

a department could tell whether any particular officer was properly applying himself to his duties—not even if he stood at the officer's shoulder all day long. And then there are certain classes of officers whose work it is very difficult to gauge. No man without technical knowledge could tell whether, for example, a draftsman was doing his duty by the State. At present, the doing of one's duty is, for public servants, almost entirely a matter of fair conscience. They are poked away in little rooms, mostly, and this circumstance renders continuous supervision impracticable. What we want to do is to modernise our office accommodation, and thereupon to set about the making of economies. Once we do start, we will continue until we are satisfied that the Public Service is being conducted entirely in the best interests of the community as a whole. However, I wish to say once again that the criticisms which have been uttered upon these Estimates have, with but few exceptions, failed to prove helpful to myself as Treasurer. There are matters which I might bring forward in refutation of much of the adverse criticism to which I have been subjected; but in the interests of the State of Western Australia and of the British Empire I decline to advance certain facts within my knowledge. I prefer to bear my burden. The Government are faced with difficulties which, in the absence of a knowledge of the full facts, hon. members cannot possibly appreciate. In conclusion, I may be permitted to express the hope that a return of normal good harvests, a recovery of the pastoral areas, and a revival in industry generally will speedily bring back prosperity and well-being to the State and the people of Western Australia.

General debate concluded: Votes and Items discussed as follow:—

Votes—His Excellency the Governor, £1,750; Executive Council, £50; Legislative Council, £969—agreed to.

Vote—Legislative Assembly, £1,900: Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11-32 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 16th February, 1915.

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ABSENCE OF PRESIDENT.

The Clerk reported the absence of the President (Hon. H. Briggs) owing to ill-health.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.30]: We all deeply regret the illness of the President, and we hope it will not be long before he is restored to us. I move—

That the Hon. W. Kingsmill, Chairman of Committees, take the Chair as Acting President of the Council pending the return of the Hon. H. Briggs.
Question passed.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon. W. Kingsmill) as Acting President took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.

On motion by Hon. D. G. GAWLER, the time for bringing up the Committee's report extended to Tuesday, the 23rd February.

BILL—DIVIDEND DUTIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Report stage, etcetera.

Report of Committee adopted.

Bill read a third time and passed.

BILL—LUNACY ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly having been received notifying that it had disagreed to the Council's modification of

the Assembly's modification of the Council's amendment No. 6, the Message was now considered.

In Committee.

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

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I propose to move that the following Message be sent to the Assembly:—"With reference to the Assembly's Message No. 33, the Council requests the Assembly to grant a conference respecting the Lunacy Act Amendment Bill. Should a conference be agreed to by the Assembly the Council will be represented at such conference by Hon. A. G. Jenkins, Hon. W. Patrick, and Hon. J. M. Drew."

The CHAIRMAN: The motion cannot be taken in Committee. If the Minister has some formal motion, such as that the modification be not insisted upon, it can be dealt with.

The Colonial Secretary: I have already had such a motion before the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, at a previous stage. A conference cannot be appointed out of Committee, but must be appointed by the Council. If the hon. member makes a formal motion we can deal with it and afterwards report progress.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Then I move—

That the modification be not further insisted upon.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: That means that we do not insist on the modification, and therefore we will not be able to get a conference. Can we not report progress on that? Then, when progress has been reported, the leader of the House can move his motion for a conference.

The CHAIRMAN: No. The Committee stage must be finished before a conference is asked for. If the Committee is going to insist on this modification, the conference may be requested or the Bill dropped.

Hon. A. G. Jenkins: Then the only way is to vote against the motion?

The CHAIRMAN: Quite so.

Question put and negatived: the Council's modification further insisted on.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.40]: I move—

That the following Message be forwarded to the Assembly:—With reference to the Assembly's Message No. 33, the Council requests the Assembly to grant a conference respecting the Lunacy Act Amendment Bill. Should a conference be agreed to by the Assembly the Council will be represented at such conference by Hon. A. G. Jenkins, Hon. W. Patrick, and Hon. J. M. Drew.

Question passed.

BILL—VERMIN BOARDS ACT
AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

A Message having been received from the Assembly notifying that it had disagreed with two amendments made by the Council, the Message was now considered.

In Committee.

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

No. 1.—Insert a new clause to stand as Clause 7 as follows:—Section 47 is hereby amended by striking out the words "two shillings" and by inserting in lieu thereof the words "one shilling":

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the amendment be not insisted on.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I must ask hon. members to disagree with the motion. The reason given by the Assembly for the continuance of this maximum rate of 2s. is that the board will not be able to fulfil its obligations if the rate is limited to 1s. The only alternative is for the Government to take the fence over and keep it going, or else to allow it to go to ruin altogether. The reason for reducing the tax to 1s. is that the settlers, who have incurred this liability, are prepared to pay this amount off if they get time in

which to do so. The Act states that if there is no board, or the board is not carrying out its duties, the Minister can take the place of the board, and has all the powers of such a board for carrying these duties out. It has been suggested that the Government should step in and keep the fence up out of the same funds and the same vote as are sustaining the other rabbit proof fences in this State. This will only cost something under £1,000 a year. If the 2s. taxation is left in the measure it gives the Minister power to levy this every year. Judging by previous results, the Government, who have always spent every penny that they have had, will see that they get all that they can out of the settlers in this particular. I hope the House will not agree to the proposal of the Colonial Secretary.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The framers of the reasons for opposing the amendment overlooked the fact that the Vermin Act deals with the whole of the State and not particularly with the board which did exist in the Gascoyne district. It is for this Council to say whether they are prepared to allow any board, irresponsible or responsible, to inflict a tax of twice the amount of the rent. A tax of 10s. per thousand acres, equal to the rent, should be quite sufficient for any board. I oppose the motion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Sir Edward Wittenoom stated that the board is not in existence, I believe it is.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: It is moribund.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If it fails to carry out the functions of its office it can be superseded, but this is not likely if Parliament, through the representations of hon. members from the districts concerned, reduces the taxing powers given under the principal Act. These powers were provided in accordance with the wishes of the people immediately concerned. The maximum was 2s. per hundred acres, and this was put on by the settlers themselves. The board was elected by the settlers and fixed this rate. Now it is suggested that the Government should take it over, hon.

members representing the province desire to deprive the Government of similar powers of taxation as those previously enjoyed by the board. It is very unlikely that the Government would supersede the board in such circumstances. I am quite aware that this Act deals with the whole of the State. No board would be deprived of the right of fixing a rate at any figure that it wished. If 6d. per hundred acres was considered sufficient to carry on the necessary operations, no doubt that amount would be fixed, but power is given to go up to 2s. if necessary. This seems to me to be a reasonable limit.

Question put and negatived; the Council's amendment insisted on.

No. 2.—Insert a new clause to stand as Clause 8 as follows:—Section 49 is hereby amended by striking out the words "two shillings" and inserting in lieu thereof "one shilling":

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the amendment be not insisted on.

Question put and negatived; the Council's amendment insisted on.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted, and a Message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Order Discharged.

Order of the Day for third reading read.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS (Metropolitan) [5.5]: I move—

That the Order of the Day be discharged.

Question passed; the Order discharged.

MOTION—LAND AND INCOME TAX ACT, TO AMEND.

Order of the Day read for resumption of debate from 28th January, on motion by Hon. J. Cornell:—"That in the opinion of this House the existing "Land

and Income Tax Act" should be amended so as to provide for a greater tax on income not earned by personal effort."

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.9 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 16th February, 1915.

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

QUESTION—WHEAT HANDLING CHARGES.

Mr. THOMSON (without notice) asked the Premier: 1, What amount per bushel are the Millers' Association receiving for acquiring wheat from the farmers for the Foodstuff Board? 2, Is it correct that a charge of 2d. per bushel is made? If so, is it the intention of the Government to direct the Foodstuff Board to deduct that amount only from the farmers who have wheat to sell, instead of the charge of 4d. now made? 3, As the Foodstuff Board are acquiring this wheat for the benefit of the community, will he direct the Board that all charges over 2d. will be borne by the State and not by the seller of the wheat?

The PREMIER replied: 1, For acquiring and receiving in truck or lat stack, 2d. per bushel plus an additional charge for other items such as storing, handling, interest, insurance, stationery, clerical assistance, etc. 2, No, because

that is not the only charge incurred in securing this wheat as shown by answer No. 1. 3, No; the Board point out that in fixing the price they took every factor into consideration and provided and fixed 4d. per bushel as the approximate cost of acquiring, etc. If a lesser figure is to be allowed, then undoubtedly the difference between that and 4d. would be a loss to the State. Had the Board considered that 2d. or some other amount less than 4d. would have been sufficient to cover the cost of acquiring the wheat, they would have reduced the basic price—which is a generous one—accordingly. It is considered that the price now paid to farmers at country sidings is a fair one. The Government, while not desirous of making any profit from the transaction, are not prepared to suffer any loss to the general community, as the action taken is primarily in the interest of the farming community.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.

Extension of Time.

Mr. HOLMAN (Murehison) [4.35]: In the absence of the member for Canning (Mr. Robinson) I desire to report that some progress has been made by the committee. Meetings of the committee appointed by this House and of the committee appointed by another place have been held, and it is hoped that some arrangement may be arrived at which will overcome the difficulty experienced in regard to money Bills procedure. We have not yet completed our labours, and I move—

That the time for bringing up the Joint Select Committee's report be extended to Tuesday, 23rd February.

Question passed.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1914-15.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 11th February; Mr. Holman in the Chair.

Vote—*Legislative Assembly, £1,900—*agreed to.