

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 17th January, 1931.

| | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Question : Financial Emergency Bill ... | ... | ... | ... | PAGE |
| Bill : Financial Emergency, 2R | ... | ... | ... | 68 |

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

QUESTION—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY BILL.

Government Employees Benefited.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What is the highest rate of pay per annum of any police official who will, if the Financial Emergency Bill is passed, no longer be subject to the reductions of 18 per cent., 20 per cent., or 22½ per cent. of his pay as existing on 30th June, 1930? (Pay to include salary and allowances.) 2, What is the highest rate of pay per annum of other Government employees, and in what departments, who will be exempted because their pay is governed by an Arbitration Court award? 3, (a) How many Government employees, classed by the Financial Emergency Bill as "wages men," are there who will no longer be subject to the reduction of 18 per cent., 20 per cent., or 22½ per cent. of their 1930 rates of pay if the measure be passed in its present form? (b) How many Government employees, classed as "salaried officers" as distinct from "wages men," are there in each of the respective departments who will gain any measure of relief from the 18 per cent., 20 per cent., and 22½ per cent. reductions of their 1930 salaries?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1. £429 (one officer only). The reason this rate is higher than in other Government departments is because all police officers, including the chief inspector, have their salaries fixed by an award of the Court of Arbitration, and are ordinarily subject to basic wage declarations. This does not apply to officers receiving such high salaries in any other Government department. In the Bill the line of demarcation has been drawn at the point where the police officers are appointed by Executive Council. 2, Railway Department

—Goldfields, £324; elsewhere, £303. 3, (a) Exclusive of men on sustenance and part-time work, etc. Wages men previously released from the Act by reason of the reduced basic wage totalled approximately 5,500. Those to be now released total approximately 5,000. (b) Railways and Tramways, 370; other departments, 1,010.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Does the amount quoted as salaries of police officers include allowances or not?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I ask the hon. member to give notice of that question.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. M. MACFARLANE (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.36]: We have been called together for this special session to consider the Bill, which takes the place of the measure that failed to pass last session. The Government and their followers state that there is no need for emergency legislation relating to salaries and wages, and that at the general election they received a mandate from the people to alter that legislation drastically. However, before any Government could assume that they had received a mandate of that kind, one question, and one question only, should be submitted to the electors for their definite answer. The general election is too recent for hon. members not to recollect what the facts were, and what were the influences that upset the Mitchell Government. Secession was adroitly side-stepped by Labour candidates during the campaign, because of their attitude towards unification. The Mitchell Government were definitely committed to secession by reason of the fact that they had introduced the referendum Bill, and the animosity of anti-secessionists would be directed against Government candidates. Unemployment was another important consideration in the election. There was an incentive for those out of employment to displace an Administration which, they felt, had had its trial. The unemployed probably thought they could not do wrong by substituting a Labour Government for the previous Administration.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The lotteries had something to do with the change.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Those who are opposed to gambling in any form east

quite a number of votes against the Mitchell Government, at whose instance the Lotteries Act had been passed. Again, there were the newspaper cross-word puzzles, the ban on which lost the Government two seats, those of Mr. Scaddan and Mr. Mann. Such matters as these had no concern whatever with emergency legislation. Then there was the emergency tax of 4½d. in the pound, a flat rate collected at the source. That tax also had a big influence on people who had been exempt so long that they felt they should continue to be exempt. There was, too, other emergency legislation which had to be enacted to meet conditions existing at the time. Lastly there was the alleged statement of Mr. Latham, the Leader of the Country Party in another place, that if returned to office the Country Party would see to it that the Federal basic wage applied to this State.

Hon. A. Thomson: But Mr. Latham did not really make that statement.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: It was alleged that he had made it. The alleged statement, in my opinion, did more to give the present Government their majority than anything that was done by the late Government. I was in the thick of the fight in many constituencies, and I could sense the Nationalist stocks dropping during the last fortnight, owing to the activity of Labour candidates in exploiting the alleged statement in question. From that standpoint the voting had nothing whatever to do with the emergency legislation, and did not constitute a mandate to the present Government. There were also the promises made by Mr. Collier and his followers. It must be considered that in these features lies the explanation of the present Government's majority. Mr. Collier promised drastic amendment of the emergency legislation. He promised to pay the basic wage to all unemployed for three months straight out, and then to keep them on the basic wage for a further three months.

The Honorary Minister: Why do you not quote the Premier correctly?

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: That is as I read his policy speech.

The Honorary Minister: No. That is not in his policy speech.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: The Honorary Minister can deny it. I will look the matter up again. Anyhow, the sense is there if the truth is not expressed in the exact

words. The Honorary Minister will admit that.

The Honorary Minister: No, I will not.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: The Honorary Minister reminds me of the old Scotch lady who said she was open to be convinced but would like to see the person who could convince her. Taking these various matters into consideration, one cannot agree that a mandate for this Bill was given to the Government. They claim to have a mandate to alter the emergency legislation so as to protect the wage earners and others in various walks of life. To say that that is equitable is quite a different thing. Let us look at the voting itself. The mandate theory explodes when we realise that Labour secured 84,371 primary votes for 41 seats, while non-Labour secured 104,462, and that in the case of the nine non-contested seats, three of which were non-Labour, the allowance of a proportionate ratio of votes to Labour would still leave the voting for the mandate in a minority of about 16,000. To claim a mandate one must have a definite majority of the people. To contend there was no need for emergency legislation is to disagree with the economists and the Premiers who evolved the Premiers' Plan to meet the crisis. It cannot be denied there was a crisis at that time, nor that the crisis is still with us. For anyone to maintain that the fact of our having reached the limit of borrowing, and our national income in relation to expenditure having shrunk, do not constitute a state of emergency, amazes me. Even the knowledge that we have 10,000 workless people in our midst does not help to convince the Government. We are being asked not to re-enact the measure of last year, but to amend it by abolishing Part V., and thus throw an increased burden upon industry. In justification for this we are asked to accept the vote of the electors, and the statement that it was in their minds to return the Collier Government to power in view of their promise to amend the Act. Can they be considered competent guides? It seems to me there was only one objective. The attitude of the Government appears to be, if we can believe they had a mandate from the people, to restore wages and to let everything else go hang. Industry and commercial pursuits have been badly hit. The turnover has been greatly reduced. What is left is

being done on margins that do not encourage people to continue. If the amendments forecast by Mr. Baxter are not embodied in the Bill we shall be faced with the restriction, if not ruination and closing down of business, with insolvency and increased unemployment to follow. It has been hard enough to keep out Eastern States manufacturers with the preferences shown by the State basic wage as compared with the Federal, for the former represents an average additional income in the case of skilled workers of about 5s. per week. To emphasise what this means I will quote the rates existing in the other States. Here the basic wage is £3 9s. a week. The Federal basic wage is £2 19s. 8d., and in South Australia, where the situation is mostly governed by the Federal basic rate, the amount is £3 3s.. Victoria follows the Federal rate, in New South Wales it is £3 6s. and in Queensland £3 14s. If we add the proposed increase in the case of the commercial and industrial sections of the community we see what we have to face. I will now turn to the primary industries. Gold values are fictitious, and could at any time be seriously affected by circumstances and the exchange rate. Wool has had a sensational rise. I hope prices remain where they are, but it is usual in business to dread sharp or sensational rises. We all know the position of the wheat farmer. We have had to call upon the Federal Government for aid to keep him on the land. We have also passed the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act for the same purpose. We know that the price of wheat to-day is as low as it was in 1931. In the case of butter, this commodity is being sold wholesale in London at 63s. a cwt., and retailed in Lyons' establishments for about 7½d. per lb. This is the lowest price in the history of Australian or New Zealand butter exports. If we consider the cost of transporting this commodity to the Home market, we can see exactly where our dairy farmers stand. We know also that we are exporting about 50 per cent. of our production.

Hon. G. Fraser: From Western Australia?

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: No, from Australia.

Hon. G. Fraser: How much is Western Australia exporting?

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: About 48,000 cases.

Hon. G. Fraser: But we are dealing with the position in this State. How does that support your argument.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: We know the bad position in which the potato grower finds himself. I believe that the cost of digging, of bags, transportation and delivery is just about covered by what the potatoes fetch on the market. The fruitgrower is in much the same position. The market gardener has been in a bad way for the last two years, and the poultryman is no better off. Eggs can to-day be purchased for about 9d. per dozen retail, and the poultry farmer has to pay for his wheat, his transport, commissions and receive something for his labour. We can see how he stands.

Hon. C. B. Williams: On the goldfields people pay double that price for eggs.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: It is safe to say that the people to whom I have referred comprise about 75 per cent. of those engaged in primary industry. One can see what the situation means to them as well as the Government. I am sure that these people are not in a position to meet their obligations to storekeepers and tradesmen, and that they are unable to meet their obligations to the Government unless conditions improve. To tell us that the emergency conditions have passed away, and that there is no longer any need for legislation of this kind for the worker, and to ask that the burden should be carried entirely by the producer and the manufacturer, gives rise to such a serious situation that I feel that I am facing the most critical division I have ever faced in my life.

Hon. C. B. Williams: As a manufacturer or as a producer?

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: As an individual of this State.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Not as a manufacturer?

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: As a manufacturer and as an individual.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I doubt it, because you have your own methods.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Those engaged in manufacturing and commercial pursuits and in primary industries will remain badly off for a considerable time. Therefore, unless the Bill is amended, I must offer it my opposition. With regard to Government employees, if this Chamber could compromise with the Government at all, it should be on the question of equitable treatment for

all civil servants. If the Government can find £115,000 a year for distribution, there should be none of the discrimination which is now being shown in regard to the civil servants. Surely it would be possible to pay out the money on a percentage basis, starting with incomes at, say, £400 a year and working downwards.

The Honorary Minister: What would you do with those above £400 a year?

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: On the salary they are receiving they would have to wait until times had improved. I do not say that the time is ripe for the Government to pay out anything, but from the point of view of a compromise, this does seem to be something on which the Legislative Council might make common cause with the Government.

Hon. G. Fraser: You propose to carry out the Government policy, and to go a little higher.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I would not make the invidious distinctions the Government are proposing to make.

Hon. G. Fraser: Whether you make it £300 or £400 a year, the principle is the same.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Out of all this I am satisfied there is a kick coming to the Government. To whom will they look for sympathy if this proves a very hard one? The civil service journal has published a graph showing the salaries, etc., paid in the different industries in this State. On reference to that members will find that the employees of banks, insurance companies, and so forth are a long way ahead of the employees of the Government. In fact, officers of the civil service come last on the graph.

Hon. C. R. Williams: Private employees are being sacked, but not so in the case of Government employees.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: The Premier said, with reference to the balancing of the Budget, that if it meant adequately feeding the people, then the people would have to come before the balancing of the Budget.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is where the money ought to go instead of to the civil service.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: It is remarkable that after the Government had agreed with the Loan Council upon a deficit for the year of three-quarters of a

million, they had no ambition to reduce it below that. I assume the £115,000 will come out of revenue, judging from the remarks of the Honorary Minister. If the Government can find this amount of surplus revenue, surely it ought to be reflected in a reduction of the deficit. I think that people who are in employment would have no objection to the reinstatement of the old Act if they saw that the State was getting into a better and healthier financial position by a reduction of the deficit, as this would serve as a barometer of the position and indicate that the State was turning the corner. The Premier said he was prepared to put the feeding of the people before the balancing of the Budget. I therefore propose to help him in that respect by submitting an amendment to the proviso of Part II., Clause 6, Subclause (1), as follows:—

Provided further that notwithstanding anything elsewhere in this Act contained, except as to any increase in salary due to a rise in the basic wage, no officer or Government employee shall receive a salary greater than that which he received as at the 31st December, 1933, until such time as all Government employees, sustenance or relief workers, are in receipt of not less than the State basic wage.

This would enable the Government to carry out the promises contained in the policy speech of the Premier. It would also give the sustenance worker and the part-time worker encouragement, for he would know that he was being properly looked after in accordance with the promises that have been made, and that the anomaly which is apparent in the Bill with respect to the treatment of Government servants would be removed. It is alarming enough to realise that last year we had a deficit of three-quarters of a million pounds without realising also that no attempt has been made to reduce it below that figure for this year. If we are not going to attempt to balance the Budget in a reasonable and sound way, how can it be said that the corner has been turned? If we go on as we are doing to-day, I contend that in the place of a three-quarters of a million deficit, we shall finish up with one or a million and a quarter. In other words, the situation will get out of hand. The deficit appears to sit lightly on the shoulders of the Government. It has been said that the emergency Act of the last Government did

not fairly treat the worker, that it took matters out of the hands of the Arbitration Court. The other night the Honorary Minister said they stood for arbitration and all that it meant. I seem to recall having heard or read statements from members of the Labour Party indicating that arbitration had failed. An article by Mr. Hawke, M.L.A., appeared in the "Daily News" last night much to the same effect.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You do not believe in arbitration. You want the right to bargain.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I wish the hon. member would not bark so much.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I am assured of this, that during the last 12 months in those cases where relief has been asked for, it has been granted by the Arbitration Court. Opportunity was given for the employers to apply to that court. Opportunity was also given to the employees, if they considered that any particular industry had so improved that it should no longer be subject to the emergency conditions apply to the court to have the court's order reviewed. When one realises that the more direct method of Parliamentary action is being taken, then I say that is not treating the previous Government or the Financial Emergency Act itself fairly. It cannot be said that the Act did not treat the worker fairly, because Clause 15 gave both the employer and employee all the conditions that were required to meet a state of emergency. To say that we are the only Parliament in Australia that legislated against those conditions—

Hon. C. B. Williams: True!

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: —seems to be quite beside the question. Needs must when the devil drives! Commerce could not get an amelioration of conditions quickly enough to keep it going, in somewhat the same way as it was intended to keep the farmer on the land.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Poor farmer!

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: When I find that they choose now not to use the Arbitration Court, but Parliament, to try to obtain that which is wrong in principle, then it must have my opposition.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You have no chance of getting it through Parliament.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Your Government are getting it through now.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You are going to fight it and stop it.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: If I can.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Too right, you will.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I am satisfied that if something of that sort is not done, and the Government's hand is not stayed, they will have a considerably greater number of unemployed to deal with in the future.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is your idea, not mine.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I am obliged to support the second reading with a view to trying to get Mr. Baxter's proposed amendment passed, and thus give relief to the industrial community. I am opposed to the Bill as it stands. I supported the re-enactment of the previous measure, as I believed it to be fair and equitable. If the Government looked at the matter fairly, they, too, would condemn the present Bill, and re-enact the previous measure.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [5.4]: I look upon the Bill as the most important piece of legislation that has ever been presented to this Chamber, and it is presented at a time of difficulty and stress which we are all facing. I go further and say the Bill demands the presence of every member in order that the subject may be carefully considered and decided by a majority of the members. I go still further and say that holidays should have been postponed, as I hope anticipated holidays will be postponed, until this matter is dealt with. This House is a House of review, a House of equity and justice, and its members have never had a better opportunity of proving to the public of this State that they stand for the fair treatment of all. I am certain that by the time the Bill has been dealt with, this House will have established itself for many years to come.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It is the most conservative of Houses.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Labour Party at one time had a plank in its platform, the abolition of the Legislative Council. They found the plank an unpopular one, and dropped it. This Bill, by the time the House has dealt with it, will prevent the resurrection of that plank in the Labour Party's platform for many years to come.

Hon. C. B. Williams: To show the public what an expensive House it is, we have had to come back after the holidays.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I want to deal with the question of the Government's policy and to explain to members who it is that should define the policy of any party. It is the leader of the party. There are only three men in the Legislative Assembly—at one time there were two—who can define the policy of their party. They are the Premier, the Leader of the Country Party, and the Leader of the National Party.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You cannot speak for the Labour Party.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: There is an irresponsible babble from Mr. Williams' chair when members speak. I am not going to be interrupted. The House has to decide whether it will hear me or him.

Hon. C. B. Williams interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! I remind Mr. Williams that he was not subjected to interjections when he was speaking, and I hope he will extend the same consideration to other members.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I reached the point as to who should define the policy of a party. Now I ask what has been the policy of any Government during the last 15 years, except a policy of borrow and spend? The leader who made the most promises, particularly promises of increases in wages and salaries, and increase of expenditure, was the man who came back to power. That has been the policy for at least 15 years. There has been no other policy, except in matters of detail. As I say, there are only three men whom we can recognise as being able to define a policy at the present time. Were that not so, we would have had at least 50 policies from another place. As was actually the case, each man had a policy of his own to submit to the country. Some of the rank and file are forcing upon this country not Mr. Collier's policy, but the policy defined by them when they were irresponsible candidates seeking return to Parliament. Mr. Collier's policy is the policy that I look to, and no other. Even the Minister in this House yesterday referred to the policy of the supporters of the present Government. The supporters of the present Government were never pinned down to anything. They should be pinned down to the policy of the leader of the party. It is

common knowledge that Mr. Collier did not go to the country and promise the Heavens above, the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth. It is common knowledge he would not do that, because he has a sense of responsibility. He knows his job, and will do it if left alone. He refused to make irresponsible promises, yet some of the would-be shining lights would make promises, and then have the audacity to come to this House and say, "That is the policy of the Government," whereas it is their individual policy. Nobody could accept it; we would never get anywhere if we did. Mr. Collier rightly left himself free on the financial emergency legislation. He said it would require drastic amendment. Mr. Macfarlane this afternoon said that Mr. Collier said something else. I cannot remember having read it, at all events not in that light. Mr. Collier did say that the financial emergency legislation required drastic amendment. That was a very astute statement by a very astute man. It left him in the position to reduce still further, more than 22½ per cent., or to give a little back. It left him open to do exactly as he liked. Consequently, there was no definite policy with respect to the financial emergency legislation.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: I cannot imagine his making an increase.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Now we have this Bill. It is not introduced by Mr. Collier, the Premier. If members read the Bill, they will find that the Treasurer may do this or he may do that; but he is almost silent on the subject. The Bill was introduced by the Minister for Works, who may have made a promise at election time that Mr. Collier would not make. I am not accepting Mr. McCallum's policy. I am following his leader, Mr. Collier. We come now to consider the right of the Council to question anything contained in the Bill. If the preamble be looked at, we find the words, "Be it therefore enacted . . . by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council . . ." Yet we have irresponsible men asking, "What right have the Council to interfere with our policy? What right have the Council to amend this Bill?" I can understand why Mr. Collier did not introduce the Bill, why he was not prepared to bring forward a Bill providing that £100,000 should be given to one section of the community, because in his pre-election speech,

at the close of the last session of the previous Parliament, he promised when he was in the Greenough electorate supporting the Labour candidate, that he would see the wheatgrowers of this country got £100,000. At the close of the session when the Mitchell Government were in power he, on the 15th December, moved the adjournment of the House on a matter of urgency, the urgency of the position of the wheatgrowers. I think prices were better then than they are to-day. This is what Mr. Collier then said. It is his policy, not Mr. McCallum's, nor that of any of his irresponsible followers. That is why I presume the Leader of the House, whom we all know, is not waxing eloquent on this Bill. Greenough is part of his province. Mr. Collier said, on the 15th December, 1932, page 2496 of "Hansard"—

I wonder whether . . . this Government (the Mitchell Government), which was elected to restore confidence, have any real understanding or appreciation of the part that the farmers and wheatgrowers play in the national life of Australia.

He proceeded—

They cannot have any proper appreciation of the relative importance of industries within the Commonwealth. If they had, they would say, regardless almost of the financial position of the Commonwealth Treasury, that the farmers of Australia must be kept on their holdings. The national solvency depends on those primary producers being able to carry on production without any considerable diminution of their output.

Every thinking man could come to no other conclusion but that there was nothing except stark insolvency facing the Commonwealth if the primary producers were driven off their holdings because they were unable to carry on. Continuing, he said—

No sacrifice is too great in order that that should be avoided.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Thank God for "Hansard."

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The compensation offered is £115,000 for a section of the community already well paid!

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That case submitted by Mr. Collier was in association with the representatives of the Wheatgrowers' Union.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I do not care who assisted in putting it up; the statement is a good one. Mr. Collier continued—

To-day in our wheat growing areas, that all important factor in the make-up of every

man, whether a wheatgrower or in any other occupation, is almost entirely destroyed. The result is that men are disheartened, broken in spirit. . . . Even with that assistance the year's operations showed a loss to practically every farmer in the State. Now we come to this, the third year, and we have almost plumbed the depths of prices known in the history of this State, and with wheat worth about 2s. 2d. per bushel—

Wheat prices to-day are 2s. or less per bushel—

—it is admitted that the cost of growing wheat is not less than 8s. per bushel—here again for the third year our farmers are faced with an almost dead loss. No section of the community can stand up against a succession of bad years such as the farmers have experienced. So is it any wonder that they are restless, dissatisfied, losing hope and losing ambition. . . . ? There comes a time when our farmers will decline to be slaves and serfs, uncared for by other sections of the community. . . . Within measurable distance, within two years or a little over, the area under wheat will have decreased by not less than 50 per cent. I do not believe that is an exaggerated statement. I ask the people of Western Australia to picture the conditions of things in this State, with all our responsibilities and liabilities, when wheatgrowing shall have decreased to the extent of 50 per cent. . . . Is it unreasonable to say that men who labour all the year in producing an essential commodity—a commodity almost essential to life itself—should not at least have first claim upon their commodity for a fair sustenance allowance. Surely that is fair. . . . It is all very well to say we have not the money. We ought to find the money—

That is to say, Mr. Collier contended we ought to find the money for the wheatgrowers. This is Mr. Collier's policy, delivered during the course of a speech immediately before the elections. He went on to say—

I would supplement the Commonwealth grant by making available for assistance to our wheat growers the sum of £100,000. . . .

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: He has slipped a bit.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The "Hansard" report continues—

The Premier (Hon. Sir James Mitchell): You would have to get it by taxation.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, I will tell the Premier how I would get it. In common with other State Treasurers he is called upon to frame his Budget proposals on the basis of the deficit allowed him for the year.

The Premier: I did not agree to that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know; but the Loan Council fixed the deficit for each State, and ours was fixed at £763,000.

The Premier: I did not agree to that; I had to take it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that. At any rate, that is the deficit allowed for this financial year. I will tell the Premier what I would do. I would make £100,000 available to the wheatgrowers and by so doing I would increase the deficit by that amount, making it £363,000. I would then go to the Loan Council and fight them on it.

That was the policy of Mr. Collier, not that of Mr. McCallum or anyone else.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is that what he is going to do under this measure?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I will tell the House what the position is before I finish, and I will explain why the Premier is not in charge of the Bill. He wanted to carry out his promise, but he was not allowed to do so. I know Mr. Collier and I respect him. He made that statement in the Legislative Assembly in December, 1932, but Mr. Collier cannot get all his own way. We have heard a lot about apologies, but I make no apology for detaining members, because I am dealing with a policy speech by the Premier when he was Leader of the Opposition. Not only were the statements made in the Legislative Assembly, but they were repeated throughout the State in support of Labour candidates. In the course of the "Hansard" report, Mr. Collier's speech included the following—

Let the Loan Council turn the Premier down. He has an unanswerable case, and it would not be the first time the deficit agreed upon had been exceeded.

If the Mitchell Government could exceed the deficit allowed by the Loan Council to the extent of £100,000, surely Mr. Collier with all his power and his strength, backed up by the great body of opinion of men who sit behind him in another place, could get the extra £100,000, if he asked for it. However, he continued in his speech—

I would make the £100,000 available, and I would go to the Loan Council and say "I am very sorry but I have not been able to live within the amount you have allowed me. I have expended an additional £100,000, which I made available for the assistance of the wheatgrowers of Western Australia I would incur that expenditure and then throw the responsibility on to the Loan Council of dishonouring the Government's cheques. They would not dare to do so. . . . There is a way by which it can be done, although I know it involves defiance of the Loan Council. . . . We are confronted with the possibility of a real crash in Western Australia if conditions do not improve.

Conditions have not improved. That has been made clear by Mr. Baxter and Mr. Macfarlane and others who know what the position is, or think about it at all. To again quote Mr. Collier—

We are confronted with a possibility of a real crash in Western Australia if conditions do not improve, and a big factor in tiding us over our difficulties will be Government assistance to this great and important industry of wheat growing.

Where is that assistance indicated? Under the Bill, £115,000 is to be given to one section of the community, of whom all are in permanent positions.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Yes, to civil servants.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: In concluding his remarks in the Assembly, Mr. Collier said—

The Premier should see that this money is made available irrespective of what the deficit may be, and then he should fight it out with the Loan Council later on.

These extracts from Mr. Collier's speech indicate what he said in moving the adjournment of the House on a matter of urgency, immediately prior to the elections. Everyone knew it was a pre-election speech. It was quoted time after time throughout the country as indicating what Mr. Collier would do if he were returned to power. I go further and say that the speech indicates what Mr. Collier would have done had he been allowed to give effect to his policy. I know that statement was repeated all through the Greenough electorate, and it was repeated by the Premier at a big meeting at Mingenew.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: But the people did not swallow it there.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I would have swallowed it, because I know Mr. Collier and trust him. I understand that dodgers were thrown over farmers' gates bearing the words "£100,000—Policy of Incoming Government." The fact remains that that £100,000 has been lost sight of. In another place, the Bill was introduced by the Minister for Works (Hon. A. McCallum) and not by the Premier. I go further and point out that in this House the Bill was introduced by the Honorary Minister (Hon. W. H. Kitson), because we know that the Chief Secretary (Hon. J. M. Drew), who represents the province in which the statement was made, is a man of honour, and knew what promise was made in his province. Knowing Mr. Drew as we

do, we know he would not come to this Chamber and move the second reading of the Bill that does not honour the promise to provide money for the farmers, but, on the other hand, seeks to give another section of the community £115,000. Mr. Drew is not that sort of man, and he could not do it. We have to visualise the position that must have arisen.

Member: You seem to know a good deal about them.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: If Labour Ministers were all Colliers, Drews, Millingtons, Troys, and Willcocks, they would not do much harm.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: You have not left out very many.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: He left out the Honorary Minister.

The Honorary Minister: Mr. Holmes will not have the Honorary Minister at any price.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: There were a number of Labour men in the House when Mr. Collier made his statement in 1932, and many heard him make the statement throughout the country that £100,000 would be provided for the farmers. We do not know what goes on behind the closed doors of the caucus room, but we can visualise what happened. We can conceive the following being said, "You promised you would find £100,000 for the farmers, but the farmers are not going to get it. We are going to get it all." This is how the position appears to me. I can conceive the Premier saying, "Very well, if you want that. I am not going to put up the Bill; someone else can do so." We have heard something said about retiring members of the Legislative Council having no right to vote on this Bill. When it comes to a decision as to what the State requires and what ought to be done, no man is more capable of arriving at a wise or a better decision than the present Premier, but the trouble is that he is not allowed to do what he thinks best. That is the whole trouble. As to the duty of retiring members in relation to the Bill before the House, I was returned for the fifth time, having been four times unopposed, just about the time the present Government took office, or a little while before that. I was returned pledged to continue in the same old way and to act as I had for the previous fifteen years. I was to endeavour to

save the State from financial disaster. I presume I have a right to speak on the Bill and to vote on it, having been returned to the Council in the manner I have indicated. In any case, those members who are going up for re-election this year or are about to retire, were properly elected, and have to carry out their task until others are chosen to take their places. If the Government desired a reflection of public opinion, the best way for them would have been to put up a nominee in connection with the election in the South-West Province that is proceeding now. That would have been a trial of strength, but the Government did not dare to do it.

Hon. G. Fraser: They may try in your province instead.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You would meet your Waterloo there. But what about the Leader of the Nationalist Party and the Leader of the Country Party contending that we had no right to interfere with this legislation?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Have I the floor, or have I not? Very important principles are involved in the Bill. One is that it provides, as I understand it, for an expenditure of £90,000 this financial year for a section of the community already in permanent employment.

The Honorary Minister: I wonder how many more times you will have to be corrected on your figures?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I do not think there is any doubt about £30,000 having been expended during the last half year, and another £60,000 is to be paid out if the Bill be agreed to. That means £90,000 for this year and £115,000 or £120,000 for the next financial year.

The Honorary Minister: You ought to reconsider the matter, and get your figures accurate.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: As I understand them, those were the figures given to members.

The Honorary Minister: Not by me. I have used one set of figures all through.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: According to my calculations, £60,000 would represent the expenditure in the second half of this year. I think the Minister yesterday corrected an hon. member and said, "Let us deal with this financial year." I am dealing with the financial year ending 30th June next, and I am taking the figures of approximately £60,000.

Is that money available, and can we afford to provide it? If so, surely the only equitable distribution must be to give it back on a pro rata basis to those from whom it has been taken. They all suffered for the common cause; they all agreed to the deductions for the common cause, and if we are in a position to give back £60,000, common sense demands that each and every person from whom the money was taken should have a quota returned. If money is to be refunded, all must be treated alike. I think I am correctly advised—to use the words of Mr. Piesse, the information is straight from the horse's mouth—that there are 1,490 civil servants and that 329 will receive an average of £4 per annum, which gives us a total of £1,300. The teachers will get approximately £7,000 for the year, or £3,500 for the half year. The railway officers will receive £5,000 for the year, or £2,500 for the half year. These figures make up a total of £7,300 for distribution amongst civil servants, teachers and railway officers. The yearly basis has been given us as £90,000. What, then, becomes of the other £82,000 odd? It will go back to the wages men and the country is to be saddled with that while the wheatgrowers starve. The wages men are getting $11\frac{1}{2}$ times as much increase as the salaried men. Is there any justice in that? Is there any need to remind members that the country is looking to this Chamber, as it never looked to it before, to see that justice is done. We have heard about equal sacrifices. Surely it is right and fair to say that equal refunds should be made, that is, if any refunds at all are to be made. The country will be annoyed, there is no doubt about that, if this House falls down on its job. I do not for one moment think it will. The alternative is to throw out the Bill, and although it may cost £65,000 for the half year to do so, it might be worth that sum of money to prove to the people of the country the fallacy of what the so-called policy-makers preach six days a week, that the only solution of our trouble is, give everything back, return to everybody their spending power, never mind where it comes from, and so bring about a state of prosperity. That is what the wrecking of the Bill will do. It might cost the State for the half year £65,000, but it might be worth the money to prove the fallacy of the doctrine preached from one end of the country to the other. That is the result of leaving

others to think for them. If the course I suggest be adopted, the fallacy of it all will be brought home to those who will not think for themselves. We have a Government that has a monopoly of everything. They can fix railway freights, harbour charges and even impose surcharges. They have control of everything that brings them in revenue, and yet they can only give back a small sum to one section of their employees, and under the Bill they ask the employers of the State to give everybody the full rates of pay existing before the crisis and continue to meet competition from elsewhere.

Hon. G. Fraser interjected.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The hon. member comes from Fremantle and I hope we shall hear from him in due course, not now. The only Government supporter who has so far spoken to the Government's proposals is Mr. Williams and he said he intended to vote for the Bill because he had to. Let us see what Mr. McCallum had to say when he introduced the Bill in another place. Mr. McCallum is one of those who would give back everything to reach a state of prosperity, though he will not give the wages to the men that Parliament says must be given. Private employers on every pay day are paying the full amount that was paid before the deductions were made, but the Labour Government, blacklegging on their own men, are withholding the payments that are justly due to their employees. The Bill provides that the employers, not only now, but afterwards, shall pay everything without any deductions. Could anything be more illogical? Is it any wonder that Mr. Collier did not father the Bill in another place? Mr. McCallum, in introducing the Bill, said—

Not only has the Premiers' Plan paralysed the spending power of the poor people, but it has resulted in the stagnation of the commerce and trade of Australia. In our judgment there is no hope of the trade and commerce of this country reviving until such time as the people have had returned to them their purchasing power.

This Bill gave the Government the opportunity, when we refused to accept it, to give back the purchasing power, irrespective of where it was to come from, but they set up a howl in the "Worker" newspaper, which is the mouthpiece of the present Government and supports the policy of increased spending power. That newspaper printed in big headlines that the Legislative Council was plunging the State into financial chaos. But

the Legislative Council did exactly what had to be done to save the situation. So much for misleading the public. Surely the public will have their eyes opened to the position before this Chamber has finished with it. Mr. Williams delivered the most able speech he has made for years past in which he told us that the solution of the difficulty was to give everybody back their spending power. He quoted Kalgoorlie and, incidentally, that hon. member cannot see outside the boundaries of Kalgoorlie, where the gold which is being mined is about 100 per cent. higher in price than it was before the depression set in.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: You can dig it up in the footpaths there.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It does not matter where it comes from. The mine managers are anxious to get the gold out of the ground at any price, and they have done more to create dissatisfaction in this State than has any other section of the community by disobeying the award of the Arbitration Court. All they desire to do is to get the gold out of the ground while the going is good and while the price is high. If they gave consideration to the men who become afflicted through working underground, I would not mind so much, but a big proportion of those men are pushed on to the State, and the State will be responsible for their welfare when the mines are worked out, as they will be, some day. At the same time I hope that that day is a long way off. We must remember also that every ounce of gold taken out of the ground is an ounce less to be dug out, whereas, with regard to wheat growing, every time you tickle the soil with a hoe, you reap a harvest.

Hon. R. G. Moore: But without any profit just now.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: That is the difference between the mining for gold and production from the soil. I know it hurts the Kalgoorlie people to refer to the subject in this way.

Hon. R. G. Moore: The goldfields have done a great deal for the State.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes, but we provided the goldfields with water at a cost of £100,000 a year. If the mining companies looked after their employees, I would not mind; but the industry has done more to upset the labour position in the State than any other that I know of. If it were to cost the Government another £65,000 to pay

everyone the full rate, we would demonstrate the fallacy of increasing the spending power irrespective of where the money came from. The only place from which it could come would be the Loan Council and it would be Mr. Collier's job, although he did not introduce the Bill, to go to the Loan Council and tell them that he wanted another £65,000 because he refused to listen to the reasonable proposals of the Legislative Council of this State. That also might have a good effect. Monopolies in competition with private traders have an agreed deficit of £750,000 to the 30th June, 1934; and for the half-year ended on the 31st December, 1933, the deficit is £800,000. Half of the year is gone, and we are £50,000 over the agreed deficit for the year; and yet we are told that £90,000 is available for the purposes of the Bill. It is a marvellous piece of finance, if we can believe it. Take the Railway Department. The loss for the last half-year amounts to £200,000. There are about 25 million pounds invested in our railways, and on this amount we pay interest. Private enterprise has nearly run the railways off the track. Therefore we cannot expect too much assistance from the Railway Department. There are ten millions of money invested in group settlement. The Treasury has to pay four per cent. on that money. If the interest was paid by the group settlers, it would mean £400,000 a year coming in. But I have it on the best of authority that the utmost the Government have been able to squeeze out of the groupies last year is, not £400,000, but a paltry £4,000. We cannot throw away hundreds of thousands of pounds. Some hon. members may not like my saying uncomplimentary things about Mr. Collier, but I give credit where credit is due.

The Honorary Minister: You are quite impartial.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: What concerns me is the difference between £4,000 and £400,000. Does the Treasurer debit up the £400,000 to the groupies and take credit for the amount in the Treasury books?

Hon. A. Thomson: That has been done in the past.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It is an easy matter to improve one's position by saying that one has interest owing to the extent of £396,000. The crash will come when we reach the dead-end and the £396,000 per annum is not forthcoming. I think the interest has been a book entry. Speaking from memory,

we have had a special grant from the Imperial Government which was used to wipe off a lot of the interest that had been debited up; but who is going to wipe off this annual charge of £396,000 when the general square-up comes? We have the Agricultural Bank disclosures going on, and there has been a collapse of our primary producers. Wool is the one bright spot on the producing horizon. I have my own idea about wool, though I do not say it is correct. Still, I know what happened before, and what is likely to happen again. Wool went down and down and down until it was so cheap that the consumption of wool went up. Naturally so, because there was nothing to compete with it at the price. The people in the wool trade at the other end of the world found themselves, at the close of the previous season, with no stocks in reserve. My opinion is that they are not going to be caught twice. They are going in now and buying up and buying up wool to create a reserve. When they have created that reserve, their turn will come again as it came before, and they will sit back until they can buy at their own price. There is no justification, I contend, for the big increase in the price of wool. It has been said that there are wars and rumours of wars, and that this accounts for the increase. My honest opinion is that that is the game which is being played. The buyers of wool are not there for the good of their health, but to make money. Next there is the question of £118,000 surplus sinking fund. It has been said—I hope it is not true—that the Treasurer will annex that amount and take it into revenue if he can. There is some indication that Canberra is not likely to part with the amount without some thought. It is suggested that that £118,000 of accumulated sinking fund might be used to help to provide for the commitments under the Bill. In view of what is transpiring, I hope that will never happen. Under the Financial Agreement a special sinking fund of four per cent. per annum must be provided to liquidate deficits—a very wise provision, because there is a liability and no asset. According to my calculations, at the 30th June next we shall have dodged that sinking fund to the extent of £680,000. This year's quota of sinking fund is £220,000. I do not think any Treasurer would, in such circumstances, be guilty of taking the £118,000 accumulated in the sinking fund for a debt of 40 years back. The late

Lord Forrest made provision for that sinking fund. The policy of the country then was to provide a sinking fund for every loan. Once we got away from that principle we began to get into trouble. Having got away from the Financial Agreement, we are getting further and further into trouble; and where it will all end I do not know.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It will end in unification.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The result of the increase in wages proposed by the Bill, in omitting Part V., will be such as to go a long way to prevent us from starting secondary industries in Western Australia. A great battle is being put up, under the leadership of Mr. Kenneally, for local production, which according to that gentleman, is to be the salvation of this country. Just as the movement, having been handled pretty well, is going on satisfactorily, the Government come along with a proposal to increase the wages of the skilled tradesmen of this country to a much higher rate than the present, and much above the rate paid in the Eastern States. How this Bill is to be synchronised with Mr. Kenneally's statements I do not know. The establishment of secondary industries and local production here do not synchronise with increases in wages over and above those ruling in any other part of Australia. There is another statement which will not synchronise. In introducing the Bill Mr. McCallum said that the Government had the £100,000 required. It was their job to find it. That was another insult to Parliament. Mr. McCallum said the Government had the money and were going to spend it in this way. On the same day, or the day after, Mr. Kenneally, who is Minister for Employment, told the unemployed that he had come to the end of his financial tether, that he had no more money to spend. Yet the Minister for Works declares, "We have £100,000 available, and we are going to spend it in such a way that the man out of employment will not get any of it." The irony of the thing is that private employers are to be penalised with additional payments while the Government, who are not going to be penalised, will not be paying what they are entitled to pay. As regards the distribution of the money, I want to know before the Bill passes—and I hope other members will join me in trying to get

the information—how many persons have participated in the rebates already made, and who those persons are, and what amounts they have had refunded to them. We have heard Mr. McCallum on the subject of interference with the Arbitration Court. In introducing last session's Bill he said—

We have set up a tribunal for that purpose, and have clothed it with authority to examine and obtain evidence, and to canvass all the circumstances surrounding the subject. How are we equipped to deal with such a matter? What information have we? We are totally unfitted for such a task. To bring such questions into the political arena, especially in industrial areas, would, as I and other members said when sitting opposite, introduce into the politics of this country an element that would be degrading in the extreme.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: The Minister did not say that in connection with long service leave for the Railway Department.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: And the Government are in competition with private enterprise.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: That is Mr. McCallum on interference with arbitration awards. Yet I am told that money has already been distributed under this scheme, advantage being taken of a provision in the Act for correcting anomalies—not correcting awards of the Arbitration Court, but correcting anomalies. A certain amount of money has been given back behind the Arbitration Court. Yet we have the Minister in charge of the Bill saying, "What do we know about it? It is the Arbitration Court's job. It is repulsive to me to have anything to do with it." Nevertheless, this would appear to have been done under the lap. So much for non-interference with the Arbitration Court. I should like to know how many employees will participate in the £60,000 to be distributed during the half-year. I should like to know to what amount the employees will participate. Surely we are entitled to know whether justice is being done or not! I should like to know whether awards made by the court and awards amended by the court—the court has the right to amend awards on evidence submitted to it—have been altered under the emergency legislation. That information we are entitled to have, and I hope it will be supplied. Apart from the decisions of the court, agreements are made and registered with the court, and we are entitled to know whether any departure has been made from those agreements. Some-

body referred to the remarks of the Minister as sob-stuff. He said it was repulsive to be asked to do certain things. When we find that apparently those things have been done, what are we inclined to think? We are inclined to think that not only will the Government not tell us where the money is to come from, but where it has gone or where it is going. When we passed the financial emergency tax legislation increasing the rate of tax from 4d. to 9d. in the pound, we were told that every penny was required in order to keep within the amount of the deficit agreed upon. We were not told anything about a sum of money proposed to be restored to a section of Government employees, not a word.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: The Honorary Minister said the Premier had allowed for it.

Hon. A. Thomson: You will not find any reference to it in the Estimates.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: We have had the financial statement before us and it contained no such reference that I could find. Still, we know what the public are thinking. A maid in my home, certainly Scotch, said to me this morning, "Mr. Holmes, are we still paying the financial emergency tax?" I replied, "Yes." She said, "I thought it had gone by the board." I replied, "No, it has not gone by the board. The Labour Government—I emphasised the Labour Government—imposed that tax upon you and now they are proposing to give £100,000 back to certain Government servants who are in comfortable jobs." There is one convert, I hope. While the Bill proposes to give money back to a favoured section, it will become necessary, before we have finished, again to provide for reduced interest rates—interest on which many widows and orphans are living. We have reduced rents and we continue to reduce them, and that formed no part of the Premiers' Plan. I understand Western Australia was the only State that did reduce rents. We have, by legislation, prevented the collection of rents, and old people who had nothing but rents to live upon are unable to get their money and are on the verge of starvation.

Hon. A. Thomson: And they cannot get the old age pension.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: They cannot get the old age pension because they have property, and they cannot collect the rents for their property. We recently passed the Purchasers' Protection Bill. All such people are

being penalised as if there had been no improvement in conditions. Yet this Bill, introduced at the eleventh hour, provides for the distribution of money amongst a section of Government servants. Could anything be more iniquitous, could anything be more disgusting than such a proposal? One thing that has happened is rather serious. Judges and Ministers were not included with the ordinary member of Parliament for the salary reduction; they were provided for under a special Act, by which judges and Ministers' salaries were reduced 22½ per cent.

Hon. E. H. Harris: It did not reduce their salary as members but only the Ministerial allowance.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Ministerial allowance was reduced by 22½ per cent. Evidently it was felt that the full payment should not be made, and a Bill providing for the reduction was submitted to us. We accepted the measure as their estimate of their own worth, and passed it. One important point I wish to stress is that affecting pensions. There are a number of people in this State who, 40 years ago, worked as teachers, and in similar capacities, for the paltry Government salaries paid in those days. Some of them were drawing pensions of £15 a year and the amount has been reduced to £12. This Bill provides that such pensions shall be adjusted by executive act. I said, by way of interjection, the other day—and I repeat it now—that we should not leave those old and faithful servants at the whim of any Government, be it Labour, Nationalist or Country Party. We should stipulate in this Bill what the percentage is to be, and not leave it to any Government, friend or foe, to make whatever revision they choose. I regard that point as most important; I go further and say that I consider pensions should never have been interfered with. Men and women have done their jobs and given their lives to the service of this country, and after they retired on a pension on which they could just exist—a lot of them could not exist on it—the amount was cut down. If there is to be any restoration of those cuts, it should be done by Act of Parliament and not by Ministerial act. I should like to know what the position will be regarding State trading concerns. We have State sawmills operating in competition with firms like Millars. I understand that if the alteration of wages occurs, some of the big sawmills will have to pay an additional

£2,000 a year in wages. I should like to know whether the employees of the State sawmills, being Government employees, will receive a lower rate of pay than will employees of other timber concerns.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Would theirs be skilled labour?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: There is a lot of skilled labour amongst sawmill employees. I should like to hear from Mr. Gray and Mr. Fraser something about the State Shipping Service. Will employees of that service be affected, and will the freights charged to North-West ports be affected? Those members represent the West Province, which includes the port of Fremantle, and surely it is not too much to ask them for their views on the Bill and its effect on the State Shipping Service, on which we are already losing a lot of money every year.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Do they know anything about it?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: They should know that. If they do not know, it is probably their misfortune and not their fault. The Wyndham Meat Works employ a body of men under conditions the like of which are not granted by any meat works in the world. There is a wonderful job in which fathers tell their sons and sons tell their sons to look out for the job. The growers this season received £1 13s. 6d. per head for their cattle treated at the Wyndham Meat Works, and it is estimated that when the meat is sold they will get £2 15s. per head. I am told by a man intimately interested in the cattle trade that if similar conditions apply next year, and Part V. of the Act be not re-enacted, it will make a difference of 10s. per head, so that growers will get £2 5s. next year instead of £2 15s.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: For three or four-year old cattle.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The cattle growers of the North, burdened with all the difficulties with which they have to contend, have to sell against growers in the Eastern States, and no slaughtering establishment in the Eastern States pays anything like the wages paid by the Wyndham Meat Works. In calculating the wages paid to the Wyndham Meat Works employees, we have to include their fares from Fremantle to Wyndham and back, and payment from the time the men leave Fremantle until they return. I do not propose to detain the House any longer, beyond em-

phasising that I do not care whether we have £1,000 or £100,000 to restore to employees, we have to restore it on a pro rata basis to the people from whom it was taken.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: In giving money back to the pensioners, we must do it by Act of Parliament and not by Ministerial act. I hope we shall be given more information before the Bill reaches the Committee stage. I trust that the Bill will be amended considerably in Committee. With that object in view, I shall support the second reading.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [7.30]: The importance of this Bill, it will be conceded, demands that some notice should be taken of certain observations made by the Honorary Minister when introducing it. In submitting the measure he stressed the fact that the Government were merely giving effect to their announced policy. This policy, whatever it may be construed to mean, apparently consisted of certain statements or promises made by the Premier and the supporters of the present Government during the last election.

Hon. C. B. Williams: And which helped them back into power.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The question is how and in what way they were really helped back into power. Mr. Macfarlane, I think, showed clearly how it was that the Government got back into power. I doubt very much whether those promises actually got them back. I am inclined to think that the governing factor in securing their return to power was the set of circumstances referred to by Mr. Macfarlane. We have learned in the course of our experience, and no doubt the public have also learned, that at general elections all sorts of statements and promise are made. It is also a fact that we have learned from experience that many of these statements and promises often remain unfulfilled. The Honorary Minister also declared that his Government had a mandate from the people to introduce this Bill. I should like to know what that mandate consisted of.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You are a lawyer and you ought to know. You should be able to interpret it correctly.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not admit that the Government obtained any mandate to call upon this House to pass any legislation they may like to introduce. I think every member of this House received a mandate from his electors when he was returned.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Some of them who voted for this measure two years ago were defeated.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The fact remains that members of this House did receive a mandate when they were elected. The mandate was to support legislation and measures which they, the members returned, were of opinion would be in the best interests of the people of the State and of its progress.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Let us stick to our mandate.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is the mandate we here received. I adhere to the mandate and I believe every member of this House will do the same.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: As a rule it is found that the policy of the Government is outlined in a more or less distinct form in the Governor's speech on the occasion of the opening of the first Parliament following the return of the new Government. I have looked up the last Speech. I find that instead of any suggestion being made therein that it was the intention of the Government to bring down legislation of this nature, the only reference to be found is in almost the last line of the last paragraph of the Speech, dealing with legislation. On that point the Speech says—

You will be asked to give consideration to measures dealing with Land Act Consolidation, Mine Workers' Relief Act Amendment, an amendment to the Mining Act relating to tributaries, the Yuna-Balla-Dartmoor railway construction, Aborigines, Emergency legislation.

These are the only words in the whole of the Speech consisting of five pages in which any reference is made to emergency legislation.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Do you suggest it should have been made any longer?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The point I wish to make is that no member could have taken those two words "emergency legislation" to mean anything more than that it was the intention of the Government to continue the emergency statutes then existing.

Hon. C. B. Williams: They would never have been elected if they had suggested that.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Every kind of emergency legislation, with the exception of this particular Bill, has been continued.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The Government have improved on this one.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: If the Government had had it in mind to introduce legislation to amend the Financial Emergency Act they certainly would have featured it in the Speech, as they featured other items. There was one item which was featured, and very definitely featured in the Speech, namely that relating to unemployment. It is as follows:—

My Ministers have been very concerned regarding prevailing unemployment. Every effort is being made to assist those unfortunate people unable to secure work. Western Australia has this year been allocated from loan money a slightly larger amount than last year, and every penny available will be devoted towards providing employment upon constructive work. So seriously do my Advisers regard the position that one Minister has been appointed to attend exclusively to employment and the problems associated with it.

The Government were right in viewing that matter seriously, and I applaud them for so doing. Their predecessors also viewed the matter in a serious light and endeavoured to do their best to relieve the condition of affairs. Other speakers have referred to unemployment. They did so in connection with the allocation of moneys, which it is proposed to dispose of in a way altogether different from what is set out here. I suggest to the Government that in view of the serious position outlined in that Speech they might reasonably have been expected to devote some part of this £115,000, which they say they have available to towards relief of unemployment. I will deal with that matter more extensively at a later stage, and will suggest my own views regarding the application of that money, if the Government have it available. When I observed the manner in which unemployment was emphasised in the Speech at the opening of the last session of Parliament, I felt that at least some suggestion would have been made by the Honorary Minister as to how this money could be used to relieve that situation. Mr. Thomson pointed out that 737 men could be taken off the sustenance roll, and be given a full wage for the whole year out of this sum of £115,000.

Hon. A. Thomson: £3 per week.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is a suggestion worthy of the utmost consideration by the Government. We have been told that the men on sustenance have been reduced in number from 17,000 to between 2,600 and 3,000 in the last 18 months. No doubt this reduction has been made by reason of men being transferred to certain works which are being constructed out of loan moneys.

The Honorary Minister: And to which many members objected.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: So long as loan moneys are used for reproductive works I do not think many members will object. Members have endeavoured to recommend to the Government the wisdom of using loan moneys for reproductive works, so that the money at least would be interest-earning and thus help to relieve the Government from the very serious position in which they are financially. Another item referred to in the Governor's Speech is the effort that is being made to reduce interest on loans. Every Government has endeavoured to accomplish that purpose. One is very glad to see that Mr. Bruce's efforts in London have been attended with so much success and that such a large sum of money has been converted at a very much lower rate of interest that was paid previously. But while these particular items are featured, the matter of emergency legislation, a most important matter with which we are asked to deal, is left almost in the background. The Honorary Minister also said that he considered the action of this House in amending the Bill which was presented here last session in the manner in which we did amend it was equivalent to dictating to the Government upon its policy. I dispute that. I say this House has never dictated any policy to any Government, whether Liberal or Labour. All this House has done has been to exercise its inherent right to amend or reject a Bill. This House has that right and it would be recreant in its duty if it failed to exercise its inherent privileges. The Bill which was presented here last session was not rejected by this House. It was amended to such an extent that it was left merely a continuance measure, which the Government refused to accept. Unfortunately, the conference failed to arrive at any mutual understanding or compromise. I want to make it plain, however, that there was no rejection of the Bill. This

House simply did what it considered to be its duty in view of the economic conditions, which I claim are still existing, and said, "Let this Bill be continued." In doing so, this House was doing no more than giving effect to that which they contemplated and believed to be the purpose outlined in the Governor's Speech at the opening of Parliament. We also continued the various other emergency Acts which were in force, and I venture to say the wisest course for the Government to have pursued in regard to this Bill was to deal with it in the same way. It is surely not contended by the Government that this House exists merely to endorse the policy of a Government. Indeed, if that were the contention, then we would find this House was neither more nor less than what might be termed a rubber stamp.

Hon. A. Thomson: There would be no need for the House.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is so. There would then be reason for the public to say, "Why have a Legislative Council if that is all it does?" I contend the public believe the Legislative Council is the bulwark of legislation in this State. They believe in the Legislative Council and consider it is trying to frame legislation in the best interests of the people of the State and for the success and prosperity of the State. Information was sought from the Honorary Minister as to the source of the £110,000 or £115,000 that might be required to carry out the object of the Government in introducing the Bill. The Minister, as on the last occasion, has given the same answer. He told us the money will come from the same source as that from which it always comes.

The Honorary Minister: Is there anything wrong with that?

Hon. A. Thomson: It is indefinite.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is extremely indefinite. It is indefinite in the light of our financial position as disclosed by the accounts which have been printed and circulated. It is inadequate also when one recalls what was explained by Mr. Holmes in his excellent speech delivered just before I rose. It is also inadequate when we remember that at present we have a deficit of over £800,000, and a budgeted deficit at the end of the financial year of £750,000. It was the duty of the Minister to furnish some undoubted evidence to this House of how the money would be made available. It is not so long

ago since a deputation—I think from the Teachers' Association—waited on the Premier. Mr. McCallum was present on that occasion. The Premier pointed out that the Act would require to be re-enacted; it was a question as to how far it could be modified. As far as he was concerned, he was willing enough to repeal the 1931 Act, but money was the trouble. The finances compelled the re-enactment of the measure. It was useless trying to blink facts. I am not reading the whole of the report I have here, but merely the parts I have marked. The Treasurer found it impossible to do without the Act; £250,000 was involved and he had just told the previous deputation he could not repeal it. It was a question of how to relieve the burden of those least able to bear it.

The Honorary Minister: What is wrong with that? Is it not in accordance with what I have already told the House?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: This was after the election.

The Honorary Minister: It confirms my statement.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The Premier then referred to the £90,000 which was lost by reason of the delay in the passing of the emergency tax Act. The Government were given, as has already been explained, an increase in the tax up to 9d. and the Premier, in his office as Treasurer, explained that he could not do without the 9d. In the light of all those circumstances, surely some explanation should be given to us of how the Government are going to find the money necessary to carry out the proposals which they have embodied in this Bill. From outside sources one gathers that even private industry will be seriously affected by this proposed legislation. In the light of these facts, and the continued absence of information from the Government, I find it rather difficult to follow their proposals. Indeed, I find it difficult to decide otherwise than as I did previously. The fact that the Federal Government recently extended some relief to the members of their civil service may perhaps have induced the Government to bring forward this legislation; but, if so, whatever views one may entertain with regard to the action of the Federal Government, it is no justification for the Government attempting to follow in their footsteps until such time as the financial position of the State is at least equal to that of the

Federal Government. I would remind the Honorary Minister that the Federal Government did not attempt to extend relief to their civil service until they had an ample surplus in the Treasury. We have a very large deficit and the likelihood of a larger one by the end of June next. Therefore, I contend that until we reach the stage of at least balancing our Budget, the Government are not justified in submitting their present proposals. But if the Government can find the necessary money, and can meet their obligations, then I venture to think there are other more equitable and useful ways of disposing of the £110,000 or £115,000 than that which has been proposed. What Mr. Holmes suggested is what I would adopt as a first suggestion to the Government. There was a common sacrifice, as we know, by the introduction of the original Financial Emergency Act. That was referred to by Mr. Thomson or Mr. Macfarlane. It was referred to in the Preamble to the Act, and it meant that people were called upon to make a common sacrifice. In those circumstances, in view of the same Preamble to this Bill, if any relief is to be given, there should be equality in that respect as well. If that were done, it would overcome the widespread discontent that has been evidenced in the columns of the Press, in which it was indicated that a very large section of the civil servants will receive no benefit at all. I have endeavoured to get some information regarding the position of permanent civil servants, and I find, on perusing the Public Service List for 1933, that there are 1,490 permanent civil servants. Of that number, about 315 in the Metropolitan and South-Western Land Divisions will benefit under the legislation. The amount of relief they will secure totals £2,298 per annum out of the £110,000 or £115,000 dealt with in the Bill. In the other land divisions of the State, 14 officers only will benefit, and the assistance rendered them will amount to £338. It will be seen, therefore, that the relief to be accorded to permanent civil servants throughout the State will amount to only £2,636. I believe that the teachers and railway officers will receive something like £12,000, so that, in round figures, the total benefit to be derived by the permanent civil servants, teachers and railway officers will amount to less than £15,000. All the rest of the aggregate sum covered by the

Bill will obviously be used in assistance rendered to wages men. The discontent expressed by such a large body of permanent public servants can be realised when it is appreciated that they will receive absolutely no benefit whatever, although they participated in the common sacrifice. Such a position is absolutely unfair.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: In introducing such a Bill, the Government should have evidenced at least some sense of equity. The Bill is lacking in the extreme in that respect. The Honorary Minister indicated that the total amount that would be required if the whole of this part of the Act dealing with the salaries of civil servants were repealed, would amount to £350,000. But at the deputation from the teachers, to which I referred earlier, the Premier and the Minister for Works pointed out that the total amount required would be £250,000. There is a big discrepancy between £250,000 and £350,000, and I would like the Honorary Minister to explain the disparity.

The Honorary Minister: Had you followed my remarks more closely you would have had the explanation.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I thought that was what the Minister said.

The Honorary Minister: I did not say anything of the kind.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: You mentioned £350,000.

The Honorary Minister: I said the loss of the Bill would mean that.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I take it that, if the Bill is lost, the Honorary Minister means that £350,000 will be involved, not only in respect of the civil servants, but of the others as well.

The Honorary Minister: Yes, in respect of every section affected by the Bill.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I am obliged to the Honorary Minister for his explanation, and I shall appreciate anything else he may desire to add. I have mentioned the equitable distribution of the money as one way of dealing with the difficulty. There is a second method of application that could be resorted to, if it could be adopted without embarrassing the financial position. It could be distributed either among the unemployed or in the relief of primary producers, who are in a desperate position. That is a suggestion worthy of consideration by the

Government. As pointed out by Mr. Holmes when he read extracts from the speech delivered in December, 1932, by Mr. Collier when Leader of the Opposition, if the position of the primary producers was bad then, it is much worse to-day. I extend my congratulations to the Minister for Employment upon his efforts to secure relief for the unemployed—I know he is earnest regarding the work he desires to do—but I wish to mention an instance that was brought under my notice last week regarding the regulations governing the administration of sustenance relief. If a man should happen to be fortunate enough to secure employment at any time enabling him to earn a certain amount, then he is supposed to work off the amount involved on a prescribed basis before he can receive sustenance.

Hon. A. Thomson: In effect, he has to become broke again before he can get any sustenance relief.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The man I am referring to had an opportunity to earn between £28 and £30 spread over a period. The work was in the country. His wife and two children were in the metropolitan area and they had hardly a stick of furniture in the house. He sent every penny he could earn to his wife. Out of that money, after paying for food and clothing for the children and herself, she spent the few shillings that she had left, on a few articles of furniture. The result was that when the poor man returned to town, he found that all the money had been spent. He applied for sustenance relief, but found that under the regulations it was impossible for him to secure any assistance until a certain period had elapsed. I think he could not revert to sustenance relief until late in February. In the meantime, that man and his family have to starve. The position is serious and requires review. If the Government have £110,000 or £115,000 let them—

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Give it to the intermittent workers.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The Government can well adopt another system of distribution. Instead of granting some of that money to men who are already in receipt of full wages or salaries, should not those who are starving and need help be entitled to that assistance? I believe the Minister for Employment is doing his best to meet a very serious situation.

The Honorary Minister: Have you referred the case you mentioned to the Minister for Employment?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No, I have not had an opportunity to do so yet.

The Honorary Minister: You are a bit slow. You have known of the facts for a week.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I have not had the particulars for a week.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Similar instances exist all over the State.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: And the Honorary Minister knows of them, too.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I have not yet had an opportunity to bring the matter before the notice of the Minister.

The Honorary Minister: I think you have neglected your duty in not bringing it before the notice of the Minister before this.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I have not neglected my duty. I learned the facts during the week-end and I was told that the man had made application for relief and had been informed that under the regulations he could not possibly secure sustenance relief.

Hon. E. H. Gray: And it has taken you five days to mention the matter at all.

The Honorary Minister: These people are starving and the hon. member has not done anything for five days. He could have had the matter attended to in five minutes, had he chosen to do so.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: As a matter of fact, I put the man in the way of securing some help.

The Honorary Minister: It was your duty to take the case up with the department.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Knowing Mr. Nicholson as well as we do, we know that he gave the unfortunate people some assistance himself.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Well, that is what I did. I have mentioned two ways by which this money could be better dealt with, and I have a third suggestion to make, which is to apply the money towards the assistance of the youth of the State.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There are hundreds of youths and young women who are bereft of opportunities to earn a livelihood because of the sad state of industry and the serious economic depression that exists. I compliment all those connected with various voluntary associations endeavouring to find employment for our young people.

But if we have £110,000 or £115,000 to spend, surely the claims of youth should receive consideration. These are suggestions which I make in case the Government can provide the money without embarrassing their position. In that event I think they could utilise the money to much better effect if they applied it in the directions I have indicated. Now I come to the question of Part V. of the original Act, which part has been omitted from the Bill. I wish to remind hon. members of the position under our State Arbitration Act. Under Section 121 of that Act the Arbitration Court is concerned merely with the providing of a living wage for the worker, and not concerned with the economic condition of the State or the ability of the industry to pay such a wage. The court looks at the matter from one standpoint alone. When the amendment of the Arbitration Act was made in 1925 for the fixing of the basic wage, the court fixed an arbitrary figure, and put a loading on that of about 7s. 6d. per week. They fixed it on the basis of the rate of wages prevailing at that date, away back in 1925 or 1926. Since that time, as we all know, wages have fallen enormously; and the court has refused to take into consideration the general fall, but has fixed the basic wage on that same arbitrary figure modified only from time to time according to the index figures produced when the basic wage is decided each year.

The Honorary Minister: You know that is in accordance with the Act, do you not?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is in accordance with the Act. The Arbitration Court has stated that it will not depart from that course until the Arbitration Act is altered. There is no possibility of the Arbitration Act being altered at present—absolutely none.

The Honorary Minister: Do you argue that the basic wage in this State is too high?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Yes, I am going to suggest that. As has been mentioned by previous speakers, and as we all know, the basic wage of Western Australia is fixed on a higher basis than that prevailing in the Eastern States.

The Honorary Minister: In some parts of the Eastern States.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: In most parts. It is based, as we are aware, on the Harvester judgment—the man, wife, and three children. Ours is fixed on a different basis.

The Honorary Minister: I thought the hon. member knew more about the subject.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: In what way?

The Honorary Minister: About the way in which the basic wage is fixed with reference to the Harvester judgment—man, wife, and three children.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is man, wife, and three children in the case of the Harvester judgment. If the Honorary Minister can tell me that that is wrong, I shall be greatly surprised. My contention, which agrees with the contentions of other members, is that so long as we have this higher wage ruling here, our cost of production must be so much greater than the cost of production in the Eastern States that there is bound to be only one result from it, and that is unemployment here. The Eastern States manufacturer will be able to flood this market with his goods, to the detriment of the Western Australian manufacturer, who will be forced to close his doors, with consequent unemployment. That, again, will throw men on sustenance. Instead of the number of men on sustenance being reduced, the opposite will be the effect. There is no provision, as I have said, in the Arbitration Act for the court to consider those economic conditions. The only power given to the court in that respect is the power embodied in Part V. of the original Financial Emergency Act. Sections 14 and 15 gave certain powers to the court. Section 14 provided for the variation of awards and agreements. Section 15 reads as follows:—

An order made by a commissioner under the authority of Section 14 of this Act shall have effect according to its tenor. When the commissioner has made an order as aforesaid, the rates of salary, wages or remuneration of the employee or class of employees to which such order relates shall be reduced accordingly, and it shall not be lawful for any employee to which the said order relates to demand, sue for, or enforce as against the employer in whose favour the order is made, payment of salary, wages, or remuneration in excess of that payable by the employer under the authority of such order whilst the order remains in force. Any order made by a commissioner as aforesaid, and the reduction of the rate of salary, wages, or remuneration of employees allowed thereby, shall have effect only during the continuance of this Act: Provided that, by special leave of the commissioner, any order made against any person may, on that person's application, be varied or cancelled.

The position is that orders have been made. Power is given under the latter part of Section 15 of the lapsed Act for an application to be made by any union to the court to vary an award. So that if in any particular industry it can be proved that the industry is able to pay the full award without the deduction under the Act which Parliament was bound to introduce because of the inadequacy of the provisions of the Arbitration Act, then by an application on the part of the union to the court the deduction may be varied and relief granted. That is a fair and equitable basis on which to proceed. I can see no other course than to support Mr. Baxter in the amendment of which he has given notice, to re-insert in the Bill the whole of Part V. of the lapsed Act. In the meantime, to give an opportunity of that being done, I support the second reading.

HON. R. G. MOORE (North-East) [8.25]: When a measure of this nature was before the House last session, I supported the Government; and I did so because I considered the job was the Government's job. If they could find the money, well and good. However, the position is highly serious, and the effects will be far-reaching. I still contend that if the money can be found, it is the Government's job to treat their employees as they think fit. If the Government can see their way to give their employees a certain amount of relief in respect of the wages cut under the financial emergency legislation, they have a perfect right to do so. It is the Government's job; and although we may think a more equitable arrangement would be to give relief to all, as all are called upon to share in the sacrifice, yet we must not overlook the fact that only a limited amount of money is available. If that limited amount were distributed equally amongst all Government employees, the individual benefit would be very small indeed.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Why not save the money?

Hon. R. G. MOORE: We are starting at the bottom, and giving relief where it is most urgently needed. That is something to recommend the Bill. I am only too pleased to know that the position is such that the Government can make a start on reinstating the salaries of their employees. I hope the time is not far-distant when the salaries of all Government employees can be fully re-

instated. The Government say they can find a certain sum to give certain relief.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: But not to the unemployed.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: No. This is relief for men in permanent employment.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I will deal with that interjection. The onus of finding money for the relief of the unemployed is on the Government, and not on the public servants. If money is required for unemployed relief, every person should be called upon to make an equal sacrifice. The money should not be taken from the public servants. Every time the Government start to do something for the public servants, the cry is, "Why not give the money to the unemployed, or to the poor youths, or to the cockies?" Mr. Thomson said the money involved in this Bill would keep so many unemployed in work at £3 per week for a year. If another 20 per cent. were taken off the public servants, a second army of unemployed could be put to work for another year at £3 a week. Why should civil servants and school teachers and Government employees generally be called upon to make greater sacrifices than anybody else? If the Government can see their way to grant a certain measure of relief to certain employees, they have a perfect right to do it. I realise the seriousness of the position as well as anybody else realises it. Moreover, I realise the seriousness of the primary producers' position. Further, I realise that this country depends to a great extent on the primary producer.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: To the fullest extent.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: The hon. member can have it that way if he likes. However, the primary producer depends on other men just as much as those other men depend on him. The primary producer produces everything that comes from the land, but without the help of other men he would not produce very much. We hear a good deal about the poor farmer, and I am just as sympathetic with him as anybody is. However, we must not forget that the farmer had good times, and that while he was benefitting, his employees did not receive any more, nor did civil servants, school teachers, and other Government employees. If the time comes when the primary producer receives a good price for his wheat again, he will have a chance to recover his position in a few years. If we took the farmer's own valuation of his labour on the farm, he would never have

a pound from now till the day of judgment. He assesses his value on the land at about 30s. a week working from daylight to dark seven days a week. I know farmers who made a lot of money during the good times.

Hon. C. B. Williams: How many?

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I cannot give the number, but I can quote an instance. A farmer harvested a good crop when wheat was £1 per bag, and got 1,000 bags of wheat more than he expected. In other words he got £1,000 more than he expected. How much of that did the employees get? Did they get one penny more?

Hon. H. V. Piesse: The employee received £3 or £4 a week at that time.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: Up to £3 a week.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Four pounds a week and keep in many instances.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I do not know how many received £4 a week all the year round; they received £3 a week during the harvest.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You had better get back to your gold mines.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: If an employee received £3 a week all the year round, he would have collected £150, whereas the farmer received £1,000 more than he expected to get.

Hon. C. B. Williams: He was one in a million.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: No, he was not. As soon as a slump comes, the farmers say that the wages men must come right down to enable them to carry on.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The farmer could not pay for his tucker at the present price of wheat.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: But he has a chance to recover.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: He has poor hope of recovering with wheat at the present price.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: If wheat remains at the present level, probably the farmer will not continue to produce, but if the price of wheat rises, he has a chance to recover. The farmer, however, wants the wages men to come down now, but when wheat reached its highest price he kept the wages man down to the living wage. The onus of finding the money for the relief of unemployment should not rest on Government employees; it should be shared by every person in the community who is earning money.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We passed a measure last session increasing the tax.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Yes, put it up to 9d. in the pound.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: And it will be collected only from the people earning money.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You voted against it.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I voted for it.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I am one who voted against it.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I am of opinion that Part V. of the original Act should be re-enacted.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Hear, hear!

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I thought that statement would be applauded. The secondary industries have to compete with those of the Eastern States and of other countries, and unless they can compete on equal terms, it will be impossible for our people to carry on. The secondary industries of this State are hard pressed to compete with Eastern States and overseas manufacturers. I consider that the Government have a right to deal with their own employees and fix their wages, but I am of opinion that they should give the same right to private employers. Let them go to the Arbitration Court and, if they can prove that the conditions are such that they cannot carry on without a reduction, they should be able to get it as they were under the original Act. I shall support the amendment indicated by Mr. Baxter.

Member: Is it going to be a question of no surrender on it?

Hon. R. G. MOORE: But I will support the Government in their proposals for Government employees, though I regret that they are not able to go a little farther.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Why not divide the money amongst all civil servants?

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I have already said that if the money available were divided amongst all the civil servants, there would be very little for anyone. The Government have begun by extending relief to men at the bottom of the ladder where relief is most urgently needed.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: They have not started at the bottom.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I say they have.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You have been reading the wrong Bill.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I have not. I have endeavoured to consider the Bill from every angle. I have tried to get the viewpoint of the men and of the Government, and to

determine what can best be done in the circumstances.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Trying to please them all?

Hon. R. G. MOORE: No, trying to do a fair thing. I do not care whether I please anyone, so long as I am satisfied in my own conscience. I wish to refer further to the gold-mining industry, which was mentioned by Mr. Holmes.

Hon. C. B. Williams: He never worked in the industry.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: But he never misses an opportunity to say something about it, something not greatly to its credit.

Hon. C. B. Williams: He nearly dies of fright at the thought of gold going up.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: He said that employers in the gold-mining industry had done more harm than had anyone else.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I said they had caused more industrial unrest.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: That is not true.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The hon. member should qualify that remark and say it is incorrect.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It does not matter.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I will withdraw it, and say that I do not agree with the hon. member. It is not long since the wages paid on the coast were higher than those paid on the eastern goldfields. The miners have never received one penny more than they earned, and the most we can do for them and for the industry is the least we ought to do. This State owes more to the gold mining industry than most people are prepared to admit. During the war, when prices were soaring and a national crisis prevailed, the Commonwealth appealed to the eastern goldfields to produce gold and to provide men. The goldfields sent more men per head of population than did any other part of the country.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: The Commonwealth also asked for more wheat.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: And the farmers received higher prices for their wheat, but the Commonwealth took the increase in the price realised from the gold. The eyes were picked out of the mines in order to supply the Commonwealth with the required gold at the old price, and the miners continued to work at low wages because the industry could not afford to pay higher rates. A little time ago when the mine owners refrained from reducing

wages, as they were entitled to do, the industry was in a position to pay the higher rates. During the time of difficulty, the miners stood to the industry and worked for lower wages. It pains me when I hear members talk of what the mining industry has cost the Government of this State. I will repeat what I have stated more than once, that if there was a possibility of discovering a new golden mile in Western Australia, it would be the greatest possible God-send to the country, and every member knows it. I will support the Government as regards the proposals for their employees: that is their job, but Part V, should be retained until such time as the Arbitration Court determines that there is no longer need for granting such relief. The employees have the same right as have the employers to approach the court, and if they can prove that an emergency no longer exists, the court will grant them relief, just as it has granted relief to the employers. We should allow the Government to act as they think best regarding their own employees. It has been suggested that the difficulty could be overcome if 20 per cent. of the civil servants were got rid of. I consider that the Civil Service is understaffed and overworked, and that it would be impossible to make a reduction as suggested and carry on efficiently. It has been pointed out by many members that the basic wage in this State is higher than that of the Eastern States, but it was not pointed out that the wages of civil servants and teachers were the lowest of any. If it is fair to mention the one, the other should also be mentioned. How is it that, when the basic wage is higher in this State than in any other State except Queensland, civil servants and teachers here should be the lowest paid? I am pleased that the Government are able to give some relief to the employees, and I hope the time will soon come when they will be able to restore the whole of the cuts.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) [8.43]: The Honorary Minister, when moving the second reading, suggested that every member of this House had given further consideration to the measure. I certainly have done so. Like the preceding speaker I have endeavoured to consider the question from every angle, and the more I do so, the more I am convinced that the attitude I adopted when the Bill of last session was before us

was the correct one. Although I am satisfied that any speeches made for or against the Bill will have very little influence on the vote that will be taken, I feel bound to say that, after having given further consideration to the Government's proposals, I am more definitely of opinion than ever that we are not yet prepared for the adjustments outlined in the Bill. If the Government had decided to leave the position where it was for a further 12 months, they would have shown much sounder judgment.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That would have been against their election pledges.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: It would have been much better in the interests of the State if they had done so. Their action resembled that of a man training for a race: just as he was getting into form, instead of waiting until he was in the pink of condition and making the attempt for which he had been training, he stumbled by trying himself out too soon. Had the Government refrained for another 12 months from making the proposed alteration to the Act, it would have been much better for our industries and the State as a whole.

Hon. C. B. Williams: And they would have lost the confidence of their supporters.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: Some private industries are showing an improvement, but not sufficient to warrant an increase of 4s. 5d. per week where the margin of skill amounts to 24s. Our industries have been struggling for years. Just when they are breaking down so much of the Eastern States opposition, and our manufacturers are getting on their feet, this set-back, through the action of the Government, comes along. The Premier and his Ministers have stressed the serious position the Government will have to face if the Bill is lost, and a full restoration of wages and salaries is involved, covering an expenditure, they say, of an extra £350,000 a year. But what about the private employer? The Government do not appear to have any consideration for him when by the dropping of Part V. of the Act they force industry to restore wages to the amounts paid prior to its introduction. By that means they will place our manufactures and industries generally at a further disadvantage compared with our Eastern States competitors. Figures recently published in the "West Australian" indicate that whilst there is a steady improvement in the number of employees in our factories, it is not nearly sufficient to warrant the full

restoration of wages. It is pointed out that whilst in 1929 there were employed in 2,422 factories 26,660 hands, in 1932 the figures had fallen to 2,401 and 18,770 respectively. I consider that the Government should treat all their employees alike, and should not have selected a favoured few. If any increase is warranted, it is warranted for all, on the same percentage basis as the reductions were made. If the Government can only afford to spend £115,000, the money should be distributed on these lines. It has been pointed out that of the suggested amount, approximately £100,000 will go to Government workers receiving less than £293 per annum. Whilst civil servants numbering approximately 1,490 will divide £2,636, approximately only 329 employees will participate in the distribution. The inconsistency of the Government has been stressed by other members regarding increased emergency taxation. We know what a rush there was to secure the paltry amusement tax of £11,000 that was dropped by the Federal Government, and the frantic efforts that were made to draw up a case of our disabilities to present to the Federal authorities. On top of that we have the Government anxious to give £115,000 to those who are enjoying regular employment and reasonable wages, and picking out a section of Government workers in the achievement of that object. It is the old story, to those who have shall be given. If the Bill becomes law in its present form it will cripple our industries for a considerable time, and cause dissatisfaction amongst the Government employees. Part V. was a most important portion of the Act. In Committee I intend to support the amendments forecast by Mr. Baxter. I will vote for the second reading of the Bill because I appreciate the need for a continuance of the Act in some form or other.

HON. C. H. WITTENOOM (South-East) [8.50]: I intend to support the second reading in the hope that in Committee the parrot cry of "no surrender" will be entirely dropped, and that when we have finished with the measure it will be found to be a credit to all parties. We know what the position will be if the Bill is dropped. The same thing will happen that happened before Christmas. The Government will have to find £350,000 per annum to make up the full wages and salaries. The Premier has let fall dark hints of the dreadful things

that will occur in that event. That may mean increased taxation, which is something we do not want at present. I do not like the manner in which the Government have selected a section of their employees for this relief. As Mr. Holmes has said, everyone has suffered, be he rich or poor. We have all had a bad time. I personally believe that people enjoying big salaries should have their cuts continued, but I would suggest that relief should be afforded in the case of salaries higher than £293.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The man on £6 a week is not badly off.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: The Bill is causing dissatisfaction everywhere. I have talked with civil servants who are unhappy about it, and with railway people who are not altogether pleased with it. The Bill is not fair to teachers, who are also dissatisfied. Mr. Nicholson referred to civil servants employed in the metropolitan area. I think he said that out of about 1,400 only 300 would enjoy any of the privileges associated with the Bill.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I was referring to the 1,493 permanent officers.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: In nearly all the speeches that have been made we have been reminded that the Government have not yet told us where the money is to come from. We should know that, and we should also know where it is going. The Premier has not been too polite to those who have inquired about this matter, and the Honorary Minister merely indicated that it was coming from the same source that other moneys came from. We have no information beyond that. We ought to know, but we are told nothing.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Why should we worry?

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: We have a great deal to do with the spending of the money, and we ought to be told.

Hon. J. Nicholson: We would be nice directors of a company if we did not know a thing like that.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: We would not be kept in office very long. We do not know how the Government intend to meet the position and stand up to their Budget. As things are it seems as if they will not balance the Budget.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is their funeral, not ours.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We have to foot the bill.

Hon. C. B. Williams: We have to foot nothing.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: We do not know what the position will be if we depart from the Premiers' Plan. Someone suggested this afternoon that we might wait a year, and another suggested waiting six months to see what the situation would be like then. We do not know what the position is to-day. Wool prices have certainly improved a lot but the financial position of the State is anything but good, and is very little better than it has been for the last two or three years. We certainly have more money to spend, but we have got that from the Loan Council. Certain advances have been made which will have to be repaid later on. If we allowed the matter to stand over for a while, the position might then be that instead of giving relief to a small percentage of Government employees, a certain amount of relief could be given to all. If any relief is to be given, and £115,000 is available for the purpose, it ought to go round to everyone.

Hon. C. B. Williams: If you had your way you would put everyone back on full wages.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: Nothing would please me better. Later on we might be able to restore full wages to all the people to whom I have referred. The Premiers' Plan did a great deal for Western Australia, and led to the employment of a great many people.

Hon. C. B. Williams: In concentration camps.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: It has been a wonderful thing for this State, and if we interfered with it to any serious extent we might do a great deal of harm. This is a Government Bill. They have to find the money, and apparently, according to the Honorary Minister, the money has been found, although he has refused to tell us where it is coming from. No one would be more pleased than I to see these cuts removed from all sections of the community.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: With the exception of members of Parliament.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: I have always supported a reduction in members' salaries.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You and I may not be here six months hence.

HON. C. H. WITTENOOM: I am mindful of that possibility. In conclusion, I hope the Government will consider reasonably any amendments we may make to the Bill when we reach the Committee stage. I think no one will disagree with me when I say there has never been a Government which has received more assistance from all sections of this House, through an extremely difficult time, than the present Government has had.

Members: Hear, hear!

HON. C. H. WITTENOOM: All members have done their best to help the Government. I do not wish to refer to many Bills, but I will mention the graduated tax up to 9d. in the pound and the Transport Bill. We practically agreed to everything the Government asked for, because we recognised that it was necessary for them to get the money. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. E. ROSE (South-West) [9.2]: The very important Bill before us to-night is one which gives us grave concern. Every member of the House has carefully considered the Bill, even though we have not received an explanation of the source from which the Government are getting the £115,000. This amount is not to be expended, but it is to be refunded to some of the civil servants. That is out of all reason. When travelling throughout the State we see a great deal of suffering. We see many people who are on the bread line and who find it impossible to make ends meet. I should have thought it would be better for the Government to distribute this large sum of money amongst those people who so richly deserve it, or to spend it upon developmental work which will give employment to those at present out of employment. If it were expended in that way, then the Government would derive some return from it later. What return will the Government get if they dispose of the £115,000 in the way they propose? None whatever. In the early part of last session we passed a Bill by which the emergency tax was raised from 4½d. in the pound to 9d. in the pound, and it strikes me that a great deal of the money being raised by that tax will be given away also. As we travel about the country, we see the wheat-grower who is unable to make ends meet. The dairy farmers are in the same position, or

perhaps worse off. Many of them are on the point of starvation. Now, the civil servants to whom it is proposed to distribute the £115,000 are receiving salaries up to £293 per year. That is a very good salary, and I cannot see why in these difficult times they should have the proposed refund made to them while there are many other people starving. As has been pointed out by previous speakers, the Minister for Employment has had to turn down a great many of the unemployed men because he is unable, through lack of funds, to find work for them. Yet £115,000 is to be refunded to people who are living in luxury. It has been pointed out here that money is borrowed year after year by Western Australians. Where will this borrowing lead us? How is it possible for us to pay interest on it? It spells unification. We have been told that the Government are not in favour of unification, but they are going the right way to bring it about by reckless borrowing and reckless spending. A man cannot possibly carry on his business by continually borrowing money. If I, as a farmer or pastoralist, kept on borrowing money and put it into my property and failed to pay the interest on it, the banks would very soon foreclose on me, and then what would I do? If the directors of a company kept on borrowing money for the purposes of the company, and did not pay the interest on it, the company would become insolvent very quickly. The same thing applies to Western Australia. I say we are heading very fast for unification and, unless there is a stop put to our reckless borrowing, we will become bankrupt. We have a Disabilities Commission sitting now, but their report is not finalised. How are the Government to approach the Federal Government to obtain further money from them in our difficulties? It will be very nice for the Premier, when he goes East, to inform his brother Premiers that Western Australia is in such a fine position that it is able to refund to some of its Government officials an amount of £115,000. But what will the Federal Government say, or the Loan Council say, when we ask for further funds? They may turn us down. They may say, "You have been able to give away this large amount of money, not to those in poor circumstances, but to men who are living in the town and doing very well."

I am not in favour of the Bill, but I shall vote for the second reading. When it gets into Committee I shall certainly support the amendment proposed by Mr. Baxter. Last night Mr. Miles gave members some illuminating figures. If one goes carefully through them and analyses them, what does one find? That it is impossible for us to pay the interest and sinking fund on our loans. I did not intend to speak on the second reading of the Bill, but after reading the remarks which were made by the Premier with reference to the ten members who are retiring in May next, I decided to say a few words. I will quote what the Premier stated—

Hon. C. B. Williams: I do not think his remarks applied to you.

Hon. E. ROSE: You are one of them.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I do not think he referred to you.

Hon. E. ROSE: The Premier said—

Dealing with the position of the Bill and the Act, I wish to call the attention of the people of this country to the fact that three members of another place whose votes were responsible for the defeat of last session's Bill, are, after a period of six years, retiring from political life. I question, at any rate, the moral right of any member who has not been before his electors for a period of six years,—

Mr. Williams is one.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Too right!

Hon. E. ROSE: The Premier continued—

—and who is responsible to only a limited number of the people of this country, one-third of them, to vote for the rejection of a Bill put forward by a Government fresh from the country and returned by an overwhelming majority.

Hon. E. H. Harris: He has no right to question any one of them.

Hon. E. ROSE: The Premier went on to say—

What authority, I ask, have those members, who are giving up public life and have not been before the country for six years, to set aside the will of the great majority of the people of this country as expressed at the recent elections? I hope that is an aspect of the question which will appeal at any rate to those hon. members' sense of fair play and moral obligations before they pass a vote on this Bill when it goes to another place.

What authority, I ask, had the Premier to make a comment of this nature?

Hon. C. B. Williams: It is like his impudence, is it not?

Hon. E. ROSE: I take exception to being dictated to by the Premier. I have already expressed my views on the Bill, and I intend to vote irrespective of what the Premier has said in another place. I intend to do so right up to the end of my term in Parliament, and I think other members will do likewise. There are ten members retiring in May next. Do you mean to tell me they have no right to vote for or against a Bill that comes before the House simply because their term is expiring in May? No. We are elected for that purpose. I, as a representative of the South-West Province, intend to record my vote every time. Since the present Government have been in power, I have given Bills very fair consideration. I have assisted the Government in every possible way. I have supported them on many occasions, but I intend to use my discretion as to whether I vote for or against any Bills that may be brought forward. I shall support the second reading of this Bill.

[Hon. J. Nicholson took the Chair.]

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [9.13]: When the Financial Emergency measure was adopted in 1931 in pursuance of the Premiers' Plan, it was accepted by the seven Governments of Australia.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Each and every one of them has been defeated since.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Four of them were Labour Governments.

Hon. C. B. Williams: They have all been dumped.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The Federal Government, the Victorian Government, the New South Wales Government, and the South Australian Government.

Hon. C. B. Williams: And the Western Australian Government.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: All those Governments stood up to the Premiers' Plan, and they succeeded in bringing the name of Australia well before the world. The Plan was designed to stop a general drift of about 40 million pounds per annum when the national income had dropped by 200 millions. By the action taken by all those Governments, the position of Australia was saved. The action was applauded throughout the world, and other countries were recommended to adopt the same course of action. It seems to be a terrible thing for anyone even to suggest breaking away

from that contract, honourably entered into. The deficit in Western Australia for 1931-32 was in the vicinity of 1½ millions.

Hon. C. B. Williams: And we are still alive!

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: In 1932 it was reduced to £864,000, and there has been a very considerable alteration, so we are informed, in the unemployment problem.

Hon. C. B. Williams drew attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I thank Mr. Williams for drawing attention to the state of the House, and I am pleased that more members are present now, because there are one or two matters to which I desire to refer.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: And it serves to show how vigilant Mr. Williams is.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The Premier's Plan was entered into whole-heartedly by the people of Australia. It was recognised that great sacrifices had to be made, but the people realised it was better to make them than that the Commonwealth should be allowed to go on the rocks. At the rate of progress, it appeared as though Australia had no hope whatever of turning the corner.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The farmers are on the rocks despite all the corners we have turned.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It was recognised that all the people had to join in the sacrifice, and the Government of the day reached out as far as they could to bring everyone into line. I regret extremely that at the end of last session the Government introduced legislation to allow one section of the community to break away from the compact. I now regret that the Government have seen fit to re-introduce that legislation in this special session. The Federal Government erred in that direction, and no one will excuse the restoration of salaries to members of the Federal Parliament and the increases granted to Commonwealth public servants. Because the Federal Government erred, that does not furnish any excuse for Western Australia breaking away from the compact. I agree with those who referred to the difficulties and trials of the farmers. If £115,000 is available, it is up to the Government to make use of the money in extending relief to the primary producers who are in such dire difficulties, not only in the wheat belt but on the group settlements and elsewhere.

Those people are producing their commodities at less than cost price, and the general community have derived some benefit in consequence.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What would be the use of rendering that assistance to the farmers, seeing that their creditors would take it all, and the farmers would not see a penny of it?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Regarding the mandate the Government obtained from the electors—

Hon. E. H. Harris: You should say the "alleged mandate."

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I accept the hon. member's correction. I am sorry that Mr. Holmes did not have some information that I desire to place before the House, when he was making reference to the speech delivered by the present Premier, when Leader of the Opposition, in the Legislative Assembly in December, 1932. I recall to members the plight of the wheatgrowers, particularly at a time when the hold-up of the harvest was partially carried out. At that time Mr. Collier was about to launch his urgency motion in the Legislative Assembly. The following report, embodying the remarks of a man able to speak on behalf of the farmers, appeared in a newspaper:—

He stated that the experience he gained last year had taught him that it was impossible to carry out a wheat hold-up and that it would be equally impossible to carry out the action suggested in the motion as farmers could not be relied upon for support. Last year it was the intention of the executive to call off the hold-up two days before they did (he asked the Press to take notice of what he was now going to say), but they were prevailed upon by Mr. Collier to conduct the hold-up for a further two days to enable him to make his speech in the House on the producers' precarious position. He was of the opinion that the present Government were guilty of a dishonourable act in repudiating their election promises to the farmers.

Hon. A. Thomson: Where was that meeting held?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: At Merredin.

The Honorary Minister: And who was the author of those remarks?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: They appeared in "The Wheatgrower" on the 11th January, 1934.

The Honorary Minister: But who was the speaker?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I have been quoting remarks by Mr. O'Leary.

Hon. C. B. Williams: He was the man who was going to march the farmers down to Perth.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Those responsible wanted to call off the hold-up that had been carried out in order to draw the attention of the people to the dire necessities of the farmers, because they found they were no better off as the result of that action.

Hon. A. Thomson: Did you say that Mr. Collier asked them to continue the hold-up for a couple of days?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes. It had been decided to call it off because it had not been as successful as they had anticipated, but, at the instance of the present Premier, they continued the hold-up for a few days.

The Honorary Minister: And you believe that?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes, it was on the eve of an election.

Hon. C. B. Williams: When the farmers join up with the Trades Hall they will get their dues, not before.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The whole community throughout Western Australia are concerned in the dreadful necessities of the farmers, many of whom are in a parlous condition indeed. They were the people who were asked by the Scullin Government to grow more wheat just at the time when we were about to embark upon the Premiers' Plan legislation. The farmers were asked to grow more wheat because of the dire necessity of Australia and to enable the country to liquidate its debts. The farmers responded nobly, particularly those in Western Australia, where production was far greater proportionately than in any other State. The farmers did their part but since then, probably due to over-production, the price of wheat has gone down so low that not only is wheat-growing unprofitable, but it is conducted at a direct loss. Liabilities are growing and the position of the farmers is desperate. Machinery is worn out and plant generally is in a sad condition. Much of it will have to be renewed.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Farmers are using bags for clothes.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: If £115,000 is available, surely the Government should have gone to the rescue of the primary producers and rendered them a little help, as the Government in New South Wales did. The Government certainly made promises to the farmers, and the people throughout the

State, particularly in the metropolitan area, are vitally concerned regarding the conditions that exist inland. All were affected directly by the promises made by Mr. Collier in his speech in the Legislative Assembly, and also were vitally concerned in the actions of the wheatgrowers themselves. Mr. Collier indicated his support of the farmers regarding the hold-up, because he recognised their dire plight.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It is a pity that the farmers did not vote Labour.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Unfortunately many of them did, and that is why Labour is in power.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The crisis that developed at the end of last session regarding the financial emergency legislation was entirely the responsibility of the Government themselves. I cannot see why we should take action to break away from the honourable agreement we entered into under the Premiers' Plan, without giving notice to others concerned of the action Western Australia proposed to take. I cannot see any reason why I should alter my attitude in connection with the Bill. As regards the mandate from the people, I presume that the Government in making promises to one section of the community would naturally inspire that section with the hope of obtaining a certain amount of additional income from the coffers of the State. But anybody offering money from Government coffers is indulging in an old practice. One needs to beware of election promises. However, by that means no doubt many people were led to expect that when the present Government came into power they would benefit individually. It is only human for every one to be anxious to better his position. However, we cannot overlook the agreement which was entered into. We have the whole of the people behind us when we maintain that it is not right for one section of the community to benefit by any improvement in the finances, but that all sections of the community should do so equally. Australian Governments, and the Western Australian Government in particular, have gone along the same old road of borrowing—plunging the country further into debt. Our population is not increasing in the same ratio as our indebtedness; otherwise the debt per head would be falling, instead of which it is growing at a serious pace. Unless we

can see the position improving considerably in that respect, I cannot agree with those who assert that we have turned the corner. In my opinion, the good price for gold has proved most fortunate, as also has the finding of the metal in larger quantities. Further, the improvement in the price of wool has afforded us some relief for the time being. But hand in hand with those factors of improvement the majority of the people in the agricultural and timber districts, and generally in the areas of primary production, are not better off, but worse off. Unless a radical improvement comes about in the dairying, potato and wheat sections, we are in no position to find a surplus for distribution to any section of the community; and the Government are, in my opinion, not justified in benefiting one section of the community or plunging private enterprise into the unhappy position involved in the abolition of Part V. of the lapsed Act. Private enterprise has not recovered to such an extent as to be able to stand such a situation as will result from the Bill if Part V. is not re-enacted. Therefore, I shall support the second reading and do all I can to ensure that, in Committee Part V. of the original Act is reintroduced.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [9.35]: The Bill comes to us because we liberally amended a measure of the same nature some weeks ago. The Government apparently do not approve of our amendments. They charge us with having mutilated their legislation and attempted to dictate to them what Acts they should put on the statute-book. That charge, I submit, is entirely unwarranted. Members of this Chamber have responsibilities, just as the Government have. When there is a difference of opinion between the two Houses, provision exists for a conference of managers to sit in an honest endeavour to overcome the difficulty. In this instance the managers conferred, and the Government at that time made an announcement that this Chamber was dictating to another place what should be done. An S.O.S. signal seemed to have been sent out, and leaders of the Labour movement, chiefly from Beaufort-street, congregated in the Legislative Assembly to stiffen the backs of Ministers. They conferred while the House was sitting. I believe that one section of the evening's

proceedings, prior to managers being appointed, consisted in some representatives of the Government conferring with the leaders of the industrial section of the Labour movement, who also represent the financial wing of the movement.

HON. E. H. GRAY: Where did you get that fairy tale from?

HON. E. H. HARRIS: From the hon. member. I said, "What are we waiting for now?" The hon. member said, "They are having a conference." I said, "I have been in the Assembly, and this House has not been sitting." It was not until that chance remark had been made that I woke up to the fact that the heads were sitting together before the conference.

HON. E. H. GRAY: You are entirely wrong in what you say.

HON. E. H. HARRIS: Did they come here for the purpose of saying to the Government, "Compromise is the spirit of the day. This is the time you want to go and talk to the Legislative Council and try to overcome the difficulty"? Or did they say, "You adopt the policy of no-surrender"? I believe that is where that phrase came from. A member of another place had it on the tip of his tongue and came here and blurted it out. I submit that those people did not come to Parliament House to press the spirit of compromise, but to urge upon the Government that this was a unique political opportunity for fighting the Legislative Council, and that if the Government would fight, especially with regard to Part V. of the lapsed Act, they were prepared, on their part, to throw their weight into the political arena. But it is reported that the managers from this Chamber did confer and then went away to ask some advice as to what they should do. Meanwhile the two leaders of the Labour movement were perambulating up and down the corridor, probably conferring as to what they might put up to our representatives. However, the eventual result was that the managers could not agree and the Bill was abandoned. I submit that the Government deliberately selected that result as something on which they could fight the Legislative Council elections next May. Although I am not a candidate I will say that if the Government want to do that, they have an opportunity to put their plan into operation. The Premier and many of his followers declare, "We are fresh from the people, and we have a mandate from the majority of the elec-

tors." Mr. Rose just now read what the Premier had to say on that point, to the effect that they came back representing a majority of the electors and having a mandate from the people. I submit that no Administration has a mandate from the people unless it represents a majority—not a majority of members of Parliament, but a majority of the people. I am going to call the bluff concerning the supposed mandate. I have before me the statistical report of the Chief Electoral Officer concerning the elections held in April of last year. I find that the total effective votes recorded were 181,836. I have added the whole of the votes, and have allocated them in accordance with the returns, which I propose to quote presently; but I would like to make a reference to the second election held at Kimberley. In that election the Labour Party secured a larger number of votes than they did at the first election. They added 117 to the total effective votes they secured. I am giving the Labour Party the benefit of that addition, though perhaps they do not deserve it. That made 181,953 effective votes cast in the election. I find that the Labour Party polled 81,561 first preference votes, the Nationalist Party 55,867, the Country Party 27,311, the Independents 16,772, and the Communists 442; making a total of 181,953 first preference votes. It is necessary to add to those figures the second preference votes gained by each of the respective parties one from the other. The total poll in the contested seats ended up—Labour 83,977, Nationalist 56,944, Country Party 25,915, Independent 14,675, and Communists 442; the total being 181,953. There were nine uncontested seats. On two previous occasions I have stood in this Chamber and quoted figures to show that the Labour Party were elected by a minority of the electors. This is the third occasion of my doing so; but the conditions on this occasion were such that there cannot be any quibbling about the proportion of votes for the winners and losers. In this instance there were nine uncontested seats—six Labour, two Country Party and one Nationalist. I have included the whole of the electors, knowing full well that 100 per cent. could not possibly have been polled, and have added them to the totals of the respective parties. Those uncontested seats gave the Labour Party 20,069 votes, Nationalist Party 4,139, and Country Party 7,677 votes. Allowing for a 100 per

cent. vote for the uncontested seats, the final totals would be Labour 104,046, Nationalist 61,083, Country Party 33,592, Independent 14,675, and Communist 442. As the Communist Party were nothing but disgruntled Labourites, and as they contested seats only against Labourites, I am adding their vote to that of the Labour Party. In that I am being generous, but I wish to show that the other votes out-numbered the combined votes of the Labour Party and the Communist Party. Adding that number, we get Labour and Communist Parties 104,448, and they hold 30 seats.

Hon. G. Fraser: What did you do with the Independent votes?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The Independents have representation in Parliament; the Communists have representation only through the Labour Party. The total votes of the Nationalist Party were 61,083, of the Country Party 33,592, and of the Independents 14,675, a total of 109,350 represented by 20 seats. To those who claim the Government are fresh from the people and have a majority, I reply that the position is that 104,448 electors have 30 seats and 109,350 have only 20 seats. If we make a comparison of the votes of the Nationalist Party plus the Country Party, we find that the Country Party have 11 seats for 33,592 votes and the Nationalist Party eight seats for 61,083. I mention those figures to call the bluff about the Government having a mandate from the people. If the Government are anxious to get a fresh mandate from the people, and if they consider that this House is dictating to them, they can submit their resignation and go to the country. If they are looking for a proper time to go to the country—

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Not a bit of it.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I suggest that they should resign and arrange to hold the Assembly elections at the same time as the Council elections, for which there is a fixed time.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Let us have a dissolution all round.

Hon. G. Fraser interjected.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I cannot listen to more than one interjection at a time.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Let us have a dissolution at the time of my election in May.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am suggesting that the Government tender their resignation and go to the country for a mandate.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: You know that nothing on earth would move them to do it.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: They could not afford to go to the country.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What they have they will hold.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: If they were wise, I should think they would not resign. Concerning the financial emergency legislation introduced in 1931 when the Premiers' Plan was adopted—

Hon. C. B. Williams: I did not vote for it, did I?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: There was a touch of brimstone about some of the speeches made in the Assembly when the Premiers' Plan was mentioned. On the occasion of the original Bill being submitted to another place, Mr. Collier, then Leader of the Opposition, and his many supporters poured torrents of invective over everyone who said anything in support of the Plan or voted for it. I wonder that of all the members who have addressed themselves to the Bill, not one has turned back to "Hansard" and made quotations from it. Some excellent things are to be found in the debates which could be turned back on the Government who are sponsoring this measure.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: We left that to you, who can do it so well.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I do not intend to go into details by quoting the remarks of the Premier, but he did scoff at the Title of the Bill. Yet in the memorandum to the Bill before us, there is a paragraph pointing out that the Title corresponds with that of the Act of 1931. According to "Hansard" of the 14th July, 1931, page 3782, Mr. Collier said that the Title of the Bill was false and misleading. He added—

The Bill, if I may say so without offence, is a misrepresentation from the first line to the last line.

Now his Government have introduced a Bill bearing exactly the same Title and have pointed out that the Bill is practically similar to the measure of 1931. Mr. Collier also said there was no justification for the introduction of such a measure in 1931.

Hon. C. B. Williams: He had to follow the lead given him.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: It is an admission of the necessity for the measure of 1931 when the Government in 1934 find that they cannot pay their way.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Who said they could not pay their way?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: They are refraining from paying Government servants the money to which they are entitled, and have introduced a Bill and have asked this House, which they allege is dictating to them, to pass a measure that they themselves roundly condemned in 1931. When the financial emergency legislation is mentioned from the public platform, a majority of the people think that reference is being made to the tax. I believe that the tax offended more people than did the Financial Emergency Act. When Labour were in Opposition and during the last elections, they said the first thing they would do, if returned to office, would be "to sweep this iniquitous legislation off the statute-book." They did so, but they increased the 4½d. tax to 9d., and if they went to the country seeking a new mandate, the people would remember the increased tax.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Did not you vote for it?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Opinions in the Labour movement differ very much. Notwithstanding the demonstration recently made at Parliament House by Labourites—

Hon. C. B. Williams: Which demonstration?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The demonstration of industrialists at Parliament House in December last to support the political wing of the movement.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You must know more about it than we do.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The following is an extract from the Press on the 18th December, 1933:—

Members of the State Railway Officers' Union met at the Trades Hall to-day to discuss the position arising out of the proposed amendments to the Financial Emergency Act now before Parliament. Some strong criticism of the Government and its supporters was indulged in by several speakers. The following resolution was carried:—"This meeting of railway officers expresses its strong disapproval of the Financial Emergency Act Amendment Bill now before Parliament as continuing in a more aggravated form the incidence of the Financial Emergency Act."

It is on the goldfields where dissatisfaction has existed. People there take their politics seriously, and they object to the statement of Mr. Collier and others that, if they were returned to power they would sweep this legislation off the statute-book immediately, whereas the first thing they did was to

apply the 9d. tax. The railway employees, public servants and others held combined meetings and carried a resolution practically agreeing to hold up the railways if they did not get what they sought.

Hon. C. B. Williams: And they got it.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I believe they got a good deal: some people say, more than their share.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I did not.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: But there is still grave dissatisfaction in that centre.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Not amongst the railway men.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Mr. R. M. B. Elliott, honorary secretary of the goldfields branch of the State School Teachers' Union, wrote—

While the proposed legislation will give a measure of relief to goldfields teachers whose salary was £290 on the 30th June, 1930, it ignores the claims of teachers whose salary exceeds that figure, notwithstanding that (1) relief has been granted to (a) engine drivers, firemen and cleaners, (b) railway employees, (c) railway officers, (d) water supply workers, with increases ranging from 6s. 2d. to 9s. 11d. per week. (2) Such relief was granted from the 26th October, 1933. (3) The police and the fire brigade workers of the goldfields enjoy a similar relief. (4) The cost-of-living difference between the metropolitan area and the goldfields still remains at 8s. 3d. per week.

Here let me mention that the Minister for Health, Mr. Munsie, speaking recently when some criticism was levelled against his department for sending milk to the Kalgoorlie Government Hospital from Armadale, stated that seven firms were invited to tender for grocery supplies, that only one submitted a quotation, and that when it was costed out, it was found that the Kalgoorlie prices were over 30 per cent. more than the Perth prices. Hence the Minister, who decides that the teachers are not entitled to the goldfields allowance, definitely says that there is a difference of 30 per cent. in the cost of living.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Suppliers put their heads together in order to increase prices.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Mr. Elliott's illuminating letter continues—

It will thus be seen that while all other State employees of the Government will enjoy some measure of financial relief, the teachers of the goldfields, as well as the civil servants, above the figure of £290 will suffer alone because of the goldfields cost of living. Government employees elsewhere in the State

enjoy a decreased commodity market. For an officer to be transferred to the goldfields is tantamount to a salary decrease of 8s. 3d. per week.

Let me now revert to the meeting held at Parliament House. I have pointed out that there was dissatisfaction on the goldfields, and that dissatisfaction was expressed by the State Railway Officers' Union. The "Worker" newspaper of the 15th December, 1933, stated—

It was decided to join with the metropolitan council and any other body in an endeavour to have the amended Financial Emergency Bill passed through the Legislative Council. It was also decided to convey to the Parliamentary Labour Party through the State Executive not to accept any compromise under any circumstances.

Here we have the metropolitan council and the Midland Junction council of the Australian Labour Party carrying resolutions, probably conveyed by letter, although they came here in person, urging upon the Government not to concede any one of these items. When the Government might have been reasonable in their dealings with this House, when they heard "his master's voice," namely Trades Hall, they said, "There is only one thing to do; take up the stand of no surrender."

Hon. C. B. Williams: You do boom up these fellows.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I do not ask the hon. member to accept anything from me. The facts are in print in the "Worker" newspaper. I wish to draw attention to the discrimination in the Bill, which I submit the Honorary Minister has not justified, between the various bodies of Government servants. There are officers described as salaried officers, and employees who are known as wages men. Why should not all Government servants be on the same footing, whether they are classified as staff officers, as salaried officers, or as wages men? Anyone who looks at the Bill will see that wages men, irrespective of the total amount they receive, are going to be regarded as sacrosanct so far as wages are concerned. They cannot be interfered with. When the Government come to a man on the salaried staff he is brought in on an entirely different basis. I propose to give some illustrations. Some figures have been quoted, and I have others of a similar kind indicating that there are approximately 1,500 permanent officers on the Public Service list. Of these, 15 per cent.

are paid less than £240 per annum, and the majority of them receive less than £205 per annum. Up to a certain figure they are to be exempt, but wages men will not be affected. There are roughly 2,000 school teachers, and I believe 85 per cent. of them receive less than £300 a year. I should like to know what is the estimated relief it is contemplated to give to public servants and teachers. It has been said there are 330 civil servants who will receive a benefit under the Bill out of a total of 1,500. I should like to know the various grades of those 330 men who will be entitled to get relief. The same thing should apply to those in other branches of the service. The Honorary Minister has stated that the figure of £293 per annum is taken as the figure covering the pay of wages men. If wages were limited to that figure for exemption purposes, it might be all right, but the unjust part is that wages men working under salaried officers may be receiving a higher rate than their superior officers, such as would happen in the case of engineers. I happen to know some of the engineers employed on the Goldfields Water Supply. There are engineers in charge of pumping stations. They are paid wages at the rate prescribed by the Court of Arbitration in Award No. 4 of 1927. I understand that the Australian Society of Engineers and the Minister for Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage have an industrial agreement, and that the engineer in charge of No. 1 pumping station receives wages, after the deductions that were made under the 1931 Financial Emergency Act, equal to £332 a year, plus £30 allowance. The Bill will bring that figure to £369, plus £30 allowance, making a total of £399. That is the income of these wages men. It seems possible that the salaried engineer who supervises the wages men may be classified on a salary of a nominal value of £475 a year, but by the Bill the net salary would be reduced to £403 a year. The result would be that he would be receiving £4 per annum above the income of the men under his control. This would work out at 1s. 6d. a week or 3d. a day. An engineer would be in charge of certain workmen. Because the wages men would remain stationary he would get as little as 3d. a day more than the men under his control. That is not an ordinary anomaly which might arise out of anything of this nature, but something which

ought to be rectified. Take the case of police officials. Because they are governed by an award, they are deemed to be wages men, and as such are receiving up to £503 per annum. They will be exempt from the financial emergency tax. I asked the Leader of the House a question relating to them to-day. Some of the information I desired has been made available, and I am submitting further questions under this heading. The salaried men up to £293 per annum will gain some relief under the Bill, but wages men, who can get anything from £300 to £500 will enjoy the full amount of relief. I should like to know what is the estimate in the case of salaried officers. I submit that this information should be made available. It was sought in another place, but members were practically told they would not get it until there was a threat of a select committee. The Minister in charge then volunteered some information.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: On the third reading.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: He volunteered the information upon the suggestion of the appointment of a select committee.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Volunteered it.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: He could have told them what he did before. It is alleged that the teachers will receive £7,000 out of the money that is to be given away and that the civil servants will receive something under £3,000. It is said that approximately £90,000 will go to railway employees. I should like to know why the Government discriminated between these departments. If there were a number of non-unionists amongst the civil servants and school teachers, I might say the Government were doing it because of their policy of preference to unionists. It seems that preferential treatment is being accorded to those who are affiliated with the Trades Hall and who subscribe monetary help to the labour industrial section of the movement. It would appear as if the Government were generous towards them. There may be other reasons. If so, we are entitled to be informed of them. We are entitled to have a spotlight thrown on the details, so that we shall know just who will secure the benefits arising from the distribution of this £115,000.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Not a spotlight, but a searchlight.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: We are entitled to know the total number of Government employees who will be affected, how many of them are salaried civil servants, how many are on the wages staff, whether they are school teachers or engaged in the State Shipping Service, the Water Supply Department, the Railway Department, as officers and as wages men, the Tramways Department and other departments. We should know what money is allocated to each department and the ratio of the distribution. I shall not press the matter any further. There will be another opportunity when we reach the Committee stage. Members have, however, practically said they are going to vote for the second reading; but I can assure them that unless the Minister is prepared to volunteer more than the scanty information which he gave us when he introduced the Bill, I shall record my vote against the second reading.

[The Deputy President took the Chair.]

HON H. J. YELLAND (East) [10.12]: I did not have anything to say on the Bill which was before the House last session, and consequently I propose to address myself for a short time to the Bill now before us. It is very similar in effect to the one which was previously before the House, and the debate upon it has naturally followed along similar lines. I recognise that a most serious responsibility rests upon us in arriving at decisions in this Chamber, but of course we stand shoulder to shoulder with another place as regards responsibility under the Standing Orders. For whatever passes through Parliament we accept equal responsibility. Therefore it is difficult for me to understand the attitude adopted by a section of the members of another place who have expressed their indignation because this Chamber has exercised its rights in fulfilling its obligations. We must stand up to our responsibilities irrespective of the consequences. With regard to the original Bill that was passed in 1931, I venture to say the position of the State to-day is no better than it was then. The 1931 measure was brought forward to relieve a very serious condition that had arisen in consequence of the depression. That condition has not been swept away. Hence it cannot be said that an alteration in the Act which was brought forward to meet the position in those days is justified at the present

time. We cannot afford to let up at present the legislation that was enacted in 1931. I maintain the time is not ripe for the liberalising of the conditions imposed by the 1931 Act. The Act aimed at an equality of sacrifice by all sections of the community. There was a reduction made in remuneration for services rendered. Investors had their interest reduced. The producers' returns were very considerably reduced. As a matter of fact, it was the reduction in the returns of the producers that brought about the necessity for reducing the amount that was paid for other services. Wheat was down to bedrock and wool was lower than it had been for many years. The fruit, vegetable and potato growers were suffering considerably, and were working at a loss. If the producer is working at a loss, then it is impossible for other services to be carried on under the same conditions as when everything was at its peak and much wealth was being produced. Naturally, the civil servants had to accept their share of the sacrifice. I fail to see that the civil servants are right in their claim that they have been doubly taxed by the cut in salary and the operation of the Financial Emergency Act, but I will deal with that perhaps later. The fall in value of our exports and our inability to meet our overseas responsibilities resulted in the crash in prices which demanded the very serious consideration which the original Bill brought about. As far as the goldfields were concerned, they were in the very enviable position of securing an increased price for gold. This increase in the price of gold always takes place when there is a reduction in the value of other products. It is almost an economic axiom that gold increases in value pro rata to the reduction in value of other commodities; that is, it takes more production to equalise the value of gold as the value of production is reduced; or, if the value of production remains stationary, then upward must go the price of gold. The reduction in the price paid for our exports and the imposition of extra costs by way of exchange brought about a very high price in gold. That in itself made the position of civil servants on the goldfields very awkward. High prices were in existence there and those who were working in the production of gold were being paid higher wages than the civil servants were receiving under their classification. They were put at a very serious disadvantage. That is where dissatisfaction

originated in the civil service. I may refer here to a quotation which was made by Mr. Williams. I am sorry he is not present, because he made a statement which I wish to challenge. He said that when wages are high, prosperity is great, and that is his reason for supporting the Bill—so that there might be an increase in wages which, according to his argument, would in turn bring about prosperity. Unfortunately for the hon. member, he is working in exactly the wrong direction, because when prosperity is great then wages naturally reach a high level. What he should have said is that wages are highest because prosperity is great. If he had recognised the truth of that axiom, he would not have put the whole of his force behind the Bill. Regarding the civil service, some members of which are to receive considerable emoluments because of the Bill, I would point out that I was myself at one time a civil servant. I recognise that there are many who are not receiving a salary commensurate with the value of their work, but, on the other hand, there are many others who are overpaid. The system of classification of positions does not allow of a civil servant being paid according to the value of the work he does. A man is placed in a position that is classified, and whether he does the work well or indifferently, he is paid the same salary. That constitutes a difficulty in securing satisfaction throughout the whole of the civil service. When we can overcome that, we shall have a more effective service, and certainly at the present time we could get rid of many drones and have as effective work done without them. I would suggest to any disgruntled civil servant who is dissatisfied with his conditions—officers should recognise that they have more “cushy” positions than anyone else, with permanency and security of tenure—that he do as I did, and get out. I was not satisfied with the service, and it is within anyone's rights to take that action. Regarding the payments to civil servants and the sacrifice they have been called upon to make in connection with the financial emergency, I cannot agree that they are doing any more than the rest of the community. Every section of the people has had to experience wage or salary cuts or decreases in respect of their investments, manufactures or produce, and naturally all had to be called upon to share in the general sacrifice. The suggestion is that £110,000 is to be set aside for

the particular purpose indicated. Others have pointed to the position and we cannot mention it too often, because it is the crux of the situation. The Government were called upon to keep their deficit within £750,000. In a statement that appeared in the “West Australian” towards the end of December, I noticed that the Government had already exceeded the stipulated deficit by about £50,000. With six months only of the current financial year elapsed, I cannot understand how the Government can turn round and ask Parliament to provide increases representing £115,000 in order to grant relief from emergency cuts to a section of the community. I do not propose to detain the House any further. In these few words, I have indicated my attitude. I would go farther than Mr. Baxter. He proposes to re-enact Part V. of the original Act and I believe that the whole of the Act should be re-enacted, because the time is not yet ripe for it to be set aside. I will support Mr. Baxter and will give further support with the object of re-enacting the original Act. I shall vote for the second reading with a view to altering the Bill in Committee.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.28 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 17th January, 1934.

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| Questions: Railway passenger coaches | 104 |
| Workers' homes, interest rates: | 104 |
| Butter, price stabilisation | 104 |
| Sitting days and hours | 104 |
| Government business, precedence | 104 |
| Committees for the Session | 104 |

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