

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 13th February, 1902.

Paper presented—Leave of Absence—Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, third reading—Wild Cattle Nuisance Act Amendment Bill, second reading, in Committee, progress Appropriation Bill, second reading, in Committee, reported—Health Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Coal Mines Regulation Bill, first reading—Public Works Committee Bill, second reading (negatived)—Printing of Documents, delay—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR LANDS: Plan of Kurrawang wood tramway and State reserves.

Ordered: To lie on the table.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE, leave of absence for one fortnight was granted to the Hon. W. G. Brookman, on account of illness.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION BILL.

Read a third time, on motion by the MINISTER FOR LANDS, and returned to the Legislative Assembly with amendments.

WILD CATTLE NUISANCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. Jameson): In moving the second reading, I may point out that it is a short measure dealing with the alteration of one word in several sections of the original Act. According to the Act of 1871, when wild cattle stray they can only be destroyed. It is proposed by this short amendment that it shall not be necessary to destroy the cattle, but if possible to capture the animals alive. This is found necessary owing to the fact that at the Zoological Gardens in Perth there is at times difficulty in obtaining flesh food, and these straying animals can be captured, taken to the Zoo, and sold for the purpose of food for the beasts confined there. It is suggested that in place of destroying wild cattle, persons should

endeavour to capture the animals alive. In Section 2 of the principal Act, the words "capture or" are inserted before the word "destruction," so on all through the Bill; and in this way the scope of the Act is enlarged. I do not think there should be any objection to this measure.

HON. E. M. CLARKE: I second the motion.

HON. J. W. HACKETT (South-West): This Bill has been promoted at the desire of a large number of persons who have hitherto done a trade in destroying brumbies, but are now desirous of opening up business relations with the carnivora of the Zoological Gardens. Of course those persons desire that they should be paid for the animals they supply. The principal Act will not allow persons to capture and sell brumbies, but only to kill them. Brumbies can be made of use, and can also be made a source of profit by being captured instead of being devoted to immediate slaughter. I see no reason why the power sought by the brumby-catchers should not be granted.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—Amendment of 34 Vict., No. 24:

HON. R. G. BURGESS moved that progress be reported.

Motion (progress) put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	7
Noes	...	...	...	13

Majority against ... 6

AYES.				NOES.			
Hon. G. Bellingham				Hon. T. F. O. Brimage			
Hon. R. G. Burgess				Hon. E. M. Clarke			
Hon. F. T. Crowder				Hon. J. D. Connolly			
Hon. E. McLarty				Hon. J. W. Hackett			
Hon. J. E. Richardson				Hon. A. Jameson			
Hon. F. M. Stone				Hon. A. G. Jenkins			
Hon. C. E. Dempster				Hon. A. Laurie			
(Teller).				Hon. B. C. O'Brien			
				Hon. G. Randall			
				Hon. H. J. Saunders			
				Hon. C. Sommers			
				Hon. J. M. Speed			
				Hon. J. T. Glowrey			
				(Teller).			

Motion thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2—Notice of capture to be given to police; penalty:

HON. R. G. BURGESS: It was necessary that members should have time to read the Act of 1871 before dealing with

this Bill. To attempt to force through the House a measure which would encourage the increase of these brumbies all over the country was most improper. Stock-breeders throughout the State would entertain strong objection to this measure. A rabbit-proof fence of small mesh would be needed to keep brumbies out of the breeders' paddocks.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: It would be wrong to pass this Bill without due consideration. Members needed to refer to the principal Act. In many districts wild stock were a great nuisance. This measure applied to the whole State, and it was ridiculous to ask the pastoralists of the Kimberleys and the North-West to comply with the provisions of Clause 2, namely, to keep any wild stock in the places where they were captured until the police had had seven days' notice.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: That was not necessary.

HON. A. G. JENKINS: The wild stock could be shot or destroyed.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: It was necessary that hon. members should have the principal Act before them to decide whether the proposed amendments were objectionable or not.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Certainly if the poor hunters anxious to make a little money by catching and selling brumbies knew the strength of Mr. Dempster's and Mr. Burges' feelings in this matter, they would have approached those hon. members instead of him. Presumably he had been approached because he was a trustee of the Zoological Gardens, and also because his province was a favourite resort of the brumbies. As the law stood at present, these animals could be killed, but not captured alive.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: The best thing, too.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: It was much better that the animals should be captured than killed, because nobody could kill a branded animal.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: No one could do that now.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: No; not under the Act. But, as a matter of fact, stock could be shot in the bush, and left there without the owner knowing anything of it. Under this Bill, the captured animal had to be brought in. Moreover, those capturing or killing wild stock must

obtain a license; and this provision secured a sufficient control.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: The passing of this Bill would prevent pastoralists from killing animals in the bush under any circumstances.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: No. The sole object of this Bill was to allow of the animals being taken alive and driven to wherever they were to be disposed of.

HON. E. McLARTY: Many people were going about the country catching unbranded horses; and these men were a great nuisance to owners of stock, as they frequently took away branded horses as well. Were stockowners to have their horses chased all over the country, to enable a man to catch one or two wild brumbies? There were men going about the country to-day with files cutting squatters' fences, and branded horses were taken away. Squatters had unbranded horses on their runs, and were people to be allowed to carry these off? At the present time there were wholesale robberies of stock going on, not twenty miles from Fremantle. Lands were being trespassed on, horses taken away, sheep stolen, and this Bill would assist the robbers. Members required some time to consider this measure.

HON. J. E. RICHARDSON moved that the Chairman do leave the Chair.

Motion put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	8
Noes	...	...	...	11

Majority against ... 3

AYES.	NOES.
Hon. R. G. Burges	Hon. T. F. O. Brimage
Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. J. D. Connolly
Hon. F. T. Crowder	Hon. J. W. Hackett
Hon. J. T. Glowrey	Hon. A. Jameson
Hon. E. McLarty	Hon. A. G. Jenkins
Hon. J. E. Richardson	Hon. R. Laue
Hon. F. M. Stone	Hon. B. C. O'Brien
Hon. C. E. Dempster	Hon. G. Randall
(Teller).	Hon. C. Sommers
	Hon. J. M. Speed
	Hon. H. J. Saunders
	(Teller).

Motion thus negatived.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: According to the present Act anyone was allowed to destroy wild horses, but the amendment provided that wild horses might be captured; and, according to the hon. member (Mr. Hackett), they were to be taken to the Zoo to feed a few wild animals. He would block the measure as long as he could, as it was not a

desirable Bill to pass. Could the Minister say whether stock owners, agricultural societies, or the advisory board asked for such a Bill as this? If the measure were passed, persons would be entitled to go on to squatters' runs and steal young unbranded horses. He would not oppose the Bill altogether, but he asked for time to look into it. The Bill should not be allowed to pass without an emphatic protest from those interested in stock. The matter should not be rushed through. All he asked for was reasonable time to look into the old Act and consider the effect of this amending Bill.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must confine his attention to Clause 2, and not allow his observations to take the form of a second-reading speech.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: It was to be hoped the Royal Humane Society would see that the brumbies were fed after being captured. If this Bill became law, people who had imported blood stock to improve the breed of horses would have to put up wire netting as a protection against the two-foot-high brumbies. As a matter of fact, this Bill would only be used as a cloak under which unbranded animals could be taken away right and left. Under cover of a license, a man could take away valuable yearlings and sell them to the knacker at the Zoo. The tendency of the measure would not be towards the destruction of brumbies but to increase them, just as certain legislation with respect to rabbits had resulted in an increase of rabbits. A Bill like this should not be forced through the House like De Wet rushing his commando through block-houses in South Africa.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: The attitude of various members with regard to this Bill was disappointing. The measure affected stock-breeders more than any other class of people in the State. Mr. Hackett thought the measure a good one, simply because certain people wanted to catch the wild ponies near Canning and Wanneroo; but the hon. member should bear in mind that it would apply to the whole State, including the Kimberleys and the North-West pastoral districts. Under the Bill a pastoralist who was not able to get in his young stock might have them captured and taken away to a distant part of the State by any rascal with a license. Certainly, brumbies caught

within a few miles of Perth might be sold to the Zoo; but it was absurd to use that as an argument for passing a measure so seriously affecting stock-breeders throughout the whole of this immense State. Hon. members who were not stock-breeders might have left the consideration of this measure to those who were, and who therefore understood the subject. This Bill would clash with the Trespass Act and the Brands Bill now before the House, and was, therefore, neither necessary nor desirable.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: After hearing the remarks which had fallen from Mr. Dempster, he considered it advisable that time should be given to hon. members with a knowledge of the subject of this Bill to consider it farther. The objection raised that the measure might lead to the seizure of unbranded stock was certainly a serious one. Assuredly no hon. member favoured any legislation which might have such an outcome. The members mainly interested had expressed themselves as willing to go into the Bill and to support it at the next sitting if examination showed it to be unobjectionable. Members representing the pastoral and agricultural industries were always willing to be guided in matters as to which they had not experience by members possessing such experience. Therefore, if only as a matter of courtesy to the pastoral and agricultural members, consideration of the present measure should be postponed. He moved that progress be reported.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The hon. member could not move that progress be reported, after speaking.

THE CHAIRMAN: Another member could move it.

HON. J. W. HACKETT moved that progress be reported.

Put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

APPROPRIATION BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. Jameson), in moving the second reading, said: It is unnecessary to take much time in referring to this measure. It is the usual Appropriation Bill which comes before us every year; and it involves no

principle requiring explanation. I desire, however, to draw the special attention of hon. members to certain papers I have had placed on the table—analyses by the Treasurer of revenue, expenditure, and so forth. These papers, I think, put the matter more clearly than usual. Hon. members will see by the third slip laid before them that the gross revenue is divided into five subheads: trading concerns, direct taxation, territorial, services rendered, and miscellaneous. This paper, as well as the other papers submitted, gives a good deal of information concerning our revenue and our loans. Hon. members will see that the amount which the Government ask for from the Consolidated Revenue is £1,072,119 5s. 6d.; and from moneys to credit of the General Loan Fund, £1,077,617 8s. 1d. It is unnecessary for me to enter into farther details relating to this Bill, which in itself, of course, is very short, consisting of only two clauses. I shall content myself with assuring the House that our revenue is expanding and that there is little doubt it will afford us the amounts asked for in the schedule. I have much pleasure in moving the second reading of this Bill.

HON. E. M. CLARKE: I second the motion.

HON. G. BELLINGHAM (South): This Bill has been submitted to us only this afternoon, after having been considered in another place for two or three months.

MEMBERS: The Bill was here yesterday.

HON. G. BELLINGHAM: This is the first time I have seen it.

THE PRESIDENT: The Bill was introduced and read a first time yesterday.

HON. G. BELLINGHAM: Notwithstanding, this measure which is now before us for practically the first time has been considered in another place for several months past. It is only reasonable to ask that members of this House should have time to consider the Bill and to look thoroughly into it. I therefore move that the debate on the second reading be adjourned to the next sitting of the House.

THE PRESIDENT: Perhaps I had better point out to hon. members what is the exact position of this House in respect of Bills of this kind. The Legislative Council has a perfect right to

debate the Bill in all its points; but it must be distinctly understood that we have no power to make any amendment whatever in it. Members must either accept the Bill as a whole, or else throw it out. The general rule in this House has been to pass the second reading and the Committee stage, and to reserve the third reading of the Bill to such a time as the business of the country has progressed satisfactorily. Under the Constitution Act it is distinctly laid down that this House has no right to make an amendment in the Appropriation Bill. It is one of the particular rights of the Legislative Assembly to deal with the appropriation of the money of the State. This House can criticise this Bill, but it has no power to amend it.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Does the hon. member want the debate to be adjourned?

HON. G. BELLINGHAM: There are several members of the House who feel that they should criticise the Estimates.

THE PRESIDENT: The House must either accept the Appropriation Bill as a whole or throw it out. All power as to the appropriation of revenue rests with the other House.

HON. G. BELLINGHAM: Several members, I think, wish to speak on the second reading of this Bill, and for that purpose they wish to look into the measure so that they may criticise it. To enable that to be done I move the adjournment of the debate.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Can the hon. member move the adjournment under Rule 124?

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member cannot move the adjournment now.

HON. R. G. BURGESS (East): I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Motion put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	8
Noes	11

Majority against	...	3
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AYES.
 Hon. G. Bellingham
 Hon. R. G. Burgess
 Hon. F. T. Crowder
 Hon. C. E. Dempster
 Hon. J. T. Glowrey
 Hon. J. E. Richardson
 Hon. J. M. Speed
 Hon. T. F. O. Brimmo
 (Teller).

NOES.
 Hon. E. M. Clarke
 Hon. J. D. Connolly
 Hon. J. W. Hackett
 Hon. A. Jameson
 Hon. A. G. Jenkins
 Hon. E. Laurie
 Hon. E. McLarty
 Hon. B. C. O'Brien
 Hon. G. Randell
 Hon. C. Sommers
 Hon. H. J. Saunders
 (Teller).

Motion thus negatived.

HON. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan) : I do not think any good can be accomplished by adjourning a debate on the Appropriation Bill, though members may feel they have not had sufficient time to study the Estimates for the purpose of criticising them adversely or otherwise. Members may have gathered, from debates which have taken place in another place, that various items have been discussed. I have followed the debates pretty carefully, and I find that very severe criticism has taken place, and members in another place have discussed the Estimates very freely.

HON. T. F. BRIMAGE : How much have they cut off?

HON. G. RANDELL : As much as they generally do. I know that very often the striking out of amounts is regretted afterwards by members who have moved the reductions, because it has been found they have reduced an officer's salary by £100 or £150 a year when the officer could not afford to lose that amount. Generally speaking, on the second reading of the Bill in this House members do not deal with the Estimates as a whole. It is a very large subject, and gives members an opportunity, if so inclined, to attack the Estimates on various grounds, especially on the ground of economy, and I believe that has been done in another place. The Ministry have been challenged with having taken office principally on the understanding that they would economise as far as possible.

HON. R. G. BURGESS : Yes; they had £17,000 in one vote.

HON. G. RANDELL : And hon. members in another place did not hesitate to declare their dissatisfaction and surprise that this economy had not taken place. I am not rising to justify the Estimates as placed before us. I regret to see there is a general enlargement of the expenditure of the State, and it has been pointed out that this may land us by-and-by in a difficulty. At the present time, seeing that seven and a half months of the year have gone, seeing that the country is committed to the expenditure on the Estimates, and that this House has no power to alter a single item other than making representations to the Assembly, requesting them to do this or that, I

think we should allow the Bill to pass. I trust members will not undertake to suggest amendments of the items on the Estimates; but if members do desire to take that step, they should do so when the items come on for consideration in Committee. It is highly desirable to direct attention to the consideration of the Estimates as soon as we possibly can. This House occasionally, but only occasionally, has gone into a number of items in the Estimates, objecting to this one or to that; but the general rule has been to let the Estimates go as they are. On one or two occasions, however, I think suggestions have been sent to the Legislative Assembly, and that body has agreed to the Estimates being altered as suggested.

THE PRESIDENT : Only the Loan Bill; not the Appropriation Bill.

HON. G. RANDELL : I regret to see that the expenditure is going up, and in a direction which is not altogether satisfactory. It is not going up in regard to public works, which are desirable to promote the prosperity of the country. If that were so no one would object. It is the departmental expenditure which is increasing in various directions, and I am not quite sure if that is in the interests of the country. It is a natural consequence when we have departments established—and we have had a few departments established within the last few years, and one within the last few months, which is likely to develop into a large spending branch—that there is a tendency to enlarge these departments. We shall find that when we cease to borrow large sums of money it will be necessary for the country to retrench, and especially to retrench in the item of departmental expenditure. I know as far as public works are concerned it is competent for the Government at any time to suspend these works, even after they have been passed by Parliament. It is not desirable to bring in a large amount for public works if the revenue will not justify such a proceeding. I have gone pretty generally through the Estimates, as I took an opportunity to get a copy a week or two ago, and the general conclusion I have come to is that while I feel that the departmental expenditure has increased—I think somewhat unwarrantably—yet at the same time it is not possible for me

to lay my finger on any item that should be reduced, or about which a request should be sent to the Assembly. I have no doubt from the reports in the newspapers members have noticed that the Estimates have had very careful consideration. I am prepared at this late time of the session, and of the financial year, to support the Estimates as they stand. I feel sure no member can criticise the Estimates with a view to a reduction, satisfactorily.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: What about the £50,000 to municipalities?

HON. G. RANDELL: At the same time I feel that a great many look with alarm on the increasing expenditure departmentally. It is desirable the Government should direct their most serious attention to this question. Ministers should consider whether it is wise to launch out by creating new departments, and to increase the expenditure of departments already existing. From my knowledge of matters generally, I am led to the conclusion that economies could be effected in many directions: that in several departments of the State, especially where the State is a large employer of labour, there is immense waste. The belief I have indicated is general amongst members of the Legislative Council, and also amongst the people outside. No one who goes about the country with his eyes open can fail to see that the revenues of the State are being wasted to a very large extent through want of diligent and proper supervision, or else from some other reason—some other sinister reason—which I do not care to indicate just at present. The moneys of the country are, undoubtedly, being wasted, and I trust the Government will seriously look into the expenditure. It is true that in accordance with a resolution of Parliament a Royal Commission is to be appointed, to examine into the working of the departments to which I am more especially alluding at the present moment. I can only hope that the inquiry will be a most searching one, going to the very bottom of the methods adopted in the Public Works and Railway Departments.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Inquiry will make no difference. Things will go on just as before.

HON. G. RANDELL: I am hopeful, and not so pessimistic as the hon.

member. I am hopeful that beneficial results may accrue from such inquiry. Of course the result will depend in a great measure on the *personnel* of the Royal Commission appointed; but undoubtedly this country has plenty of men who are competent and eligible, indeed very eligible, from their qualifications and standing to sit on such a commission. Those men will not shirk their duty, I am sure. I trust the commission will be appointed, and that it will inquire thoroughly into the methods of our two great spending departments. One of those spending departments is, of course, an earning department as well. The methods of both departments, will I hope, be sifted to the very bottom. I am perfectly sure that a thorough inquiry will elicit revelations which will astonish those who have not taken the trouble to think the matter over. As I said before, no one who goes about the country with his eyes open can fail to observe that much Government time is wasted, and that a great deal of unwarrantable and unnecessary expenditure is incurred in the construction and management of our public works. The present waste of time and money *can*, I am sure, be prevented if other methods are adopted.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Are you speaking of the administration of the present Government?

HON. G. RANDELL: The same thing is going on under the present Government as happened under previous Governments. I do not blame the Ministry for that; because, owing to the recent political turmoil, they have not had an opportunity of making themselves thoroughly acquainted with the actual state of things. It frequently happens that Ministers are the last to hear of any waste that may be going on. The general public grumble and talk to one another about these matters; but, somehow or other, they hesitate, or are afraid, to bring the matter under the notice of the Government, and especially under the notice of the Minister responsible. I have, on occasion, drawn the attention of Ministers in power to maladministration and waste.

HON. J. M. SPEED: Did you ever get any satisfactory results from doing so?

HON. G. RANDELL: I am sorry to say, not very often. Of course, I may be

a little biased; but I do think that in many directions economies could be effected by having the Government work done less by departmental day labour and more by the contract system. I will take the Government Printing Office as an example. The staff of that office, I am sorry to say, was largely and unnecessarily increased, owing to the weakness of some former Ministers. The Printing Office was under my control, to a very large extent, for some time, and I was very desirous of curtailing its operations by adopting a system of having the printing work done by outside firms, as I believe this course would be far more economical in the long run, or, for the matter of that, in the short run. Of course, no one will complain that the work of the Printing Office has not been done well from a mechanical point of view. Regarded purely as printing, its work is most satisfactory and will bear favourable comparison with the printing work done in any of the Eastern States. Apart from the *Government Gazette*, and possibly one or two other descriptions of State papers, such as the Statutes—though I am not sure that even these might not be better printed by private contract—the printing work of the Government might well be done by outside firms. Of course, the *Government Gazette* should undoubtedly be printed in the Government Printing Office. However, the large staff employed at the Government Printing Office, as is well-known from events which transpired a few months ago, is by no means always fully employed. Hon. members are aware that men who had been discharged were taken on again before work was found for them. Special efforts were naturally made to find work, and in consequence work was taken away from private printers. I have indicated one direction in which economies can be effected, and I am certain there are many others. Notwithstanding our flourishing revenue—as to which I concur with many others that it is not likely to be maintained in the near future—we should make such preparations as will obviate the necessity at some future day of issuing a disastrous order for wholesale retrenchment. If reductions are now carried out carefully and systematically, it will be better for the service, better for the Government, and

certainly to the interests of the State as a whole. Hon. members know without my telling them that the Government especially are exposed to manipulation, if I may use that word in this connection. A general feeling seems to exist that one may deal with the Government on different principles from those which would obtain in dealings with a private employer. I deeply regret that such principles should be entertained; because I consider them dishonest, and not such as any citizens ought to hold. I trust that in the future a better feeling may obtain. I have not much more to say at this stage of the Bill. I hope hon. members will proceed with the discussion of the Bill and go into committee. Hon. members understand, of course, that while the Bill is being discussed in Council, they must address themselves generally to the whole of the measure. When in committee, members can address themselves to the various items, and ask explanations concerning them, or deal with them in some other way. I think we should endeavour to make reasonable progress with this very important business; because while the Estimates are framed as they are, and are not passed, dissatisfaction as well as uncertainty exists outside, since the public do not know what may happen. I urge, as another reason why we should proceed, that we can postpone the third reading of the Bill until such time as we think advisable in the interests of the country. The granting of supplies, of course, is kept as late as possible, so that grievances may be ventilated and inquiries answered, and that satisfaction may be obtained in various directions. I consider the proceeding quite a proper one. It gives Parliament the whip hand, and Parliament has a right to use its power to a reasonable extent. I think it advisable that we should carry this Bill through the second reading and Committee stages at as early a date as possible, deferring the third reading until such time as every hon. member is satisfied.

THE PRESIDENT: I had intended to bring to the attention of hon. members the point raised by Mr. Randell. On the second reading debate the whole of the Estimates are under consideration, and members can speak generally on any item if they feel disposed. In Committee, of course, members will address themselves

to the item particularly before the Committee. Now is the time for general discussion on the whole Bill.

HON. F. T. CROWDER (East) : Mr. Randell said that when in Committee we could speak only on each item as it arose. It was for that reason I hoped the House would see its way to adjourn the debate, my desire being to make one speech instead of twenty. I do not know in what light members generally view the Bill which is now before us ; but I view it in a very serious light. I sat up until half-past 3 this morning gathering information in the hope of making a speech dealing exhaustively with financial matters. It was my intention, with the support of the House, to submit to another place a resolution. Not a resolution that any items in the Estimates be struck out, because I realise, as most members do, that this Bill largely represents expenditure already incurred, and therefore a thing of the past. Who is responsible for that fact, I do not know. I do not altogether blame the present Ministry, although I cannot help saying that they are continuing in the wasteful path of their predecessors. However, it was my intention to go fully into financial matters, and to table a motion to the effect that in the opinion of this House the expenditure of the Government was unwarranted.

THE PRESIDENT: A motion of that kind would have no bearing on the Bill now before the House.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: I should have worded it so that it would be in order. Members in another place have had over three months to discuss the Bill, whilst I am to-day, by a vote of this House, practically debarred from discussing it at all. It is utterly impossible for any member of this House to master the measure in the few hours which have elapsed since we adjourned last night. No member could in such a short space of time prepare a speech criticising the financial proposals of the Government. Indeed, to ask us to discuss and pass this Bill is simply ridiculous. The whole business is a farce. Members may be told that they must pass the Bill as a whole, or else throw it out. It is thoroughly well understood, however, that this House would not throw out the Bill except for very serious reasons. We are here as a

check on hasty legislation, and it is our honourable duty to criticise every point of this Bill in common with all other measures submitted. However, the House in refusing an adjournment of the debate has debarred me from delivering a full criticism. I should have been satisfied with an adjournment of two or three days to consider a measure which members in another place have had before them for several months. After such an adjournment I should have been prepared to put before hon. members figures comparing the Government expenditure in Western Australia with Government expenditure in other States of the Australian group. I began last night to prepare comparative figures, and I find that in the item of printing alone the expenditure of Western Australia is from £30,000 to £35,000, whilst South Australia, with a population of nearly double ours, accomplishes all its printing work with an expenditure of £12,000 or £15,000 less. In other departments it is the same. Throughout the whole of our Government service the expenditure is comparatively enormous. Let hon. members consider that our population is under 200,000, while our Government expenditure is over three millions. I trust hon. members will face the position, for it must be faced sooner or later. The Government absolutely draw the heart's blood out of the people of this country to produce that revenue of three millions. And by reason of this enormous revenue there is no money in the country: it all goes back into the Treasury. That is the trouble here at the present day. In almost every direction money is being thrown about broadcast by the Government. The present Ministry assumed office on the distinct understanding that they would examine carefully into the Government expenditure and put the public service on a proper basis. So far as I can gather, and I watch things very carefully, it seems to me the present Government are throwing away money just as their predecessors did. It is only necessary for deputations to come from all parts of the country, and money is shovelled out to them. The Government will not say straight out, "We will give you an amount of money," but an amount is placed on the Estimates, and when the Estimates come before hon. members they are prevented from criticis-

ing them. I am here to represent my constituents, but I cannot do it because I am not allowed to criticise the Estimates.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member has no right to make a reflection on a vote of the House.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: A majority of members of the House have stopped me from criticising —

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member has no right to make any reflection on what the House has decided. A majority of members would not agree to an adjournment, and the hon. member has no right to make any reflection on the vote of the House.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: I say that the House by its vote has stopped me —

THE PRESIDENT: I do not wish to call the hon. member to order so often, but no member has a right to make any reflection on what the House has done. The question now is the second reading of the Appropriation Bill.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: A vote has been taken to-day —

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member has no right to make any reflection.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: I am not making any reflection on the vote the House has taken: I differ from the President. I am not reflecting on what the House has done: I am doing what I have a right to do.

THE PRESIDENT: I have no wish to name the hon. member, but the hon. member must accept the decision of the House.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: I accept the vote of the House, but I say that I have been stopped by the decision of the House from putting information before members which I desired to do. Take the Police vote, £127,632: that amount for this country is enormous. It seems to me that for a population of under 200,000 people, this is something unheard of. For my part, if the Government went into these matters with the idea of cutting down expenditure, and keeping within the revenue, a great saving would be effected. Take the Rottneest establishment. There are 25 niggers at Rottneest, and the expenditure is many thousands of pounds, besides the upkeep of the steamers which go to and fro twice a week. The Medical

vote is again something enormous, and in regard to the Magistracy, the forage allowance is very stiff. This forage allowance was given at a time when all the travelling in the country had to be done on horseback and by road. At the present time there are very few magistrates who are not near a railway, yet the forage vote in each case is between £50 and £100. Is that right or proper? If the Government wish to give an officer £400 a year, let them put £400 on the Estimates, and not give the officer £350, and a forage allowance of £50. A large amount of money could be saved by striking off this forage allowance, and another large saving could be effected by doing away with many magistrates. It is ridiculous that we should have a magistrate at every 20-mile post. One magistrate could do the work that six magistrates are doing to-day. At the present time we have a magistrate at every village, and in addition there are clerks of court who have residences and all kinds of things. We are at the present time spending money that a place like England would think twice about spending, and the time will come when the cow will stop milking, and then there will be trouble. There is the Roads vote of £50,000. It is a good thing to help roads boards and municipal councils, but it is time that municipalities taxed themselves, and clearly realised that the Government in the past had done enough for them. I would not like to remove the vote for municipalities altogether, but let municipalities understand that we are going to reduce the vote every year until we get it down to half-a-crown in the pound. This year the vote for assistance to municipalities has been increased to 15s., and at a time when the country cannot afford it. The expenditure of this country is enormous, and the income is enormous. I think I shall be borne out by Captain Laurie in making the assertion that, although the revenue at the present time is larger than it has been at any time previously, our imports are less. That is the position to-day. The extra revenue we are getting to-day instead of being conserved and put into reproductive works is being scattered broadcast throughout the State. We are bound in honour by our vote on federation to have this extra taxation,

but the money so raised should be allocated to works which are reproductive, because when the five years, during which the sliding scale will remain, have expired, we shall not have sufficient revenue for our requirements. The harbour works vote is also enormous. Not so long ago a committee of this House spent a good deal of the country's money in taking evidence, and in bringing forward recommendations on this matter. The committee recommended that the harbour should be placed under a trust, but nothing has been done. The same tin-pot way is going on at Fremantle. To-day the old arrangements are being continued, to the disgust of the merchants and everybody else, and the sooner the harbour is placed under a board the better for all concerned. The Government are not deriving the revenue from the harbour which they should derive, considering the expenditure which has been made on the Fremantle harbour works. In no part of the world has a Government spent the same amount of money as this Government has on harbour works, and at the same time received so small a return. In America if a ship lies alongside a wharf, the owners of that ship have to pay £50, whereas here the amount is only £20; the result is that ships stay alongside the wharves longer than is necessary, keeping the space which other vessels might take up. All the items on the Estimates require to be seriously looked into. We have passed a resolution that a Royal Commission shall be appointed to inquire into the Works Department. I am satisfied that if the Royal Commission have the power to summon witnesses and to make them attend, and put them under oath, some serious matters will be brought under notice which will open the eyes of most people in Western Australia, and show us how the money has been wasted, and what disgraceful things have occurred in the past. That commission will no doubt do a lot of work, and I hope it will be the forerunner of Royal Commissions appointed to inquire into all the departments of the State. It is all very well for Mr. Hackett to say that the expenditure will go on just the same. I am sure it will not. If a commission be appointed, take evidence, and place the evidence before the public, I am sure the

public will see that this expenditure does not continue.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: They will go back again to the old state of things.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: Then we must get another commission to stop it again. There is no person with any business capabilities at all who if he looks at these Estimates does not feel as if cold water were being run down his back. I do not wish to cast any aspersions on the Government, but any private individual attempting to carry on business in the same wasteful and lavish way in which the Government carry on would soon go into the Bankruptcy Court. The Engineer-in-Chief, by his departmental day labour, has cost the country hundreds of thousands of pounds, and not only has he put the Government to great expenditure but private individuals have had to expend no end of money in consequence, because the system adopted has caused wages to go up. I know of cases in which men have been getting 10s. a day—and a very good wage too—and the Engineer-in-Chief has taken these men away and given them 12s. 6d. a day. When the Government enter into competition with private enterprise and increase wages so as to affect the private individual, it must affect the taxpayers at large. The outcome of the inquiry into the Works Department will be that day labour will be knocked on the head, and it will be shown that the system should never have been started. Everything required by the Government should be called for by tender, and the lowest tender accepted if proper security be found. To-day the goldfields are singing out about a railway being built by day labour and at the rate of one mile per month, and this private railway is charging about 250 per cent. on the Government rates for carriage. The goods are taken up the line and dropped on the ground where there is no covering, and, as a consequence, a lot of these goods are lying to-day in a swamp, ruined. It is well to talk; but people on the goldfields and all over the country are commenting on this. We hear these complaints year after year, and yet the same thing goes on. There ought to be some finality in it. Parliament, as a Parliament, should insist on some definite policy being adopted by the Government. The policy should be either departmental

labour, or it should be contract work. Whatever policy may, after careful consideration and discussion, be decided on, should be finally adopted. At the present day we have all sorts of systems. The Government have first one plan and then another. All the work being done by the State, however, is costing about 100 per cent. more than it would cost if carried out by private contract. My belief is that the only reason why day labour is adopted is that the Engineer-in-Chief wants to cover up his gross mistakes. When tenders are called for and work is carried out by contract, the claims for extras made by the contractor show the public the disgraceful manner in which specifications are drawn. But under a system of departmental day labour huge mistakes may be made and so covered up that no one is any the wiser. I do not know that I need dwell on this matter longer. I have looked into the matter carefully, as one who takes a great interest in Western Australia, and my deliberate opinion is that the country is being governed at a cost altogether disproportionate to either its requirements or the number of its inhabitants. The heavy taxation imposed in this country is keeping people away, and that heavy taxation is the result of wasteful and unnecessary expenditure by the Government. I, for my part, am quite prepared to assist the Ministry in every way I possibly can to put matters on a proper basis. I do not wish it to be supposed that, in speaking as I do, I wish to cast aspersions on the Government in office to-day. They have promised to do the best they can, and I, as a loyal subject, will lend them my best assistance. If, however, after the lapse of another year a similar Bill to this, showing the same wasteful expenditure, be put before us, I shall not be found supporting it. I consider it the bounden duty of Ministers, who are intrusted by the people of Western Australia with the government of the country, to govern it at the lowest possible cost; and undoubtedly the cost at present is most excessive, considering the number of inhabitants. I shall not take up the time of the House farther. I hope when the Bill gets into Committee to have some farther information to lay before hon. members, such as will enable them to

check the expenditure item by item, for it is not my intention to let the measure go through without discussion.

HON. J. M. SPEED (Metropolitan-Suburban): I do not know that it is necessary for members of this House to offer many observations on the present Bill, for the simple reason that whether we discuss it or not matters very little. Our criticisms are of no avail, and it is really an absolute farce to bring the Bill here to be passed by us. I do not understand why the Constitution Act contains a provision that the Bill should be submitted to this House at all. The thing is an utter absurdity. However, in passing I may remark that the cause of a great deal of the extravagance and waste prevalent in Western Australia at the present time is the want of a system of classification in the Government service. Hon. members, on looking into the matter, will find that the cost of superintendence is altogether disproportionate to the work done. Certainly the cost of supervision in a private business is not nearly as great as under the system of departmental day labour. Our only hope of getting work done cheaply and effectively by the State is to engage practical men, who understand their business. I believe the workers, the labourers, in Government employ do pretty well as much work as they would in private employ.

HON. E. McLARTY: Not half.

HON. J. M. SPEED: That is my belief.

HON. E. McLARTY: Nonsense! Not half as much.

HON. J. M. SPEED: In the course of the Midland Railway inquiry we heard a consensus of expert opinion to the effect that the fetting work done by the Government was cheaper and better than that done by a private company. This opinion was expressed by the officers of the Midland Railway Company and also by the officers of our Railway Department.

HON. C. SOMMERS: Give us another instance.

HON. J. M. SPEED: The experts expressed the opinion that the Midland Company was behind the times as compared with the Government. On referring to the vote for the Railway Department, hon. members will see that in the Chief

Traffic Manager's branch, salaries are provided for 266 clerks and cadets. That seems an extraordinary number of clerical employees for the branch. Can it be supposed that all these men do good work, or must we assume the contrary? The difficulty is that we do not know whether these employees work faithfully or not. The Government, unfortunately, do not seem able to give us the information. When in another place questions were asked in regard to these items, not a single Minister seemed able to give the information required. The proceedings in connection with the Estimates in another place reminded me very much of the old story of the two Scotchmen, one of whom asked the meaning of the word "metaphysics," whereupon the other replied, "Metaphysics means one man trying to explain to another what he does not understand himself." That was the exact position in another House, and if the state of things there is so bad, we know what it is here. If information was not forthcoming there, the same remark applies with much greater force here. I repeat, it is a perfect farce to introduce this Bill into the Legislative Council and ask members to pass it. As I consider the whole proceeding nonsensical, I shall not vote on the Bill. I do not see why hon. members should give themselves the trouble of considering the various items when they know that such consideration cannot have the slightest effect. It is utter nonsense to ask us to vote on the Bill at all.

HON. R. G. BURGESS (East): After the able manner in which Mr. Crowder has dealt with this Bill, I do not think it necessary to say much. The gist of the whole thing is conveyed by the statement that the Bill is a monument to the extravagance of our system of government. The Municipal vote has been increased by £18,000. Of course, the reason advanced for that, as Mr. Randell has said, is that, this amount being granted, no more will be granted. However, we know that the goldfields members will not be pleased in this respect. At a banquet given on the fields the speakers one and all dwelt on the economical administration the present Government were to initiate.

HON. C. SOMMERS: How long ago was that?

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Not long ago. The next morning the Treasurer was receiving deputations, and shovelling money out of the Treasury as if the walls had fallen out. Let hon. members bear in mind the sanitation grant for Boulder.

HON. G. BELLINGHAM: Was that the result of the banquet?

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Possibly. The Roads and Bridges vote has been cut down, notwithstanding the fact that roads and bridges in country districts are just as necessary as railways. I will now turn to the Rabbit Department. It appears that this department has already cost the country £2,000; and here we have another £2,050 set down. This fact goes to show that the present Government cannot conduct the business of the country without extravagance. Evidently the Rabbit Department is to be another ruinously expensive branch of the public service. Here we have a secretary at £300 a year, a clerk at £150 a year, a chief inspector at £350, and five other inspectors at £250. All these officers are set down for this year. I say that every country member should stop here and endeavour to prevent such extravagance. If things are allowed to continue in this style the country will be ruined. I should like to know what all these rabbit inspectors are to do.

HON. G. RANDELL: If the inspectors are not appointed, the money will not be spent.

HON. C. SOMMERS: Provision must be made for the inspectors.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: I could have got a party to do the work of inspection for less than half the money.

HON. C. SOMMERS: Who told you?

HON. R. G. BURGESS: I could have sent out an expedition to do all that was necessary for less than half this one has cost.

HON. C. SOMMERS: What was the cost of this one?

HON. R. G. BURGESS: I could have fitted out an expedition to explore in the North-West for less than this rabbit inspection cost.

HON. C. SOMMERS: How much did this expedition cost, then?

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Two thousand pounds have already been spent on it.

HON. C. SOMMERS: How do you know?

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Because that is the amount set down here on the Estimates. Let hon. members observe how the Rabbit Department is setting to work. It is necessary for the protection of the country, of course, that the rabbit question should be dealt with; but certainly there is no necessity for all this extravagance. From present indications I fear that the Rabbit Department will prove another Coolgardie Water Scheme. Again, the Agricultural Department is costing the country £10,000 a year. I will not say that this department is not wanted: no doubt it does a great deal of good. For one thing, a large staff of inspectors is required to deal with the diseased fruit which comes here from the other States. Nevertheless, I think it time that the extravagance of the Agricultural Department was checked. No doubt some districts derive benefit from the expenditure on this department; but others certainly do not. It has been stated that the Southern and South-Western districts are those which derive the greatest advantage; but members for the South and South-Western provinces often growl at the expenditure on the Agricultural Department, and ask what benefit the country receives, and what public good is achieved by that expenditure. Let retrenchment begin now, for the expenditure is creeping up, creeping up, all the time. There is an item in the Bill of £16,000 for the Leonora Railway for traffic expenses. This seems a heavy item; but possibly satisfactory reasons for it will be supplied by-and-by. I do not propose to take up the time of the House in fully criticising the Bill, with regard to which we have little power. We can, however, make suggestions to the other House. This is the proper House in which to consider retrenchment. Members in another place do not like cutting down items when the money is to be expended in their own districts. Members of this House are better situated in that respect, not having to go before their constituents so often. We must bear in mind that our revenue will decrease year by year under Federation. Although the income of the State is large now, the people are crying out that taxation is too heavy. I hope those hon. members who forced federation on us see the error of their ways. The country has to

suffer. If we do not keep down useless and extravagant expenditure in connection with public works our position will become extremely serious. All who know anything of work can see that departmental day labour is extremely wasteful. On public works one sees men piled up like a swarm of bees, and asking and getting increases every day.

At 6:30, the PRESIDENT left the Chair.

At 7:30 Chair, resumed.

HON. R. G. BURGESS (continuing): The vote for the Department of Agriculture is increasing; and another large amount of money is spent in connection with this department, but I do not know where it is to be found in the Bill. A sum of money has been expended in the purchase and importation of stock; and I would like to know where that amount is shown, what the amount is, and what has become of the stock. I think it is unsatisfactory to the general public that stock should be imported here, and I will tell hon. members how these imported animals are dealt with. Bulls have been imported to improve the breed of stock, and these animals have been let to people in the towns. The calves which are bred near the towns are as a rule killed and sold for veal. I do not know if it is better to have calves bred from imported stock to kill for veal. I do not know whether the meat is any better. Last year a large amount of money was expended on the purchase of stock, but I do not know altogether where the stock have gone to. We find that all the bulls, horses, and animals which have been imported have been divided amongst the officers of the department. That is the way in which these animals bought by the public funds have been disposed of. I do not know who is responsible for the administration of this department, but I think it high time some amendments were made. This stock was purchased with public money. Why then was not the stock sold by public auction? Why was it offered to certain people, and no doubt sold, before anyone else could get a chance of purchasing? I asked an officer of the department, the morning after certain stock had been disposed of,

whether it was for sale, and he said it had not been sold. A member of the Legislative Assembly told me the other day that he had some of that stock. The public ought to have had a chance to buy it, instead of its being sold in a hole-and-corner fashion. If this were a matter of 5s., I should not object; but it is of great importance. The sooner Parliament and the country realise that wilful extravagance and wasteful expenditure are going on in every department, the better. The sooner the other House does its duty, the better. If not, this House will have to take a firm stand, and decline to pass the Estimates until we get some guarantee that the money will not be wasted; for if this state of affairs continue for another year, it will be the manifest duty of every member of this House, whoever may be here, to put a stop to it.

HON. G. RANDELL: Make a motion.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Yes; and see that it is carried out. Lots of motions are passed in this House without effect. This unfair and unjust expenditure goes on in these votes year after year. I hope the Minister, when the Bill is passing through Committee, will be able to tell us how the money has been spent, how the stock has been sold, and to whom. Regarding the Rabbit vote, it appears as if one-fourth of the money allocated to it will be spent on clerks, inspectors, and surveys, before the actual work of fencing is done. It is little use the Upper House existing at all if it does not look into such matters. We cannot reject this Bill; but we can send up suggestions to the other House, and stand by our decisions. It must come to that, or we may as well altogether do away with this House. I hope to be able to get farther information in Committee.

HON. H. J. SAUNDERS (Metropolitan): I should like to say a few words regarding the public works of this country which are carried out departmentally. I have just travelled over the Leonora railway, and it appears to me that the reason why that railway has not been properly opened to Leonora is owing to the red-tapeism of the Government. From inquiries I made during the last few days, it seems that the Government put certain men in charge there and do not give them any authority. Apparently the officers in charge are not able to dismiss a man.

If anything goes wrong they have to write to Perth, and it takes a month or two to get an answer. Therefore the work cannot proceed as it would were the railway being built by a contractor who had tendered for its construction. The time has come when Parliament should set its face against any more departmental work being carried out in this State. Yesterday the line from Malcolm was publicly opened, to carry passengers as from Saturday last. We happened to strike a heavy rainfall at Kookynie, the rain coming down in torrents; and hundreds of tons of goods were left lying in the wet, the Government having made no provision for their proper protection. I venture to predict a large number of packages will be ruined. Whether the Government are responsible is more than I am able to say; but so far as I can see, no provision was made, but the goods were simply dumped on the ground, and there they lay. Regarding the Department of Agriculture, Mr. Burgess seems strongly to object to bulls and other animals being imported by the Government.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: And left in the towns.

HON. H. J. SAUNDERS: I think the hon. member said members of Parliament bought those bulls.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: I said a member of the other House has them now.

HON. H. J. SAUNDERS: I thought the hon. member was referring to the stock imported and exhibited at Guildford, when the Royal Agricultural Society held its last show; and that the hon. member was referring to me, because I happened to buy some of that stock. I was charged a fair price for the stock, and I paid the Government its exact value, if not a little more. The officials assured me the price they charged for the stock was the price which it actually cost the Government for purchase and importing to this State; and if the hon. member had been there a little earlier, he might have bought the same stock for himself. They were exhibited on the show-ground, and everyone knew they were for sale. When I saw the stock, I asked the secretary what was the price. He told me, and I tried to knock it down. Finally I agreed to buy at the price the Government paid for it; therefore I do

not think the finances of the State have suffered by the importation of that stock.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: What about the stock unsold?

HON. H. J. SAUNDERS: No doubt the Government, if sufficiently hard up, will put them up to auction and give the hon. member an opportunity of bidding.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—Application of moneys:

HON. J. T. GLOWREY moved that progress be reported.

HON. SIR GEORGE SHENTON: No progress had been made.

Motion put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	7
Noes	...	...	...	8
				—
Majority against	...	...	...	1

AYES.	NOES.
Hon. R. G. Burgess	Hon. T. F. O. Brimage
Hon. F. T. Crowder	Hon. E. M. Clarke
Hon. C. E. Dempster	Hon. J. W. Hackett
Hon. J. T. Glowrey	Hon. A. Jameson
Hon. B. C. O'Brien	Hon. R. Laurie
Hon. J. M. Speed	Hon. G. Randell
Hon. J. D. Connolly	Hon. Sir George Shenton
(Teller).	Hon. H. J. Saunders
	(Teller).

Motion thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2—agreed to.

Schedules A, B, C—agreed to.

Preamble, title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and, on motion by the MINISTER FOR LANDS, read a first time.

COAL MINES REGULATION BILL.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and, on motion by HON. E. M. CLARKE, read a first time.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE BILL.

SECOND READING—AMENDMENT (THREE MONTHS).

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. Jameson), in moving the second reading, said: This Bill provides for the establishment of a parliamentary standing committee to

investigate and report on proposals for public works. New South Wales and Victoria furnish us with very good precedents for this measure. In those States the limit at which public works become referable to the committee is higher than we propose to make it—£20,000 instead of £10,000. The Victorian and New South Wales public works committees have now existed for several years, and have been found to answer very well indeed. The proposal of the Government is that the Committee here shall consist of five members—three members of the Legislative Assembly, and two members of the Legislative Council. Those members will be elected by their respective bodies. The committee is to have power to sit and transact business during recess as well as during the session, and may sit at such times and in such places and do its business in such manner as may be most convenient for the proper discharge of its functions. It is provided that three members shall form a quorum. Members will no doubt recognise the great advantage which this Bill promises to the State. During the past session, for instance, there has been such a rush of motions and of general business in both Houses of Parliament, and particularly in another place, that it has been difficult, if not impossible, to consider questions relating to public works. Moreover, parliamentary bodies as a whole are not well adapted for considering questions of detail—such a question, for instance, as the cost of a work. Questions of policy, of course, will always have to be decided, in a large measure at all events, by Parliament. But even on questions of policy the opinion of Parliament as a body may well be modified by the opinion of the proposed committee. We have heard charges of extravagance on the part of the Government in carrying out public works, and no doubt there is a tendency towards extravagance on the part of Parliaments and Ministries. By means of a small responsible committee, consisting of members of both Houses of Parliament, we shall be able to focus matters more clearly and distinctly, especially if the committee sit during recess, when it will have ample time to discuss and consider proposals for works to be submitted to Parliament when the session commences. I see great advan-

tages in the measure, and only wonder that it has not been introduced before.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: How are the members of the committee responsible?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: They are responsible in so far as they take the oath provided by the schedule:—

I, A.B., do solemnly and sincerely promise and declare that, according to the best of my skill and ability, I will faithfully, impartially, and truly execute the office and perform the duties of a member of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: That is the responsibility?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Surely the members of the committee are responsible when they take an oath to do their duty to their country! Surely such an oath imposes some responsibility!

HON. J. W. HACKETT: We all try to do our duty by the country.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I wish to bring to the particular notice of hon. members Clause 17, which fixes the limit at which works become referable to the committee. It reads:—

No public work, the estimated cost of completing which exceeds Ten thousand pounds, shall be hereafter carried out, unless in accordance with a resolution of the Assembly, made after inquiry and report as aforesaid. "Public work," for the purposes of this section, includes any continuation or reconstruction of or extension or repairs to any existing work.

The limit in New South Wales and Victoria, as I have mentioned, is £20,000; but of course those are larger States, and carry out works on a larger scale.

HON. G. RANDELL: A statement was made in the other House that the limit was £10,000 in New South Wales and Victoria.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Speaking from memory, I think the limit is £20,000. However, I can look the matter up again. One advantage of this Bill—and I consider it a great advantage—is that the amount of remuneration to be paid to members of the Committee is exceedingly meagre. In Victoria and New South Wales, the fees are much higher than those proposed here. It has been stated—though one hardly likes to repeat the statement—that elsewhere the measure has been used as an engine for securing political support. It has been alleged that the Government sought to secure the support of

certain members by urging the appointment of those members to the committee. Nothing of the kind can occur here, because the inducement is wanting. For a sitting of not less than two hours members are paid only £1 1s., while the chairman receives £1 11s. 6d. Traveling expenses are on the same scale as allowed to Ministers, namely 25s. per day. Of course, members of the committee, being members of Parliament, have a free pass over the railways. I think that if a Bill of this kind had been brought forward 10 years ago, the State would have been in a better position to-day. I can only hope that hon. members will see their way to support the second reading, and let the Bill become law as early as possible. Then a programme of carefully-considered public works may be submitted during next session. It is perfectly clear the advantages must be great in the constitution of a committee of this kind. Therefore, I hope members will see their way to pass the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. W. HACKETT (South-West): I humbly hope the House will not see its way to pass this measure. I am not, of course, disposed to quarrel with the fact that the Appropriation Bill has come to us at the end of the session—it must always do so; but I really object to a measure of such importance as this one being brought up and debated at the end of the session when we are unable to give attention to the principle and details of the Bill. Dr. Jameson is unable to inform us at this moment what is the limit that has been adopted in one of the Eastern States—New South Wales.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I said £20,000.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: You are sure of that? You stake the Bill on that?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The hon. gentleman is decided, and I congratulate him. I challenge anyone who has listened to the remarks of the hon. member to say that he fully understands the advantages of the Bill. The hon. member said that it has worked with great benefit in another State. Would the hon. member tell us what benefit the other State professes to have derived. The supporters of the Act in that other State have said that hundreds of thousands of pounds

have been saved in the construction of railways by the passage of their measure, and the opponents of the Act say that the law has practically been inoperative. It has stopped works of usefulness, and the only works which it has been active in hindering are those which are really needed to develop the country by bringing the districts into closer communication with the capital.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: That would be the effect here.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: No doubt it would. As a matter of fact, in the city of Sydney, the most wasteful, the most monstrous public work within the last few years—a work which is costing or has cost half a million of money, and which it is now publicly known will have to be pulled down—was adopted by the public works committee, and recommended to Parliament by that body. It was adopted because it was in the city of Sydney, and would employ plenty of workmen and plenty of builders if the expenditure were carried out. Those who wanted wages knew that there would be plenty of work because it was to be a splendid stone structure, therefore there would be employment for stonemasons and builders; but the work, it is absolutely asserted, has been found to be mischievous, and is to be pulled down.

MEMBER: What work is that?

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The Darling Harbour bridge. It blocks the waterway to such an extent that it is an obstruction, and will have to be pulled down. That is the issue of this business in New South Wales, but that is a small matter. Our objections are to the principle of this measure, which I hope the House will carefully weigh before they consent to pass it. I was more than astonished, nay I was shocked, to hear it stated by the highest political authority that such a matter as the Esperance railway could not be discussed in the Press or Parliament, but that it was a matter to be decided by the new public works committee to be constituted. These very words have been used also by another eminent well-known member of Parliament who leads a party, if small in number, of great importance and great influence. Both these gentlemen declined to reply to one of those touching appeals which reporters sometimes make to the inner conscience of

public men to discuss the matter, as it was wholly a question for the public works committee to decide. It seems to me the object of the Bill is to hand over to five estimable gentlemen—

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Three.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Three or five; but not more than five.

HON. G. RANDALL: They will all be there.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Yes. What guarantee have we that those five gentlemen will be more intelligent, more patriotic, more industrious, and more public-minded than Dr. Jameson and his colleagues, because this Bill is practically a vote of censure on the Government whom the people have put in power. It is a declaration that the present Ministerial system is a failure. The most important side of the Ministerial duty is that of developing the country and constructing public works, for after all finance is the root of all politics in these new countries; and are Ministers unfitted to decide how the money is to be spent and what money is to be expended? Will anyone say that these five gentlemen—they may be honest and upright gentlemen—will not be swayed by party feelings, will not be swayed by feelings of friendship, but will only have one desire, and that to serve the country? Will anyone tell me that these five gentlemen will be above all such feelings? We know very well they will not be responsible in spite of what Dr. Jameson has said, but they will be open to all the feelings I have described. They will not have to answer for their actions to anybody except their own consciences. I prefer to have a Minister before us and five Ministers in another place, whom we can attack for any wrong use they make of their power, or any wasteful expenditure of public money. I do not understand what the Minister meant by saying that he trusted the Bill would be passed in order that a programme of public works could be approved by the committee and put before Parliament next session. Surely the hon. member has not read the Bill or studied the question in the least. This programme cannot be drawn up until next session, when the hon. member or one of his colleagues will have to submit the question to the Legislative Assembly, or will have to submit the question to the

House and obtain a resolution of the House before the committee can set to work at all. It is clear the hon. member was a session too soon. The reason I object to the Bill is that it is simply performing the duties which the Constitution requires, and the country requires, should be performed by the Government. Just let me read to the House what it is the committee are supposed to do:—

2. In considering and reporting on any work as aforesaid, the Committee shall have regard to—

- (a.) The probable cost thereof, and the stated purpose thereof;
- (b.) The necessity or advisability of carrying it out, and as to the amount of revenue (if any) which such work may reasonably be expected to produce;
- (c.) The present and prospective public value of such work; and
- (d.) Generally the Committee shall, in all cases, take such measures and procure such information as may enable them to inform or satisfy the Legislative Assembly as to the expediency or otherwise of carrying out the work in question.

I say, without fear of contradiction that the duty of informing or satisfying—I do not like the words “Legislative Assembly”: the words should be “the Parliament”—the duty of informing or satisfying Parliament as to the expediency or otherwise of carrying out the work should be left to the Government. What in the name of the world will the six Ministers draw their £6,000 a year for? What have they their responsibilities for, why are they trusted? Simply because we believe they will do their duty. But they desire to shirk and push off their responsibilities on to the shoulders of this body, and heaven knows how this committee is to be appointed! We not only pay these Ministers their handsome salaries to enable them to do this work, but we give them a huge staff of public servants, and the best means of obtaining all the information that can be obtained, yet we are to pay a body to inform or satisfy the Legislative Assembly as to the expediency or otherwise of carrying out public work! If the object of the Bill before Parliament was to reduce the salary of the Engineer-in-Chief, to reduce the salaries of Ministers by one half, and increase the salaries of the committee in

a corresponding degree, then there would be some ground perhaps for accepting this Bill; but this is not to be done. We shall still have the enormous overgrown public service, we shall still have a staff of great magnitude from which it is necessary to obtain all its information for Ministers; we have still to keep all that alive as a going concern, and in addition create another expensively paid body, and as they can call anybody to their aid they can run the country into expense, for in addition to the guinea a day and the guinea and a half for the chairman, they can run the country into any expense in the way of witnesses, expenses for travelling about, because they get other expenses besides the 25s. a day pocket-money.

MEMBER: Incidental expenses.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: They are entitled to that. They receive it in New South Wales in addition to the 25s. a day pocket-money, and the guinea a day with which to provide themselves with gloves and tobacco. Are the members of this committee, which it is proposed shall take on itself the duties which we expect the Ministry to carry out, to be put in that position and rewarded with very handsome salaries to enable them to do their work? If that is to be done, let Ministers confess that the day of Parliamentary Government is over, and that Parliamentary Government is entering on a new phase, worked more cheaply and perhaps more efficiently, but to be done through this committee, and not through the departments. When we look at the Bill from another point of view, what is the effect? And I am not quite sure if it is not the object of the Bill to relieve Ministers and the departmental officers of their responsibility. Once a work is brought in and explained in a perfunctory manner, the Minister in charge throws the resolution on the table and it is then sent to the committee. Then the Minister can retire—I will not say to the refreshment room, for Ministers never go to the refreshment room—very well satisfied that he has done his duty, satisfied that he has done everything that is expected of him, and that the onus rests on the five gentlemen who are to be selected—as I say, we do not know how or who they will be. They will not be the busiest men, therefore they will not be

the best men in the two Houses. But Ministers are quite satisfied they will get rid of the whole thing, like the *Esperance* railway. The whole responsibility is to be thrown on the committee. The grounds on which the work is to be carried out, and the reasons for its construction will be got rid of altogether. The Minister will say, in that suave manner of his, "We have nothing to do with it: we have sent the work to the committee; there will be gentlemen there who will answer questions which will be put to them." We know the way the measure acts in New South Wales, and therefore Ministers say they have no responsibility. Another party will be relieved of responsibility—the departmental officers of the Government. They will rub their hands with satisfaction: their responsibility will be shifted on to the committee. It is for the committee to worm it out of the officers, to travel about, to swear witnesses: the officers will throw the onus of the line or the work on the committee to recommend what is advisable to the House. Ministers will take a back seat, and the five gentlemen will become an inner cabinet, and their recommendation or resolution will have to be adopted by Parliament. One other matter is that Parliament gets rid of its responsibility, has half its responsibilities taken away. What the committee, after so much trouble and scrutiny, decide to be best for the country, I suppose Parliament will accept. Certainly Ministers will, if they can, insist on its being accepted, because its acceptance will relieve them from all responsibility. It is a strong inducement for a Government to be a lazy Government, which of course this Government is not. Or if there be an incompetent or indifferent public works committee, or a Parliament which likes to sit outside the walls of the Chamber rather than within, there is an inducement to neglect business. But on the day on which this principle is followed out, Parliamentary Government passes off the scene; and that would be the real effect of this Bill if it were acted on. Of course, we know it will not be acted on. A number of us here will not pay the least attention to the recommendations of those gentleman, who cannot know as much about the works as Ministers; and I shall go so far as to say they should not know so much,

because they have not the same means of knowing, nor are they paid the same salaries to attain the same knowledge. If the motion for the second reading be passed, I shall move an amendment which I think the House will carry, and which will bring the whole Bill down to the ground. The amendment is that every proposal of this select committee, or grand committee, or joint committee, or whatever it be called, shall be made a separate Bill, and passed through both Houses of Parliament. We have a right to insist on that, otherwise the whole matter begins and ends in the Legislative Assembly. We should have it, not in the Appropriation Act, not down among the Estimates merely, but as a separate and distinct Bill to be considered by itself. I am not quite clear whether this Bill is in order, or whether it is not a violation of the Constitution Act. We all know that the acceptance of an office of profit under the Crown vacates a seat in either House. An amendment of the Constitution Act has to go through various forms, with which I need not trouble the House, but none of which have been observed in connection with this Bill. On the contrary, Clause 21 of the Bill declares that —

The position of a member of the committee shall not be deemed an office of profit under the Crown so as to render such member incapable of sitting or voting as a member of the Legislature, or to make void the election of such member.

What power is there to make a change of that kind—to declare that an office of profit under the Crown is not an office of profit under the Crown? The Constitution Act must first be amended; therefore if this be an amendment of that Act, the provisions rendered necessary by the Constitution Act must be observed. That an office on this proposed committee would be an office of profit under the Crown, even though Parliament voted the money, would be obvious. All the money is voted to the Crown, and the Crown pays those persons to whom it is indebted. An obligation is here created to provide salaries for certain persons. They are not styled officers, but persons. The clause declares that these salaried persons are not officers or officials, and do not hold office under the Crown, and are not paid by the Crown, directly or

indirectly. It would appear that the matter has not been sufficiently considered, and I hope the Minister in charge will, in addressing himself to the question, give us an assurance that the law officers of the Crown have considered this point, and that the Bill in its present shape is in order. Be that as it may, the fact remains that a place of profit is created under the Crown. I trust I have made out my case. This is one of the most dangerous experiments ever attempted. New South Wales adopted it; and I venture to say that those who study the history of the subject in New South Wales will come to an opinion different from that of the Minister. At all events, to relieve Ministers of work which they are sworn to perform and paid to do is a proposition which cannot be entertained. As soon as the Minister for Lands and his colleagues fail in their duty to the country or to Parliament, then let us bring in this Bill, or in the alternative put them out of office. I prefer the latter. But if they intend to hold office, and to bring in measures utterly wasteful and impolitic for the country, then let us bring in such a Bill as this, and let them pass another Bill putting themselves out of office for the next ten years. I now move:

That the word "now" be struck out, and "this day three months" be added.

HON. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan) : I have much pleasure in seconding Mr. Hackett's amendment, and I can satisfy myself by saying that I indorse every word he has uttered regarding the scope and the operation of this Bill. Had it been somewhat different, we might have called it a self-denying ordinance; but it is rather a self-abnegating ordinance of the Ministry of the day.

HON. J. W. HACKETT : A self-indulgent ordinance.

HON. G. RANDELL : I am quite sure the Bill diminishes the right and proper functions of the Ministry, and to a certain extent damages the independence of Parliament, and especially of this honourable House. I shall say no more. The last speaker made an excellent case against the Bill, which case will, I hope, impress itself on every member.

HON. F. T. CROWDER (East) : No doubt this is a very pretty little Bill, very prettily drawn. No doubt the gentleman

who drew it was imbued with the same idea as that held in another place I shall not mention, that this place does not exist, or if it does exist, it is peopled with a lot of old fools of whom it is unnecessary to take any notice; because the whole Bill absolutely ignores the existence of the Legislative Council of this State. By the Bill, the whole of the business the Public Works Department has to perform is to be referred to the Legislative Assembly only. My trouble as a member of Parliament—and I take it, the trouble of most members of Parliament—is to find someone on whom to rest the responsibility for what takes place. At present we try to fix the responsibility on Ministers, and they to a great extent put it upon their officers. If the Bill becomes law, it makes the position worse than before. The Government will not accept any responsibility, the officers will not accept any responsibility, and they will both combine to throw the responsibility on this public works committee of gentlemen who receive the magnificent salaries—if they sit every day in the year—of £550 for the chairman, and £365 for the other members!

HON. G. RANDELL : They would not sit on Sundays.

HON. F. T. CROWDER : That is, giving them Sundays. They would sit if you paid them. The man who drafted the Bill was so certain they would sit at every opportunity that he has absolutely been obliged to provide that they shall not sit twice in one day, and they would do so if they had a chance.

HON. J. W. HACKETT : In New South Wales they sit more than once per day.

HON. G. BELLINGHAM : They can; but they cannot draw double fees.

HON. F. T. CROWDER : In New South Wales, the public works committee is the means of people in power keeping all their relations in affluence. So far as I could gather when I was there, it has done no good whatever, and the same thing would go on under this Bill. The trouble would be that nobody would be responsible, and I take it that we as members of this Parliament are paid to be responsible to the people, and it is our duty individually and collectively carefully to go through every item of expenditure by the Government, and to say to it yea or nay; and not to shift

our just responsibility to a committee of five, appointed, perhaps, for reasons which I need not mention. The duty of this committee would be to sit on all matters which involve an expenditure of over £10,000. Now if a Bill were brought in for a committee to investigate all works involving an expenditure of over £500, I do not know that I should not vote for it. I should vote for it for the simple reason that it would prevent Ministers going all over the country saying to the electors, "What do you want?" "Do you like it?" "You can have it." That is the position to-day. I am sorry for Ministers, because as long as we have responsible Government, and Ministers are appointed as they are now appointed under the Constitution, so long will they be beset for these votes. If we had a Ministry appointed, as I hope we shall some day, for five years, that sort of thing would be stopped. The only object I could have in supporting the measure would be in case it would take away the necessity for Ministers having to scatter gifts of public money all over the country.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: If it would stop the small jobs.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: A £10,000 job is nothing to us now, though when I entered Parliament that was considered a large sum. Some people now talk as if a million were nothing; but before long they will find out what a million means. The Bill will not in any way affect the waste of money, because it will deal only with sums of £10,000 and over; and it is the absolute duty, first of the Ministry and then of their departmental officers, to advise on those projected public works, and lay their advice before Parliament for its consideration. I, for one, shall not hand over my power and my right to say whether a work shall be carried out, to a committee appointed as this committee would be. I hope hon. members will not vote for the Bill, but for the amendment. This is not the sort of legislation which should be passed; for it simply takes away the right of members of Parliament to have a voice in regard to important public works.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (in explanation): I wish to point out to the last speaker that this House will not altogether be ignored under the Bill.

There will be on the committee two members of the Legislative Council.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: That is the only reference to us in the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: And by Clause 8 it is provided that the report of the committee shall be laid on the table of both Houses of Parliament; so that we are not entirely ignored. I should like to draw the attention of Mr. Hackett to Clause 14, which provides that any proposed public work may be referred to the committee in two ways, by resolution of the Legislative Assembly, or by the Government during any recess of Parliament.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The Legislative Council is not mentioned.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: No; but I understood you to say it was utterly impossible that any proposals could be brought forward except through the Assembly. There is another course: by the Government during any recess of Parliament. Therefore, I did not altogether ignore the point, as the hon. member said. It must surely be admitted that advantage will result from carrying this Bill. As I said before, at the present time the onus of deciding on works is largely thrown on Parliament, which as a body is, in the opinion of many people, unfit to decide questions of detail.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Is not this a Parliamentary committee?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is more in the nature of a select committee. In the ordinary course of business, whenever we want to investigate a matter in detail we appoint a select committee; and this standing committee is really akin to a select committee, which, however, has power to sit not only during the session, but also during the recess.

HON. G. RANDALL: Would not this committee be open to political influence?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course, the members of any committee will always be open to some sort of influence; but seeing that they are only to be paid £1 ls. for two hours' sitting, there is not much of a lever. However, I rose only to put Mr. Hackett right.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY (North-East): I have great pleasure in supporting the second reading of this Bill, the spirit and principles of which have my entire sympathy. Indeed, I think it a

pity that such a measure was not introduced years ago. Speaking as a man who has had some experience of public works, I assure the House with every confidence that if a similar measure had been in force three or four years ago, the country would have benefited to the extent of at least several hundreds of thousands of pounds.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Where is the evidence of that?

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: If the hon. member will go through the country he will see plenty of evidence of it. It may be argued that under the present system we employ a number of architects, engineers, and so forth; but the questions which the committee will have to decide will be mostly questions of policy. The committee will be able to devote a great deal more time to public works proposals than Ministers possibly can. Its members, representing as they do various parts of the country, should know public requirements and local conditions better than either the Minister for Works or the Engineer-in-Chief.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The members of the committee can give the House the benefit of all that knowledge.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: I think it rather a pity that this should be a Parliamentary committee. It is highly questionable whether in our small Western Australian Parliament we can obtain five competent, practical men. I contend that if the members of the committee are not practical men, its proceedings must be, to a great extent, what Mr. Hackett has characterised them, merely a farce. This is the only real fault I see in the Bill. Undoubtedly the measure gives the committee great powers, and I think this quite right. The members of the committee must have every reasonable power if they are to do effective work. Here the question of expenditure crops up. I observe by Clause 12 that the committee has power to call in assessors and professional men. I fear such a provision may result in heavy expense. No opportunity ought to be afforded for calling in assistance; for the Public Works Committee, to be of any use at all, should, as I have said, consist of practical men, who will be able to decide professional questions for

themselves. I entirely disapprove of the provision. A measure similar to this has been in force in Victoria and New South Wales for a number of years, and, so far as I am able to judge, has done much good—more especially in Victoria. I agree that to a certain extent the Act in force in New South Wales has been abused. The remuneration there paid to members of the committee is fairly large. The fact that the measure has been abused, however, is not a fault inherent in its nature. Mr. Hackett mentioned the case of the Darling Harbour bridge as an instance of the unsuccessful working of a public works committee. Here again I say that the fault is not in the system, but in the *personnel* of the committee. If we have a bad Ministry, and that Ministry commits bad acts, the deduction drawn is not that responsible government is bad, but merely that we have a Ministry we ought to get rid of. And so I contend that there are bad men on the Public Works Committee of New South Wales. I certainly must enter my protest against Clause 16, under which the reports of the committee are to be referred to the Assembly alone. When the Bill goes into Committee, I shall move that the word "Assembly" be struck out, and "Parliament" substituted; so that reports may be laid before both Houses. I certainly think we have the same right to be furnished with the proposed committee's reports as the Legislative Assembly has.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Evidently we shall not keep much of the Bill, in Committee.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: Perhaps not. A good deal has been urged against this Bill on the score of expense. My opinion is that the Bill is at fault in the matter of remuneration. How can we hope to get good men to serve on the committee for a remuneration of £1 1s. per day? Members may have to travel hundreds of miles in the discharge of their duties; and, although they receive travelling expenses, the probability is that the actual cost of journeys to them will be four times the amount of the allowance. Certainly the measure cannot be condemned on the score of extravagance. When the Bill was discussed in another place, I noticed that men like the Hon. F. H. Piessé—

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member must not refer to what took place in another House.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Say you have read of it somewhere.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: I noticed in certain reports relating to this Bill that men of considerable experience had given it their strong support—particularly one man who has for four or five years held a position at the head of the Works Department. The opinion of such a man should be valued.

HON. J. M. SPEED (Metropolitan-Suburban): Believing in government of the people by the people for the people, I shall support Mr. Hackett's amendment. The pivot round which our parliamentary system turns is that the people shall return to Parliament representatives who will be responsible to the people for the work they do. The whole object of this Bill, as Mr. Hackett has so ably pointed out, is to allow the Government to shirk their proper responsibilities. I may go even farther, and say that in proposing this measure the Ministry admit their incapacity to carry out the function which is the reason of their existence, namely the government of the country. I am prepared to maintain that in passing this Bill, Parliament will admit its incapacity to carry on the business of the country. The work which the Bill seeks to refer to a standing committee is such as should be done by the Ministry of the day. The Ministry are really a board appointed by the people to manage the affairs of the people. If we find that the board cannot carry out the work committed to it, then Parliamentary representation, at any rate so far as regards our present system, must be admitted to be a failure. No thinking person who reads the Bill but will come to the conclusion that if the measure be really necessary, the manner in which government has been conducted in English-speaking countries must be regarded as a total failure, and that it is necessary to seek a substitute for it. Such bodies as that proposed to be created by this Bill have proved a failure in most of the States which have tried them. I need only refer hon. members to the boards which have administered Government railways in various States of the Australian group. It is well known that certain members of

Parliament support this measure because they are under the impression that railways and public works have in the past been obtained by log rolling, and other improper methods. I shall ask those hon. members, however, to consider whether it is not just as likely that the same evils will make themselves felt if the responsibility for public works be referred to a committee, as proposed. When a member brings forward in the House a proposal for the construction of a public work there is some opportunity of attacking him and showing that he is not doing right by the country—if, of course, the proposal be an improper one. But how is responsibility to be fixed on the committee in such circumstances? Practically, we have no means of doing it. Whether right or wrong, the reasons advanced by the committee will probably outweigh anything urged in opposition, particularly if the Government support the committee's recommendations, as will usually be the case. For the reasons I have stated, but more particularly for those advanced by Mr. Hackett—a good many of which I should have urged myself had that hon. member not stated them—I shall support the amendment.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER (East): I do not consider the present measure a desirable one. It is admitted that reformatory legislation in connection with public works is necessary; but after the powerful arguments advanced by Mr. Hackett I cannot regard this measure with favour. During the time Parliament will be in recess the Ministry will have ample opportunity of examining into the work of every public department, and also of considering the advisability of any public works proposed. It is the duty of the Government to consider public works, and to appoint a committee solely to relieve the Government of responsibility is therefore utterly wrong. We should be placing on the country a tax in no way necessary for an object in no way acceptable to the people. Undoubtedly members of the present Ministry have had a great deal to do. During the time Parliament has been in session they have not been able to go into many matters requiring attention. The hands of Ministers have certainly been very full. I do not, therefore, accuse the

present Government of neglect. When Parliament is in recess, however, there will not be the slightest reason why Ministers should not go carefully and thoroughly into the working of every Government department, with a view to effecting those economies which are necessary in the interests of the State. There is not a single department but requires re-organisation in some respect. The management of many Government departments is undoubtedly grossly extravagant, and this remark applies especially to the Railway Department. The matters I have indicated are such as the Government must devote attention to; the public look to Ministers to provide a remedy. I shall support the amendment proposed by Mr. Hackett, because I do not think we should be doing our duty by the people in passing this Bill.

HON. G. BELLINGHAM (South): I am disposed to regard this Bill as an admirable measure for the place in which it was introduced. Certainly in passing the measure we should deprive ourselves of what little power we, as the Legislative Council of Western Australia, have at present in the administration of public affairs. Under this Bill, the administration would be entirely in the hands of the Assembly. Clause 3 provides that the proposed committee shall consist of two members of this House, and of three members of the Legislative Assembly. I see no reason why both Houses should not have equal representation; and therefore I say Clause 3 alone, which is quite sufficient to throw all the power into the hands of the Assembly, should insure the rejection of the measure here. Clause 6 again provides that the standing committee shall present its reports to the Assembly alone. It appears to be assumed that the Council has no interest whatever in the reports. All these features of the Bill go to show that the Government, in introducing it, were endeavouring to take away a certain amount of power from this Chamber. Farther, the Bill provides that no works of an estimated cost of less than £10,000 shall be considered by the committee. Many public buildings scattered through the State have, of course, not cost anything like £10,000, though in the aggregate the expense involved in them has been very great. Consequently a great

deal of work would still be done by the Government without reference to the proposed committee. Yet another objection to the Bill is that the members of the committee would have a leaning towards various constituencies; and this remark applies especially to members of another place. Legislative Council electorates, of course, comprise several districts. I believe the intentions of the Government in submitting the Bill were good; but I cannot see my way to support the second reading. The Bill, to my idea, is badly drawn—it does not give to members of both Houses equal power, and on that account I shall vote with Mr. Hackett to throw the Bill out, for the present.

HON. B. C. O'BRIEN (Central): I do not like to give a silent vote on this question, and I will tell the House why I intend to vote for the amendment. It is not from any selfish motive, and not perhaps that the House has not the power it should have in this matter; but I hold the view, in common with other members, that this Bill takes the responsibility away from a quarter where I think it should remain—that is with the Cabinet. If the Government have not sufficient power to deal with the expenditure of large sums of money on public works, no committee that we may appoint can be fit to deal with it. It has been wisely said by several members that the Bill is a reflection on members of Parliament, for it takes away the responsibility from Ministers and members. I cannot say more, as I shall be only covering the ground other members have already traversed. These are the principal reasons for supporting the amendment.

Amendment put and passed, and the second reading thus negatived.

ADJOURNMENT.

PRINTING OF DOCUMENTS—DELAY.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Members might give some idea as to the adjournment. If the House adjourn until to-morrow and met on Monday, the work might be got through early next week; but if the House did not meet until Tuesday, it would be the end of the week before the business could be got through.

HON. C. SOMMERS: It was advisable to meet to-morrow as well as on

Monday, all the members desiring to bring the session to a close as quickly as possible. A lot of work had still to be done.

THE PRESIDENT: During the last three weeks the Assembly had been sitting on Mondays, but the Council had met on only three days of the week. Members might fairly consider the suggestion thrown out by the Minister for Lands, and sit to-morrow and Monday. The work could then be got through by the early part of the week.

HON. J. T. GLOWREY: It was to be hoped members would not agree to the proposal. Some consideration should be shown to country and goldfields members. If the House met on Monday or Tuesday, the whole of the work could easily be cleared off.

THE PRESIDENT: Members should take into consideration that they were now paid for attendance, and when a request was made that the House should meet to clear off business, that suggestion should be accepted. There was one matter he wished to bring under the notice of the Minister for Lands. On two occasions within the last ten days he had been forced to draw the Minister's attention to the delay caused to the proceedings of the House by the Printing Department. The other day he sent a rather important motion (which he had hoped to place in the hands of members this evening) to the Government Printer. It was not a long document, and the Printer was requested to send it down to be distributed to members to-night. The document was not yet received from the Printing Office. At the close of the session, when the two Houses were sitting trying to clear off the work, some arrangement should be made by the Minister in charge of the Printing Department so that the requests of either House of Parliament should be met, and that the work be taken in hand by the Printing Office at once. The proof-sheet of the matter which he desired to circulate amongst members was revised by him at half-past 11 o'clock to-day, and returned to the Printing Office at 12 o'clock; but the document had not yet been printed and sent down. Parliament had a right, especially at the close of the session, to have its work attended to.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was to be regretted this difficulty had occurred through the shortcomings of the Printing Office. He would have the matter looked into, and see that it did not occur again. The Printing Department had a lot of work to carry out—there were reports of select committees and other work to do, and the session had been a very long one. The officer in charge of the Printing Department complained that the office was undermanned. He now moved that the House at its rising do adjourn until half-past 4 o'clock to-morrow.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: There was no objection to sitting to-morrow, but some consideration should be shown to country and goldfields members. It might be arranged to sit until half-past 6 to-morrow evening, which would allow members living in the country to get home.

THE PRESIDENT: The Minister would accept that suggestion.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 10 minutes past 9 o'clock, until the next day.
