. While I admit it may be difficult to arrange a system of representation that would be universally endorsed by members of this House, there are features of the Bill that render it most objectionable, inasmuch as it will operate contrary to the promise made by the Premier when introducing the Electoral Districts Bill last session.

Mr. Davies: How could he have known?

Hon. M. F. TROY: He ought to have known.

Mr. Marshall: He seemed to know a lot about it then.

Hon. M. F. TROY: A lot of members seemed to know what was happening before the Bill was introduced, if one may judge by the discussions in the corridor.

The Premier: I gave no information about it outside.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Last session the Premier said the quota for the metropolitan seats would be 6,062 as against 7,073 and there would be 14 seats; in the mining area the average number of voters would be 1,874 with five seats; in the agricultural area there would be 22 seats with an average of 2,993, while the central goldfields would have four seats with 3,413 electors.

The Premier: On the rolls at that time.

Hon. M. F. TROY: On the rolls as they stood then; I shall come to that point later.

This Bill makes a most drastic alteration, inasmuch as it takes from the outback portions of the State no fewer than five seats and transfers them, three to the metropolitan area and two to the agricultural area. The objectionable feature is that the quotas, which members thought would be provided under the Bill and which the Premier led us to believe would be provided, have been entirely departed from. In some respects the more remote mining areas, on the verge of our civilisation, have a quota almost equal to that provided for the agricultural districts that are close to and nearly akin to the city. From the map members will find that under the proposed redistribution, Murchison embraces the Mt. Magnet, Cue, and Murchison electorates. It extends from the Greenough and Irwin on the west, from the new electorate of Mt. Marshall on the south, right across that great area of country contiguous to Gascoyne and Roebourne, adjoining Pilbara on the north, and then extends east to the South Australian border. With the possible exception of Kimberley it is the largest electorate in Western Australia. The Murchison is arranged with a quota of 2,202 electors. When we compare it with Gascoyne and Roebourne we find the arrangement is grossly unfair to the Murchison people. Gascoyne, a much smaller territory and contiguous to the new Murchison seat, has a quota of 1,057, while the Murchison, an electorate several times as big, has a quota of 2,202. Roebourne, an electorate about one-sixth the size of Murchison, has a quota of 587, and Murchison 2,202. Pilbara, a little more remote, but adjoining the Murchison, has a quota of 720. The Murchison has a quota equal to the combined electorates of Roebourne, Gascoyne, and Pilbara, and much of its territory is as remote, if not more so, than these other electorates. I take the strongest possible exception to a representation of that sort for the Murchison. While the Gascoyne has an area of 50,000 square miles, the Murchison has an area of 122,000 square miles, two and a-half times that of the Gascoyne. The Murchison also has more than twice the number of electors. The Murchison districts ought to have two seats under this Bill. We were convinced that under this scheme of electoral representation the Murchison must lose one seat, leaving it with two seats. No census has been taken since 1921, no elections have been held since, and the rolls have not since been brought up to date. At the last census, the population of the Murchison electorates was 3,554. The weakness of this proposal is that, whereas the Electoral Department has been striking names off the roll in all these areas, with the alleged object of purifying the roll, no effort has been made to add a single name to the roll. There are hundreds of people who are not on the roll.

Mr. Davies: That is their responsibility.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The Government are not justified in bringing down a measure of this description without first taking the full-

est precaution to see that the rolls are in order.

Mr. Latham: Hear, hear!

Hon. M. F. TROY: The electorates should have been framed on a proper population basis. It is not within the means of members representing outback centres to spend large sums of money to get names on the roll. That is the province of the Electoral Department. I have every authority for saying that there are hundreds of men in the back country, on mining fields, on stations, well sinking, boundary riding and fencing, who have not their names on the roll. The department merely writes to the local mining registrar, instructing him to purify the rolls in his district. That officer then strikes off all the names of the people he knows have left the district, but he can know nothing whatever about people who are living scores of miles away from his centre. These men are disfranchised under this Bill. Since 1921 there has been no great reduction of population on the Murchison. If an electoral canvass were made it would be found that there are even more electors in the Murchison district than there were in 1921. While the extremity of the Gascoyne electorate is 510 miles from Perth, the extremity of the new Murchison electorate is 830 miles away. Is the Murchison any more accessible to the metropolitan area than the Gascoyne?

Mr. Teesdale: Yes. It has 500 miles of railway.

Hon. M. F. TROY: From Geraldton a man can reach the Gascoyne much quicker than he can get to the Murchison. The means of communication between Perth and the Gascoyne are more rapid than they are between Perth and the Murchison. There is the weekly aerial service between Geraldton and Carnarvon, and that centre is only 24 hours' sail from Geraldton. One can travel through the Gascoyne in one-third of the time it takes to travel through the Murchison.

Mr. Angelo: How many electors are there in the eastern half of the Murchison?

Mr. TROY: How many are there in the eastern half of the Gascoyne?

Mr. Angelo: Hundreds.

Mr. Chesson: Niggers.

Mr. Teesdale: There are more than in the Murchison.

Hon. M. F. TROY: It is wrong that people in the back country of the Murchison, who suffer from the same disadvantages and lack of conveniences, and who have also taken on the great work of developing the back country, as is the case with the people of Roebourne and Gascoyne, should be denied the same proportion of representation. But we have not asked even that. If two seats had been allowed to the Murchison we would have thought it a fair and equitable distribution. There were rumours in the lobbies that members of Parliament—I do not say members of this House—could tell other members just what arrangement was being made in regard to certain boundaries. Before this discussion is over it will be found that what I state is

correct. Members discussed the proposed boundaries of the seats in this House, and were fairly accurate in regard to many of them.

Mr. Davies: They must have guessed them.

Mr. Marshall: Guessed them!

Hon. M. F. TROY: Members who represent the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Roebourne seats cannot vote for the Bill, if they want to give fair representation to the people adjacent to them. Is not an elector on one side of an imaginary line equal to the elector on the other? Why should not an elector on either side of an imaginary line, dividing the Roebourne and Murchison electorates, have similar representation? A Bill that gives one set of individuals twice the voting power of that possessed by their neighbours is not equitable. Let me now discuss the agricultural districts. The Avon is an electorate adjacent to Perth. One can get on the train in the city and be there in a few hours. It extends along the Eastern Goldfields railway, and is a very compact electorate. One can reach every centre in it within a few hours. It enjoys many facilities and advantages that people in the back country cannot get. Its quota, under the Bill is 2,900 and that of the Murchison 2,202. The Beverley electorate is also adjacent to Perth, and within a few hours journey of it. It is one of the old established portions of the State, and its people enjoy all those facilities common to up-to-date localities. Its quota is 2,511, while that of the vast Murchison, which stretches from the mid-south to the South Australian border, is 2,202.

Mr. Marshall: It is a crying shame.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Is that a fair and equitable redistribution of seats? The Irwin seat is a little more remote than Beverley, but it is adjacent to the metropolitan area, and is accessible by two lines of railway. One can board the train in Perth at 8 o'clock at night and be in the Irwin electorate within a few hours. Its quota is 2,660, and that of the Murchison 2,202. When we compare the remoteness of the Murchison from the capital, and the difficulties under which the people labour, can it be considered that the Murchison has a fair representation as compared with the electorates I have mentioned? Pingelly is another electorate. I admire the present member who represents it, and hope he will long continue to do so. This district also is adjacent to the city, and enjoys all the social and educational advantages peculiar to the older established country towns of the State. Its quota is 2,500, as compared with the Murchison of 2,202. Can any hon. member consider that the Commissioners have provided a fair quota in that respect? It is not a fair proposition. Any member who wants to do justice to the country will not be justified in supporting the measure. Now let me come to the new electorate of Mt. Marshall, which is certainly more remote than Pingelly or Beverley, though its remoteness is nothing as compared with that of the Murchison. Yet Mt. Marshall has a quota of 2,400, and

the vast Murchison a quota of 2,200. And we are told that that is a fair method of electoral redistribution. There is still another comparison I wish to make, and it is as regards the new electorate of Plantagenet. That new electorate, lying adjacent to Albany, in one of the most favoured climatic portions of the State, as well as one of the oldest established, has a quota of 2,472, or only 200 more than the vast Murchison, with its thousands of miles of territory. And we are told that in the wisdom of the Commissioners this is a fair and equitable method of redistribution.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Their proposal is as bad as the present position.

Hon. M. F. TROY: There never was any reason for the Plantagenet electorate. The district known as Kendenup, where there must have been 1,000 votes, is a district which is reducing in population. Hundreds are leaving it. The possibilities are that Kendenup will utterly collapse. If the population of Plantagenet were counted to-day, it would not equal the quota provided for the Murchison. I say that is a damnable system of redistribution. What inspiration was there to suggest an electorate at Plantagenet?

Mr. Davies: Whom do you suggest?

Hon. M. F. TROY: I ask the hon. member what does he suggest? Who inspired the whole thing? We knew here last year, when the Electoral Districts Bill was being discussed, that there was going to be a new electorate called Plantagenet. It was mentioned here.

Mr. Mann: I never heard it.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Of course, the hon. member would not. He never does. There never was any necessity for the Plantagenet electorate. If there was any necessity for new agricultural electorates—I admit there was—it was in the more progressive districts which have gone ahead during the last ten years—to the east of the Great Southern line and to the north of the Eastern Goldfields line. I ask again who inspired the Plantagenet electorate? Why was that electorate formed? Why was a new electorate created in the most unprogressive agricultural portion of Western Australia? The Commissioners, if they had any knowledge at all of the development of the country, must have recognised that east of the Great Southern and north of the Eastern Goldfields railway there had been the most rapid agricultural development in Western Australia for the past ten years. With the collapse of Kendenup, the Plantagenet district to-day does not possess the quota provided for the huge Murchison electorate. The Premier can go to the electors on this redistribution, but I warn him that as far as I possibly can I shall tell the people of the country just how this Bill has been arranged.

The Premier: What about the 1913 measure?

Hon. M. F. TROY: Did the 1913 measure impose the gross injustices that this Bill imposes on the men in the back country? No.

The Premier: I say it did.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I say it did not. Did the 1913 measure provide for an electorate in Plantagenet, the most unprogressive agricultural district of Western Australia? The Commissioners must have been wanting in knowledge, or wanting in wisdom; otherwise they could never have arranged a scheme of representation on the basis they did. Let me say, as a further proof of the incompetence of the Commissioners, and I say that advisedly—

The Premier: The Commissioners could not please everybody.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Anyhow, they have pleased somebody. This Bill, providing for this huge electorate of Murchison a quota of 2,200, gives little more than the same quota for the other goldfields electorates. In fact, the Commissioners have arranged the matter so badly that they provide a quota of 500 more for the huge Murchison electorate than for the electorate of Coolgardie, and 500 more than for the electorate of Leonora, and 700 more than for the electorate of Kanowna. The Premier says we ought to be pleased with this as a fair and equitable system of redistribution.

The Premier: I had nothing to do with it.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The comparisons I have given show how grossly unfair the whole proposition is to the back country. The Bill takes five seats from the back country, five seats from the most remote parts of the State. And who are the people disfranchised in this manner? They are the people living on the very frontiers of what may be termed the civilisation of Western Australia. They are the very salt of the earth so far as Western Australia is concerned. They are the pioneers. They are the people who go out back to live under the worst conditions, who take on the most risky and most unhealthy occupations. They are men who take their wives and children away from all the educational, social and medical advantages of the cities. And those are the people to whom this Bill deals the heaviest blow. I do not worship the fetish of one vote one value. What we ought to consider in this country is not the question of one vote one value, but the question of political equality. In my opinion, the closer the people are situated to the seat of government, the greater political pull they have and the greater political influence they wield.

Mr. Money: As proved by the growth of the cities.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Absolutely. The people who have been penalised by this measure have never had political equality, have never had the representation they are entitled to. The people who go out in the far back country, away from all advantages, and under the worst climatic conditions, are so remote from the seat of government, that they have never had political equality; and therefore it is the duty of the House now to bring about, as far as possible, political equality. This Bill does not give it. It is unreasonable

to suggest that a Bill which provides the same quota for the huge Murchison electorate, stretching over thousands of square miles, as for electorates near Perth, is a Bill that is fair and just to the people living outback. The people of the Murchison are even more disadvantageously situated than the people of the Gascoyne and Roebourne electorates, a considerable proportion of whom live adjacent to the sea coast. The people of the Murchison live very far away from the sea-coast, in a locality where during summer time the conditions are almost unbearable. Indeed, they live under most undesirable conditions. They are helping to pioneer the wealth of this State. Without them the populations of our cities would not exist. And the quota provided for the Murchison people is equal to the quota provided for country electorates adjacent to the seat of government. I have already said that this Bill must be unacceptable to the House on the ground that the rolls on which the redistribution was arranged were incomplete. I have already said that no attempt was made by the Electoral Office to put a solitary name on the rolls in the back country. There are in this country thousands of people who are disfranchised, and therefore the Government have no business to bring down a measure of this kind and ask for the support of the House when the redistribution is arranged on a basis that is incorrect. The electoral rolls are not correct now; they are very incomplete. As I said when the Electoral Districts Bill was being discussed, I do not think the Commissioners were competent for the job.

Mr. Teesdale: Your side said the work could be done by a schoolboy sitting in an office.

Mr. Munsie: The Commissioners never went out of the office, which is proof of the correctness of the statement.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If I had only 500 electors I would not say too much about this redistribution.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale) should hold his peace. He represents 540 electors, and he makes more noise in this House than a member representing 10,000. With all due respect to the Commissioners, I say that the Chief Justice, on his own admission, which was made when speaking jocularly at Bunbury, is not the man for this job. He looked upon it from a legal aspect only. What does he know about community of interests?

Mr. Pickering: What does it mean?

Hon. M. F. TROY: What does the Chief Justice know about what has been accomplished in Western Australia? What does he know about the areas for which he has to provide electoral boundaries? He has never seen those areas. He knows nothing whatever about them, not more than the veriest schoolboy knows about them. We come now to another of the Commissioners, Mr. Camm. What does Mr. Camm know about this great country?

The Premier: He ought to know something about it.

Hon. M. F. TROY: What does he know about it? What area of this country has Mr. Camm seen in the last six years? What development has he seen in the last six years? He came from Northam to Perth. Has he been in the back country? Does he know anything about the back country, its interests and people, beyond what he has been told? How can he know? How can we know what happens in parts of the State which we have never seen? How can we know beyond what we are told? These men were merely office men!

The Premier: Camm is not an office man.

Hon. M. F. TROY: He has been an office man for years. He was at Northam for years and knows nothing about the northern parts of this State. He knows very little about this State at all, not nearly as much as members of this Chamber. He does not move about the country and cannot understand its changes.

Mr. Davies: Is this the time to question the personnel of the Commission?

Hon. M. F. TROY: That is my business!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. M. F. TROY: The member for Guildford can please himself what he does.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Mount Magnet is discussing the work of the Commission.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Most decidedly, and I contend that the Commissioners were not competent for the work. What does the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Cooke, know about the country districts? He knows least of all. What does he know beyond what he ascertains from the figures placed before him? What does he know about community of interests and the physical features of the country? He is an office man purely and simply, and has rarely been outside his office. We might just as well have appointed any city man with office environment and would have got the same result.

Mr. Chesson: We could not have got worse.

Hon. M. F. TROY: That is so. We now see how the Commissioners accomplished their work! I have shown the House the quota they gave to the Murchison electorate and compared it with that allotted to the Plantagenet, Mount Marshall, Irwin, and Pingelly electorates, to demonstrate how much they knew of the work, what they accomplished, and with what sort of justice they carried out their duties. How have the members of that Commission carried out their instructions under the Electoral Districts Act? One of those instructions was that they should consider the means of communication and distance from the capital. If they considered that point, how could they arrange one huge electorate such as that of the Murchison and give the same quota, within a few hundred, as those allotted to electorates contiguous to Perth? Yet we are told they followed instructions!

Rather have they departed from their instructions entirely.

Mr. Angelo: Do not forget Geraldton, with the quota of 2,500.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I include Geraldton, Bunbury, Northam and all those electorates which one can traverse in one day. The quota in those electorates is only a few hundred in excess of the Murchison, which could only be traversed in a few months.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is only a few hours' journey from Geraldton to the Gascoyne electorate.

Mr. Angelo: I travelled for 2,000 miles from Carnarvon and did not see all the stations in the electorate.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I travelled through my electorate for a month and could not see half of the stations there.

Mr. Angelo: You have not got them.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Yes, I have.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The member for Gascoyne has no stations away from the coast.

Mr. Angelo: There are over 100.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Close to the coast.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I have voiced my opposition to the measure. I do not deny that I am personally affected by the measure. I appeal to hon. members to look at this proposition fairly and reject the Bill. Justice has not been done to the areas where the people have done more for the development of the State than have those in any other part. I do not wish to make invidious distinctions. I say advisedly that the people living in remote areas under adverse conditions, deprived of those facilities for education and social life afforded people in more settled areas, are entitled to fair representation in this Chamber. The Bill does not give that to them. I would not be human, nor would I be decent to my own people, if I did not protect their interests to the last. I have represented them for nearly 20 years. I have a great deal of affection for them. I know their difficulties. I know the hopelessness of the outlook for many of them. I know of their privations, suffered in an inhospitable climate. Because of these considerations, I am not justified in voting for a measure which seeks to impose such unfair representation. I make my objection in the strongest possible language, and I hope hon. members will not agree to the measure passing this Chamber.

On motion by Mr. Johnston, debate adjourned.

BILL—PINJARRA-DWARDA RAILWAY EXTENSION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 23rd August.

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly) [8.24]: I am rather astounded and astonished, after all the evidence furnished regarding the Dwarda-Narrogin railway, to find that the Government seem anxious to commence build-

ing the line. I attended a meeting at Codjatonine on the 18th August. The meeting was well advertised and the opportunity was given to those interested to attend. There was a fairly large and very representative gathering, drawn from the district. The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) was also invited, so that all sides of the question could be discussed.

Mr. Johnston: You did not invite me and you are the member for the district.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I know Mr. Johnston was invited to attend, for I saw the announcement in the paper. He did not seem inclined to attend the meeting, for he was not there.

Mr. Johnston: I did not get a proper invitation.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Two resolutions were adopted. At the public meeting a resolution was agreed to that the extension should go to Codjatonine, in accordance with the recommendation of the Railway Advisory Board. The chairman of the Hotham Railway League said he would not be bound by any resolution carried at the meeting. Directly after the public meeting was concluded, the members of the Hotham Railway League met and carried a similar resolution, namely, that the railway should be extended to Codjatonine Pool, as recommended by the advisory board. On a previous occasion, evidence was placed before the House showing that if the line were built it would be almost unworkable, and the Commissioner of Railways has stated that he would sooner carry the goods traffic by the Great Southern railway, and allow freight on the shorter distance. It will thus be seen that if the line is built, it will be a losing proposition for the railways for all time. At the public meeting the resolution was agreed to by 40 votes to 25.

Mr. Johnston: The 40 people were mostly from the Great Southern.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Those who were opposed to the resolution were a few people residing around Dwarda, and, of course, the Narrogin people.

Mr. Johnston: There was not a soul there from Narrogin.

Mr. HICKMOTT: The people voting against the resolution mostly live close to the line. I asked them why they wanted the line to go to Narrogin. One man said he wanted to take his cream to the butter factory at that centre, while another said he wanted to take his stock to the market. I will leave it to the House to judge whether it is reasonable to build the line for a few dairymen who wish to take a little cream from Dwarda and Wandering to Narrogin when they could send it to the metropolitan market by the present line. It would be better to build a butter factory at Dwarda, if that is warranted, than to construct the line proposed. The strongest argument in favour of the proposition is that the line has already been authorised by Parliament. But for the last eight or nine years there has been no improvement in the district, nor is there more

production there than was the case previously. That does not appear to warrant the expenditure of such a large sum of money. The only other argument in favour of the line was advanced by the Minister for Works, who said it would enable timber between Pinjarra and Dwarda to be shifted. I believe there are several mills there and that a considerable quantity of timber is cut and stacked at those mills. If we are to take any notice of the people who are in charge of our railways, however, it is not likely that the timber will be carried over the line. They would sooner convey the timber over the longer distance and allow the freight for the shorter distance. Although our railways are not paying at present, they are to be further robbed of freight by this proposal. I very much regret we did not have an opportunity to thoroughly investigate the question last session. I moved for a select committee to go into the matter.

Capt. Carter: That is the most reasonable course to adopt.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Unfortunately my motion did not come on until the close of the session, when it was useless to persevere with it. However, at the end of this debate I will move to refer the Bill to a select committee. I see no other way of satisfactorily settling the question. I have here a circular letter from the secretary of the Hotham Valley-Woodlands Railway League.

Mr. Johnston: That is the new league, not the original one.

Mr. HICKMOTT: The letter reads as follows:—

We thought the present time an opportune one for placing a few facts before you in reference to the proposed deviation of the Dwarda-Narrogin railway line now before Parliament. It is claimed that this deviation for five miles will meet the needs of the Hotham Valley settlers. We here state that it does not do so, that it only serves a few of the many settlers requiring railway facilities. At the present time, when the Government are economising in every way to keep the finances of the State in a good position, we view with alarm the fact that the Government intend proceeding with the building of the Dwarda-Narrogin line. This railway will not serve any more people than a line run from Dwarda to Codjatonine, a distance of 13 miles. All settlers along the Hotham Valley will then be brought to within eight or ten miles of the railway. There is no need for the Narrogin portion to be built, as it will not serve any more settlers, but proceed through thousands of acres of poor country infested with poison, which will never produce much of anything. We stand solidly behind Messrs. Hickmott and Greig in their attitude towards this railway. We sincerely hope the Government will see the wisdom of this line of procedure, and not sanction needless expenditure of public money when 13 miles of railway will serve everyone. A railway advisory board's re-

port (1921) on this route is in the hands of the Government, strongly recommending that the line be built from Dwarda to Codjatinine.

That is the voice of the people. A line built on the route recommended by the advisory board would bring all the settlers within reasonable distance of the railway. I think members will agree that the Bill should be sent to a select committee to determine whether the line from Dwarda to Narrogin is worth building, or whether the 13 miles proposed would not be in the best interests, as well of the State as a whole as of the people in the district.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington—in reply) [8.35]: The Government have no other desire than to see the line placed where it will be of greatest benefit to the greatest number. It is not easy to reconcile the representations made by the member for Pingelly with certain communications I have here. First there is a telegram from Mr. Price, of Codjatinine, as follows:—

Large representative meeting 26th approved of deviation Dwarda-Narrogin railway. Urge early construction.

Then I have another from a gentleman named Treasure.

Capt. Carter: For whom does Mr. Treasure speak?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Apparently for the Noombling settlers. I do not know him.

Mr. Johnston: He has been spokesman for the Noombling settlers before.

Mr. Wilson: He sends a good many telegrams. He sent me one.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is what he says:—

Latest deviation survey suits all Noombling settlers. Immediate construction requested.

I have here a letter from Mr. George Darcey, as follows:—

The "Pingelly Leader" of last Thursday publishes a report of a meeting held at Codjatinine on the 18th August. By this report you will notice the meeting asked for a railway to be built to Codjatinine. At a meeting following, our Railway League (poorly attended) upheld the motion. May I point out that this meeting was not fully attended by members of the league. The meeting was called to hear something of importance from Messrs. Greig and Hickmott. We did not expect the meeting, and a number of our members, not being interested in Mr. Greig, did not attend. On Sunday last we held a meeting of the league (only four members absent) and rescinded the motion carried on the 18th August. I think you and other members will agree we were justified in taking this action when I point out that the meeting of the 19th August was a packed house, some people coming from as far as 40 miles east. I have been instructed to write to

Sir James Mitchell on behalf of the league, and I enclose a copy of the letter. Mr. Greig will use as an argument in favour of stopping the Bill for the deviation result of meeting of 18th. I suggest you inform your supporters of the league's action on the 26th.

Then I have another letter from Mr. Darcey, as follows:—

At a meeting of Hotham Valley railway league on Sunday, 26th August, I was instructed to write you that we commend your action in bringing in a Bill for the deviation of the Narrogin-Dwarda line. We are of opinion this line will be of great help to returned men and other settlers. Capt. Carter: The whole thing wants sifting.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There are always all manner of opinions expressed locally when a route is in question. I have had such experience as a contractor and as a contractor's manager. I have read these communications so that the House might understand the difficulties confronting the Government. We desire to do the best, not only for the State, but for the people settled in the district and for those others likely to settle there. The member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott) says the Commissioner of Railways is prepared to haul goods over the longer distance and charge the lower freight. As one who has had to do with the management of railways all my life, I say that if I were Commissioner again to-day I should not be satisfied until I had connection between Dwarda and some point on the Great Southern to deal with the traffic which will come, not only from the timber mills, but from the farming areas surrounding the district. To suggest that it would be wise to carry timber, say, 93 miles to Pinjarra, from Pinjarra to Perth, from Perth to Spencer's Brook and thence down the Great Southern, rather than carrying it anything from 20 to 45 miles, seems to me the height of folly.

Mr. Money: You are ignoring the Collie-Narrogin line altogether. That is where the timber mills are.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That does not matter. The district has a right to proper facilities to enable it to do its work and to an outlet for the timber it produces, which is ten times more than is carried by the Collie-Narrogin railway.

Mr. Money: Have you any estimate of the revenue to be earned by this proposed railway?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is not necessary to enter fully into the controversy, because the whole thing has been thrashed out before. It is for the House to judge.

Mr. Brown: How can the House judge if you give us no particulars?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The particulars have been given times without number; indeed the House decided long ago. The Speaker would not allow me to deal with all these points when I am merely replying to the debate. If the House de-

cides upon a new course of action, it will be for the Government, who have no personal interests in the question, to take steps to carry out that decision. It is impossible to build a railway anywhere without some people feeling disgruntled and dissatisfied, and it would be a relief to arrive at a decision on a matter which has been in dispute for the last nine years. This question has been debated in the House several times and the House has pronounced upon it. We started to give effect to the decision of the House and then, in consequence of some expressions of feeling, we tried to ascertain whether things could be worked out better than under the original survey.

Capt. Carter: Did the House decide in opposition to the Advisory Board's report of 1921 that recommended the building of the line to Codjatatine?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot speak as to that offhand.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister had better not enter into a general discussion.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I quite realise that you, Mr. Speaker, would check me if I attempted to do so. The Government were preparing to give effect to the decision of the House and then, in deference to the expressions of feeling, the Government made further inquiries. Eventually they came to the conclusion that a deviation such as I have mentioned would meet the situation. If the House thinks differently, it is for the House to say so.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

To Refer to Select Committee.

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly) [8.47]: I move—

That the Bill be referred to a Select committee.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [8.48]: I hope the Government will oppose the motion. The position is not analogous to that of a new railway being proposed for the first time. This railway was authorised in 1915 and it is the only railway authorised at that time that to-day is not well in hand or approaching completion. This Bill was passed in the same month as the Bill authorising the line from Kuerin to Lake Grace, and that line has been operating for six or seven years.

Capt. Carter: But that was a very different proposition.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The people of that district have had the advantage of the line all those years.

Capt. Carter: But they had no line at all before.

Mr. JOHNSTON: This proposal was held up on account of the war. A large number of people are settled in the district—

Capt. Carter: They have settled there since the war.

Mr. JOHNSTON: And they would have had a line years ago but for the war. I could point out in "Hansard" that the Minister for Railways has said so on many occasions. During these years since 1915 we have had the pleasure of visits by several Premiers—Mr. Scaddan, Sir Henry Lefroy and Sir James Mitchell—and each of them has told representative gatherings of settlers that the railway would be built as soon as the war ended or as soon as the finances permitted. Fifteen months ago, while the Premier was in England, the Government decided to build this railway, and Mr. Colebatch told Mr. T. A. Hardie, a settler in the district, and me, that he hoped the line would be completed in ample time for the coming harvest.

Mr. Hickmott: What are they going to harvest?

Mr. JOHNSTON: Everything that can be grown in the fertile districts west of the Great Southern Railway.

Mr. Hickmott: They do not grow anything.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Wool, mutton, milk, cream, hay, oats, practically every thing that man requires for food or clothing can be grown in this fertile area.

Mr. Hickmott: They have a railway now.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott) told us a year ago that he had never been through the district between Narrogin and Dwarda. I am speaking of a locality with which I have been intimately acquainted for 20 years. After Mr. Colebatch made his pronouncement the Government started to construct the railway, and twelve miles of clearing were actually carried out by the Public Works Department.

Mr. Hickmott: An inquiry will not delay the work much longer.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Afterwards a deputation came to Perth, headed by Mr. Treasurer. He has been accepted as the spokesman of the Noombling soldier settlers, and so far as I know he is their spokesman. His property is the original Noombling homestead on the north side of the estate, so he is further from the line than most of the others.

Capt. Carter: Do you think he would object to an inquiry like this?

Mr. JOHNSTON: A year ago the hon. member moved for an inquiry and his proposal was before the House throughout the session. Though I was opposed to any delay I became reconciled to an inquiry. At the end of the session, when it came to deciding the personnel of the committee, the member for Pingelly withdrew his motion. Mr. Greig, a member of another place, made a speech in which he stated, very unfairly to the member for Pingelly, that he had inspired that gentleman to move the motion. That is recorded in "Hansard." It was very unfair to the member for Pingelly and it is distinctly significant that Mr. Greig is in town again to-day and in this Chamber, although another place is not sitting.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not know that that has anything to do with the motion for a select committee.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Since then, whenever the Government have made a start with the work, something has occurred to delay it. In Narrogin the other day I was informed that there is a party of surveyors looking over the route that the line is to take.

The Minister for Works: Not to my knowledge.

Mr. JOHNSTON: That is what I was informed. Though £50,000 appeared in the Loan Bill for this railway nothing has been done. It is unfair to the residents of the district that those members who moved for a select committee last year and withdrew the motion, should again prefer a similar request just when the Government have decided upon a proposal to give the Noombling soldier settlers all they ask for and serve the whole district between Narrogin and Dwarda as well. The Government have done the fair and square and honest thing, and the House should insist on the construction of the railway being proceeded with. Regarding the conflicting letters received, the Hotham Valley railway league at Codjatinine, of which Mr. T. H. Price is the president, is the body that has always been fighting for a deviation of the line. A letter from the league to the Premier dated the 26th August states that at a meeting held that day, with only four members of the league absent, the motion previously carried had been rescinded.

Mr. Hickmott: The same Mr. Price was the chairman of the two meetings I referred to.

Mr. JOHNSTON: But Mr. Price, under the influence of the member for Pingelly and Mr. Greig—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not attribute motives to members.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I had no intention of doing so. Mr. Price and his fellow members of the league on the 18th August, when Mr. Hickmott and Mr. Greig were present at the meeting, together with settlers already served by the railway at Popanyinning, passed a motion opposing the proposed deviation. Then when those two gentlemen were away, they called another meeting of the league at which all except four members were present and rescinded the previous resolution. They now approve of the deviation and ask the Government to go on with the work.

Mr. Money: They do not deny their previous meeting and decision?

Mr. JOHNSTON: No.

Mr. SPEAKER: I cannot allow the hon. member to discuss the whole of the merits and demerits of the route and the construction of the line. The question is whether a select committee shall be appointed.

Mr. JOHNSTON: There is no need for a select committee, because the Hotham Valley railway league and the Noombling soldier settlers—the railway is to pass through a corner of the estate—applaud and approve the Government's action. The only opponents of the proposal that I know of are the members of the new league at Wood-

lands, already served by the Great Southern railway at Popanyinning, the people who carried an adverse motion by 40 votes to 25. I urge the House to do justice to the settlers, between Narrogin and Dwarda, who have waited so long for this line. The Bill was passed in 1915 and the railway has been promised by each succeeding Government, and the deviation will serve the soldier settlers on the Noombling estate. This is a matter of vital importance to a number of residents in that part of the State. I regret that the member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott) did not accept the very reasonable compromise brought forward by the Government in this Bill. All that the first deputation, which resulted in stopping the construction of the line, asked for, was this deviation, and this has been granted. It is unjust to the settlers to further delay the construction of the work because of the efforts of the new league.

Mr. Davies: What is your objection to a select committee?

Mr. JOHNSTON: If a select committee is appointed it means that the hon. member will be the chairman and there will be months more delay. I hope the Government will stick to the Bill and will not agree to the motion of the hon. member.

Captain CARTER (Leederville) [9.1]: I support the motion of the member for Pingelly. I am not at fault with the pros and cons of the case and it is not my intention to discuss them. In the interests of the House and the country I should like to see a free and open opportunity given to every settler in the district to express his views before an official body appointed by Parliament. The hon. member who has last spoken has not stated one reason why a select committee should not be appointed. During a recent visit to portion of the district concerned I gathered that there is a grave conflict of opinion amongst the people. This is one of the most potent factors for the appointment of a select committee. There can be nothing that the advocates of the line desire to hide. I do not suggest such a thing, but fail to understand why they object to the appointment of a select committee.

Mr. Johnston: Why was the motion withdrawn a year ago?

Capt. CARTER: I do not know, and am not interested. We are asked to adjudicate upon this Bill, and to set our seal as a board of directors, responsible for the expenditure of public moneys, upon it. Before we take any steps that may affect a lot of people and the finances of the State, we should have the fullest inquiry into the question. The letters with which we have been inundated during the last few days prove that there is a great difference of opinion amongst people in the district affected. From my inexperienced view of the country I should say a good deal of it is of no use, infested as it is with poison and other pests. According to Mr. Price there is no need for the Narrogin portion of the line to be built as it will not serve any more set-

ters, and will pass through thousands of acres of poor country that are infested with poison and will never produce much of anything. If the line is built to Cadjatoline the settlers can be helped in the manner desired, and there will be no need for a further extension to link up with Narragin, which cannot want the railway unless it be from a parochial point of view. I have yet to see that any great benefit would accrue from the timber point of view. The member for Bunbury (Mr. Money) by interjection said that timber can be brought to the Great Southern via the Collie-Narragin railway. Seeing that this railway will serve the timber interests, we should only be duplicating the service if we built this additional line. In the interests of the country, and of sound finance and administration, we should have the fullest inquiries into this question before coming to a decision. I support the motion.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [9.5]: I cannot understand why the member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott) moved this motion. Some years ago Government officers recommended the continuation of the railway through to Narragin along a route as straight as possible.

Mr. Harrison: Are you dealing with the last report or the former report?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am dealing with the Bill of 1915. It was pointed out that the construction of the line in another direction would considerably increase the cost. Bridges would have to be built that would be unnecessary along the straight route. The Bill was then introduced and passed. It is all very well for the member for Pingelly to say what the Commissioner of Railways said. In the past the Commissioner of Railways has always endeavoured to get as few junctions as possible. That applies to Narragin.

The Minister for Works: The Commissioner advised in 1914 that Narragin was the best point.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Government again reviewed the position, after taking advice. Land has been sold there and developed, which was not developed at the time the Bill was passed. After giving the matter every consideration the Government found it advisable to vary the route to the extent provided in the Bill, in order to suit the needs of the new settlers. Can the select committee obtain any more information than members of the Government have in their possession?

Mr. Money: That could apply to any select committee.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Not at all. Members of the committee would have to rely upon the same staff on which the Government rely.

Mr. Money: That would apply to every case.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Select committees are at times appointed to investigate matters and they can obtain evidence which is not at the disposal of the Government.

Mr. Money: We have no evidence here.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The files have been laid on the Table regarding the various deviations.

Capt. Carter: But the Bill was introduced only the other night.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Various plans were laid on the Table last session, as the Minister for Works knows. The papers were first asked for, and were then placed on the Table to give the member for Pingelly an opportunity to move for the appointment of a select committee. The Minister for Works was so suspicious of the actions of the previous Government that one of the first things he did on assuming office was, upon receipt of a letter from the member for Pingelly, to make an examination into all the lines previously passed.

The Minister for Works: It was not suspicion; it was perhaps caution.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It was one of those matters over which the Government burned the midnight oil in a vain attempt to find something wrong. Have members opposite confidence in the Government, or not? The matter was fully investigated and a Bill drawn up according to the advice of the engineers. The present Government investigated the matter, and decided on the advice of their officers that this Bill met the situation. If I were supporting the Government and had so little confidence in them I would vote them out on the first occasion. I would be very surprised if the Government supported this motion. It was a question of policy and administration, and they have given their decision. The whole business was decided some time ago.

Capt. Carter: How often has the route been altered?

The Premier: Not at all.

Capt. Carter: But there was a deviation.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: A deviation that suited the settlers concerned. Some time ago I was with the Premier in a place about 20 miles from Narragin. A deputation from the district asked him for a deviation, and the Government have given it to them. We should all be pleased if we had a railway or tramway close to our backyard. I hope the House will not pass the motion, but will uphold the Government in their decision. The line has been deviated in the best interests of the State and the settlers concerned. The Government could have gone on with the line without the Bill. This motion must have been moved for the purpose of stopping the construction of the railway. If one party does not satisfy the opponents of this line, they try another party. It would be wrong to refer the matter to a select committee after the Government have given such serious consideration to it.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [9.13]: I oppose the appointment of a select committee. I am not altogether wedded to the system of advisory boards. I have had experience of them in my electorate. These boards do not really consider all requirements in connection with a railway, neither do they make the careful examination of the position they are supposed to make. One of the principal persons to advise in the matter of a railway is the Commissioner of Railways. This House looks to the Commissioner of Railways to make a profitable proposition of the railways placed under his control. The present case seems to me one of individual interest rather than anything else. Personally, I am not interested in the route of the railway, but I am interested in the people who have been definitely promised railway communication since 1915. Although I was not in accord with the route of the railway from Busselton to Margaret River—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot discuss railways generally on this motion.

Mr. PICKERING: Would you indicate to me, Sir, what I can use in the way of an argument on this motion if I cannot give an instance?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is in order in giving an instance, but he is not in order in labouring the question.

Mr. PICKERING: I have been speaking for only two minutes on the motion, and unless I am permitted to express my reasons for opposing the appointment of a select committee, I might as well sit down. I wish to point out that if I had adopted the tactics of certain members of this Chamber, the railway in my district would not have been constructed. The member for Leederville (Capt. Carter) rose to protest against the fulfilment of a promise which has been definitely made by the Government and has been outstanding for years. I would like to know how he would regard the postponement of the construction of tramways in Leederville, or a motion that such a work should be considered afresh. It is due to the people settled in the district affected by this motion, people who have invested their money there, that reasonable facilities, long promised by Parliament, should no longer be delayed. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) said—and I believe he said it in full knowledge of the facts—that the necessary investigation had been made, and that a deviation had been agreed upon in accordance with certain interests indicated. Are we to go on reopening questions indefinitely? This is not the first time the matter has been brought before the House. I hope hon. members will not countenance any further inquiry, which would be merely a waste of the time of the House, and a breach of promise to the people affected.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [9.18]: I really do not know whether it is advisable to have a select committee or not. The Government have come forward with the offer of a devia-

tion. In 1915, when Parliament authorised this railway, the Railway Advisory Board thought the direct route would be the best one. During the long interval which has elapsed settlement has taken place in the district, and it is now felt necessary to ask for a deviation from the original route. Whether that deviation goes far enough is a matter upon which I think the House should express its opinion. I do not know whether the advice which the Government has had convinces me that five miles is sufficient, having regard to the fact that we are getting letters expressing the contrary view from people who should be competent to offer an opinion. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) considers that the motion to refer the Bill to a select committee indicates want of confidence in the Government. I do not know that the appointment of a select committee amounts to that. Frequently it is a means of trying to assist the Government. On this occasion a reference of the question to a select committee should involve no delay whatever to the line. The select committee should be able to come to a decision early enough to advise the House which is the best route to adopt.

Capt. Carter: The whole thing could be done in three days.

Mr. LATHAM: It is only a short piece of line, and the select committee would not take long to get over the distance. They should be able to report before the session closes. However, I have seen so many select committees and Royal Commissions appointed that I begin to wonder whether the House does right in sheltering Ministers in this way. In my opinion, select committees and Royal Commissions are no ornaments to a House of Legislature. If we got some results from the select committees and Royal Commissions, we would have more confidence in asking for their appointment. But I have known the reports of such bodies to be absolutely ignored. If in this case the House does decide to appoint a select committee, I hope the report of that body will be considered by the Government. Otherwise the investigation will be a mere waste of time and money.

The Premier: Select committees report to the House.

Mr. LATHAM: But the Ministry decide whether the wishes of the House shall be carried out or not. If Ministers vote for the appointment of a select committee, I hope they will give due consideration to the report, and that they will accept such amendments in the Bill as the report may show to be necessary.

Mr. MONEY (Bunbury) [9.23]: Never, probably, has a matter of this kind come before the House with the representatives of the very district concerned more utterly at variance. That fact in itself constitutes a very good reason why the matter should be investigated.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Government represent the State, and not any district.

Mr. MONEY: It is the State for which I am concerned.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Government are responsible.

Mr. MONEY: It is the concern of the State, if there is any concern at all, that in view of what has transpired the whole subject should be thoroughly investigated. There are many thousands of pounds to be spent in this connection, and many interests to be considered. Never have I known a proposition to be supported here by such flimsy evidence as the production of a letter signed by somebody, the hon. member who produced the letter not knowing whom the writer of it represented. We have a league one day against the deviation. At a later stage the league say, "We were wrong before, and we are now in favour of the deviation." What can the House gather from any resolution of such a league? The people vitally concerned do not know from day to day what in their opinion is right. Then how are we to know what is right? No member of this House will be fulfilling his duty to the State unless he votes for a fuller inquiry into the subject.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [9.25]: During last session I spoke in support of the appointment of a select committee on this subject. I shall support the same proposal to-night. My reasons are very much those of the last speaker. According to the report of the Railway Advisory Board, this line is going to be expensive in point of cost per mile of construction. If we are to spend capital in railway construction, there are other parts of the State which need railways, and in which the money could be just as well spent, or perhaps better. If there is a prospect that a select committee can obtain evidence to guide the House to do what is best for the State, and perhaps to save public funds, it is our duty to appoint the committee.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [9.26]: I do not know why the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) says that the motion for the reference of the Bill to a select committee shows a want of confidence in the Government. The present Government did not introduce the Bill which authorises the construction of this railway. My friend from North Fremantle, as Minister for Works, introduced the Bill.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You recommended a deviation.

The PREMIER: This matter has been considered by the House more than once. The route has been approved by the House more than once. The question has been gone into very carefully by the Government. It is true that to the north of the route, though some distance to the north, there is better land than the land through which the line will go. The Government, however, have given the question very careful consideration, and have

had reports on the subject from various centres, reports from men whose judgment we respect. Therefore we are now asking the House to agree to this deviation, which we are entitled to do. We are satisfied that the deviation will enable us to make the only alteration of route which the House should be asked to pass. No one can object to the fullest information being got for any purpose, but it does not seem to me that any further information can be got in this case. The hon. member who has moved for a select committee is absolutely entitled to ask for it. I think it is due to the tactics of the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) that the mover is getting so much support for the appointment of a select committee. We all know that the battle of routes causes trouble in the district affected, and in the House, too. In this case, however, there has been the very fullest inquiry. It is nine years since the line was authorised. The people were led to believe that the line would be built through the district. They have settled along the proposed route, to some extent owing to the fact that Parliament had declared the line would be built. I do not propose to vote for the appointment of a select committee. The Government do not require any more information than they have, and I do not think very much more than we have in our possession can be obtained. The matter is very easy to understand. The line was not proposed by the present Government, but it has been at times discussed in this House, and the House has expressed a very decided opinion on the subject.

Mr. Money: It is your responsibility now, though.

The PREMIER: We take the responsibility.

Mr. Richardson: But you might be wrong, and that is what we want to know.

The PREMIER: We are not often wrong.

Mr. Richardson: Just occasionally.

The PREMIER: I do not know that we are right "just occasionally"; I know we are right on this occasion. It is a very difficult thing to play fast and loose with people in connection with railway construction. The line should never have been passed and would not have been passed—

Mr. Latham: What an admission!

The PREMIER: What admission?

Mr. Latham: You say it should never have been passed.

The PREMIER: I was saying that it should not have been agreed to, if the line was not to be built. I do not know what the decision of the House will be. So far as the Government are concerned, we have gone into the matter and we believe the deviation proposed to be the only alteration that should be made to the original measure as agreed to in this Chamber.

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly—in reply) [9.32]: Much has been said regarding the withdrawal of the motion last session. Every

hon. member is aware that the House adjourned on the day the motion was withdrawn.

The Premier: You did not have a chance then.

Mr. HICKMOTT: The select committee could not have functioned.

The Premier: That is so.

Mr. HICKMOTT: The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) suggested that personal and selfish motives entered into the question. There is nothing like that weighing with me.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I did not say "personally." I do not blame you a bit.

Mr. HICKMOTT: My object in moving for the select committee, is to assure that the line will be built to serve the greatest number of people and be constructed in the best interests of the State generally. I believe that if a vote were taken from Albany to Brookton, leaving out Narrogin, scarcely one vote would be recorded in favour of the line.

Mr. Johnston: The Narrogin people are the only ones who know anything about it.

Mr. HICKMOTT: It is admitted that Narrogin is well supplied with railway lines. I entered into conversation with a Mr. Johns, who was returning from the Eastern States. He referred to my opposition to the line. I asked him why he wanted the line, as Narrogin was well served already. He said he was a hay grower and wanted to get his stuff to the market. I remarked that he had direct railway communication already, but he said the Dwarda-Narrogin line would give him a shorter route. I said: "Surely you do not want another line for the purpose of securing a route that will be shorter by only 17 miles." He said: "I hope the line will be passed. I was one of the prime movers in this matter." That is the sort of argument we have put up to us! That is what we have to contend with! It shows that there is nothing in their arguments and demonstrates that Narrogin is already well supplied with railways.

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

Ayes	16
Noes	18

Majority against	2
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AYES.

Mr. Carter
Mr. Davies
Mr. Denton
Mr. Durack
Mr. Harrison
Mr. Hickmott
Mr. Latham
Mr. C. C. Maley

Mr. Money
Mr. Munsie
Mr. Richardson
Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Teesdale
Mr. J. Thomson
Mr. Troy
Mr. Mullany

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Luley
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Maon
Mr. Clydesdale	Mr. McCallum
Mrs. Cowan	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Pickering
Mr. George	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Heron	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Marshall

(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

In Committee, etc.

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

BILL—FIREARMS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 23rd August.

Mr. MARSHALL (Murchison) [9.41]: I oppose the Bill. After giving it very careful consideration, I am forced to the conclusion that it will be applicable to localities outside the metropolitan area, where it will work unnecessary hardship. One can admit that there may be justification for the Government controlling firearms where juveniles are concerned, but it would seem that the people in the outback centres will suffer by the enforcement of such a law. Apparently the object of the Government is to secure a good deal of unnecessary revenue. Heavy license fees and registration fees are to be imposed. People in the back country who make a livelihood with their guns will suffer great disadvantages.

Mr. Underwood: Including those who are protecting their own lives.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is so. The Minister stressed the point that children had been injured through the reckless use of firearms. In avoiding that possibility, it is not right to inflict hardships on those who depend upon the gun for their livelihood. The Minister said that the careless handling of guns by children had resulted in the death of other children. I would not raise any objection to the Bill if it merely aimed at preventing such occurrences. Children of tender years should not be allowed to use firearms to the danger of others. But the Bill will be unworkable in some parts of the State. Every person using firearms will be required to register each weapon, or, alternatively, will be liable to drastic penalties. The Government have no conception of how the Bill will apply in outback districts.

Mr. Underwood: It is utterly impossible.

[Mr. Angelo took the Chair.]

Mr. MARSHALL: Apart from the impossibility of people outback complying with the law, they will have to pay a considerable sum in license and registration fees. Take

the man earning a living shooting kangaroos, dingoes, emus and other destructive pests.

Mr. Underwood: What about the other man, the nigger?

Mr. MARSHALL: I am more concerned about the man earning his bread and butter by his gun.

Mr. Underwood: He won't want bread and butter if the nigger gets him.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am not taking that view just now. I want to know why people are encouraged to leave the city and go outback, yet are never given any consideration in the House. The Bill is purely a metropolitan measure.

Mr. Underwood: It is only a taxing measure.

Mr. MARSHALL: It is not applicable to any part of the State outside the metropolitan area, or not without inflicting hardship. Many men on stations outback possess three or four firearms. Under the Bill they will have to pay a separate fee for each weapon in their possession. A family of three or four boys, each having two or more guns, will have to pay quite a large sum to the Government. Also, the Bill will impose still further financial difficulties on those people, in that every gun repairer will be required to take out a certificate, for which he will pay £1. I do not know whether the Minister is going to press for these licenses and registration fees, or whether, when in Committee, he will agree to reduce them. I will vote against the second reading in the belief that the Bill is unworthy of further consideration. Apart from one provision, the Bill is quite unworkable, except in the bigger towns.

The Colonial Secretary: The fee is not a very serious amount.

Mr. MARSHALL: In the Government view, it never is.

Mr. Latham: Five shillings for every gun will mount up.

Mr. MARSHALL: But from the Ministerial viewpoint it is not heavy.

Mr. Underwood: It is only another means of taxation.

Mr. MARSHALL: It might be a waste of time to enumerate the difficulties in applying the Bill if it should become law, because the broadminded people in my electorate would not take any notice of it at all. They are all in the possession of firearms, and it would require a desperate man to get hold of them.

Mr. Underwood: Hush, we must all respect the law.

Mr. MARSHALL: The occasion scarcely calls for it. The Bill proposes to give to the police greater authority than any other Bill has ever done.

Mr. Heron: Except the Gold Buyers Bill.

Mr. MARSHALL: I had overlooked that one exception. Under the Bill a policeman without warrant can bail up a citizen, or search the citizen's home, for weapons. It

is not right that such powers should be conferred on the police. It is creating a precedent that may be used against members of this Chamber. It is a little disconcerting to have to continue in the absence of the Minister in charge of the Bill. Evidently he regards the Bill as of but little importance, else he would not have allowed it to come on for discussion in his absence to-night.

The Colonial Secretary: That is wrong. The Minister was anxious to be here, but found it impossible.

Mr. MARSHALL: Moreover, the police will have the power to declare who is and who is not a fit and proper person to carry firearms. That provision may be all right in the metropolitan area, but in a smaller community, where usually the limb of the law is not in good odour, it will not be difficult for a constable to deny to a citizen against whom he has a grudge the right to carry firearms.

The Colonial Secretary: In most districts the constable is popular.

Mr. MARSHALL: It may be so in the Swan electorate, but there are other electorates.

The Minister for Works: I am sorry to hear it.

Mr. Underwood: I am sorry the Bill should be under discussion when the Minister concerned is not here. It amounts to contempt of the House.

Mr. MARSHALL: It will be quite easy for a policeman to deny firearms to a citizen against whom he has a grievance.

The Minister for Works: Is there no provision for appeal?

Mr. Underwood: Where is the Minister, anyhow? With the Minister not here, we should not go on with his Bill. It is disgraceful.

Mr. MARSHALL: There is provision for an appeal. But the appeal will be expensive—at Meekatharra the hearing fee alone is 22s. 6d.—and is likely to become an annual affair. Moreover, the prosecuting officer in the court will probably be the very officer who has opposed the issue of the license to the citizen against whom he has a grudge. And justices, magistrates and wardens are prone to accept the view of the police officer.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Say some of them.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, I will say some of them.

Mr. Underwood: The police force are all right, but are given duties which they should not have.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is so. They do not ask for this. They would rather not have it.

Mr. Heron: Some of them are good sports.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes. Some are as fine gentlemen as one could wish to meet. The Bill imposes on them an authority they do not want. It is certain to excite hostility between members of the force and the citi-

zens. The provision for appeal is there, as the Minister says, but the appeal will be expensive and of doubtful utility. Also it is proposed to cut out the Maxim silencer.

The Colonial Secretary: You will agree with that?

Mr. MARSHALL: I marvel at the ignorance of some members in respect of conditions outback.

Mr. Underwood: Of some Ministers, not members.

Mr. MARSHALL: I would go far out of my way to see the Colonial Secretary kangaroo shooting at night time without a Maxim silencer. I do not know why some members open their mouths only to disgorge ignorance.

The Minister for Works: Did I understand you to say a policeman could search your house without any warrant?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes.

The Minister for Works: If you refer to Clause 16, you will see he has to get a warrant from a justice.

Mr. Underwood: Why is the Bill required at all?

Mr. MARSHALL: A policeman with the authority of the Commissioner may search any individual without a warrant.

The Minister for Works: But he cannot search a house.

Mr. MARSHALL: He can.

The Minister for Works: Clause 16 says not.

Mr. Mann: The hon. member is referring to Clause 15.

Mr. Underwood: He has no right to refer to clauses on the second reading debate.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am convinced it would be lawful for a policeman, under the authority of the Commissioner, to search any person or his premises at any time.

Mr. Mann: He could search a person without a warrant, but not the premises.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not agree with that.

Mr. Underwood: Should he be able to search anything?

Mr. MARSHALL: No member of the force should be given such authority. It is proposed that lads of 16 and under may not have control of firearms. I know of cases where great hardship will be imposed if this provision is insisted upon. There are boys who have been taught, under the careful supervision of their fathers, to handle a gun at a much earlier age than 16.

The Colonial Secretary: That is permitted.

Mr. Heron: Not unless the parent is with him.

Mr. MARSHALL: If a lad is under the age of 16, he will not be able to handle firearms.

The Colonial Secretary: He may, if he is under the supervision of a licensed person.

Mr. MARSHALL: Not if he is under 16.

Mr. Underwood: How many children are there of less than 16 years that are not under supervision? Why pass legislation of this description?

Mr. MARSHALL: The whole Bill is unsatisfactory. The Minister for Mines was very brief in moving the second reading. He did very little more than refer to a few accidents.

Mr. Underwood: He does not believe in the Bill or he would be here to see it through. He is away playing bowls or bridge.

Mr. MARSHALL: I know of one home where there are nine children that is provided with wild turkey, kangaroo, and other game by lads who, at an early age, have been taught to handle guns. To require such lads to be under supervision will be another hardship. If they cannot find an adult to accompany them, the family supplies of food must fall short. The whole trouble is that, because some children have not been taught to handle rifles and accidents have occurred, these restrictions are to be imposed upon all.

Mr. Mann: Are you opposing the whole Bill, or do you desire amendments?

Mr. Heron: Oppose the whole Bill.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. MARSHALL: I propose to give the Bill the biggest boot possible on the second reading. The amount of revenue to be derived is to go to the police force.

Mr. Heron: A tax to maintain the police.

Mr. Underwood: To buy them boots.

Mr. MARSHALL: If anyone is to derive advantage from such measure, it should be the body that provides facilities for people to use guns, namely, the road board.

Mr. Underwood: No one should get any advantage from it.

Mr. MARSHALL: I agree with that. The police have always the Treasury to draw on and are never short.

The Minister for Works: By Jove, the Commissioner of Police would not agree with you there.

Mr. MARSHALL: I would have liked the Minister to explain why an extra penalty is proposed on conviction for an offence between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. However, it seems hopeless to elicit any information regarding the Bill. Is it any easier for a firearm to go off at night than during the day?

Mr. Underwood: The stars affect it a bit.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Minister said the Act of 1885 applied only to municipalities and to areas within five miles of their boundaries.

Mr. Underwood: They are thinking of those Hunter's-corner "guns"; they go off.

Mr. MARSHALL: The provisions of this Bill are more adaptable to the municipalities and the area within five miles of their boundaries than to the country districts. When the Minister replies, I hope he will explain the reason for the extra penalty for offences committed between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. I oppose the second reading because the Bill is not adaptable to the whole of the State. It will inflict hardship upon persons earning a livelihood with a gun.

Mr. Pickering: What about the farmer?

Mr. MARSHALL: I am battling for the farmer, too. Farmers will have to pay a license for every gun, and it is not right to burden them with such an impost. Outside the metropolitan area the measure will be unworkable. If we do not wish to make law-breakers of the people, we should pass only laws that are reasonable. I protest also against the high fees proposed.

On motion by Mr. Broun, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 4th September, 1923.

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

QUESTION—RAILWAYS, LOCO. BOILERS.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it a fact that there is a shortage of boilers at the Loco. Shops which will materially impede the preparation of engines for the current year? 2, What is the extent of the shortage? 3, Is it a fact that a recommendation has been made that boilers be imported? 4, Which officer of the Railway Department is responsible for such recommendation, if any? 5, Which officer of the Railway Department is responsible for the shortage of boilers? 6, When was the shortage first reported by the officer responsible? 7, Is it a fact that the number of new boilers required to keep up the equipment of the locos. in the Railway Department is approximately 14 per year? 8, What is the number that has been built for each of the past six years? 9, Is it not a fact that boilers of as good quality can be built as cheaply at the Loco. Shops as imported boilers cost?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2, See No. 1. 3, Yes, and tenders have been invited in Australia and Great Britain for 20 boilers. 4, The Chief Mechanical Engineer. 5 and 6, See No. 1. 7, No specific number can be laid down; annual requirements vary in periods corresponding with those when large blocks of locomotives were placed on traffic. As, for instance, in 1901, 1902, and 1903 107 locomotives were put into use. These are now in course of requiring boiler replacements, giving estimated requirements of 47 boilers for 1923-24, 48 for 1924-25, whereas only 22 are estimated to be needed for 1925-26. The position in regard to boilers is referred to at paragraphs 17 and 38 of the Commissioner's Annual Report, 1923. 8, Year ended 30-6-18, 6; 30-6-19, 4; 30-6-20, 8; 30-6-21, 9; 30-6-22, 9; 30-6-23, 15. 9, Boilers made in loco. shops are as good in quality as any hitherto imported. The tenders now being invited will enable a comparison of costs to be made; the last boilers, 10 in number, were imported in 1911.

QUESTION—KENDENUP SETTLERS.

Mr. HUGHES asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that settlers are leaving Kendennup, and that unless fertilisers and seeds are provided for the remaining settlers, it will be impossible for this season's crops to be planted? 2, If so, is it the intention of the Government to do anything to keep the settlers on their holding? 3, If the answer to question (2) be in the affirmative, what action is it proposed to take?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No, but I am aware that crops cannot be grown without seed and fertiliser. 2, The State Government was not, and is not responsible for the subdivision and settlement of Kendennup Estate. It has offered, subject to the company's agreement to provide security over the land, to make advances for the purchase of seed and fertiliser and for sustenance, and this offer is still open. There has been made available £2,000 for works in the vicinity to provide employment for settlers, and £50 has been granted for relief through the Charities Department. The estate has now been offered to the Government, and the offer will be sent on to the Land Purchase Board. 3, Answered by No. 2.

QUESTION—DIABETES, INSULIN SUPPLIES.

Mr. LUTEY asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Are supplies of insulin for the cure of diabetes procurable in the State of Western Australia? 2, If not, will he try and procure a supply?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, A small supply of insulin, sufficient for the treatment of one case of diabetes, has been made available to the Honorary Medical Staff