

BILLS (2)—RETURNED FROM THE COUNCIL.

1. Mines Regulation Act Amendment.
 2. Licensing Act Amendment Continuance.
- With amendments.

House adjourned at 6-11 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 19th October, 1915.

	PAGE
Papers presented	1684
Joint Select Committee. Money Bills Procedure ..	1684
Motions: Commonwealth Defence Act, Con-	
scription	1684
Commonwealth Constitution Referendums ..	1700
Public Works, authorisation by Parliament ..	1702
Agricultural Settlement and Immigration ..	1710
Papers: Power House, East Perth	1689
Bills: Industries Assistance Act Amendment,	
Com.	1684
Vermin Boards Act Amendment, 2r.	1697
Assent to Bills	1697

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Report on the inspection of liquors for the year 1914-15. 2, (a) Corrigin Road Board, Health Act, 1911-12.—Resolution (A) adopting model by-laws; (b) Burtville Local Board of Health.—Resolution (B) adopting model by-laws; (c) Melville Road Board.—by-law; (d) Menzies Road Board.—Resolution (A) adopting model by-laws. 3, Life Assurance Companies Act, 1899.—Tables in connection with the business done by life assurance companies operating in Western Australia. 4, Audit of accounts of the State meat stalls. 5, Report on the work of the Charities Department for the year ended 30th June, 1915. 6, Fremantle Harbour Trust.—Amendment of regulations Nos. 163 and 96.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.

Extension of time.

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) the time for bringing up the report was extended for a week.

MOTION — COMMONWEALTH DEFENCE ACT, CONSCRIPTION.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [4.34]:
I move—

That in the opinion of this House any attempt to extend the conscription sections, as set forth in the Commonwealth Defence Act, other than to amend the existing provisos therein relating to exemptions, so as to provide that age or physical infirmity shall be the only qualification for exemption, would be inimical to the best interests of Australia, and would not at this juncture assist the Empire and its Allies in prosecuting the present war to a successful conclusion.

I have no intention of trenching at any great length upon the valuable time of this Chamber. I recognise that the subject matter of the motion is one over which this House and this Parliament cannot exercise jurisdiction. The fact, however, that it covers a question which is well worthy of consideration at the hands of this House is my one and only reason for bringing it forward. For some time past various members of the Federal Parliament and a section of the Australian people have advocated that conscription should be enforced beyond the confines of the Commonwealth, or any of its territories. More recently in this State a section of the Press and a section of the community have been advocating in a similar direction. No doubt the action adopted by this section of the Press has been instrumental, to a very great extent, in prompting the hon. member for Geraldton (Mr. Heitmann) to give notice of a resolution of an affirmatory character in the Legislative Assembly in the direction of conscription. That motion

of Mr. Heitmann's has been given great prominence by one of the daily metropolitan papers. The views of prominent citizens of Perth have also been solicited in the direction of ascertaining their opinions in regard to this question. I note that the Honorary Minister (Hon. R. H. Underwood) as usual, has let fly on this matter without any consideration at all. He has said that he is for conscription, out and out. His statement, however, began and ended there. Another section of the business people and prominent commercial men has also expressed favour with the idea of conscription. I do not think that the fact of a man being a prominent business man, or a Minister, makes him competent in any way to deal with this question. This is a question that requires to have very careful consideration, and present comparisons should be made with past comparisons which I do not think has yet been done. I strongly deprecate the action taken on this very question by members of Parliament. The present Defence Act provides that members of Parliament are exempt from any service whatever in the defence forces of Australia. There are others who are also exempt, but I am specifically referring now to members of Parliament. I think it savours of bad form and shows a want of self-sacrifice on the part of members of Parliament when they advocate that Australian citizens should be asked to bear arms outside the Commonwealth or its territories, while they are still prepared to avail themselves of the exemption clauses under which they are not asked to bear arms, or even to do anything for the defence of Australia within its borders. Members of Parliament should, on this question, endeavour to place their own houses in order before they ask that the principle of conscription should be extended to other people. The principle is not applied to them in any shape or form whatever in Australia to-day. Until that happens, I ask them forever to hold their peace. It is very pleasing to note that, despite the efforts which are being made to enforce conscription in Australia, its advocates have received no encouragement from the only body that could give

effect to the principle, namely, the Federal Government. The Prime Minister himself on more than one occasion has declared that he is emphatically opposed to altering the existing Act. In order to more clearly demonstrate my points, it becomes necessary for me to refer to our Defence Act. I should like to say, in passing, that amongst conscriptionists and non-conscriptionists, there is a woeful ignorance in respect to our own defence laws and the Defence Act. It was not seriously contended that the purposes of the Act were other than for the defence of Australia. Had this been otherwise, or had it been made known that one of the purposes of the Defence Act was for aggression, or that its force should apply beyond the confines of Australia, we would have had no Defence Act as we know it to-day. I think that Section 49 of the Act places that point absolutely beyond dispute. It states that no member of the defence forces of Australia can be made to bear arms outside the Commonwealth. All the conscriptionists would have to do in my opinion would be to get Section 49 removed from the Act, or suspended, and every male inhabitant in Australia who had been a resident in the Commonwealth for six months (and was not exempt) and was between the age of 18 and 60 years could then, as prescribed by proclamation, be forced to bear arms within or without the Commonwealth. That is all the conscriptionist had to do so far as the Defence Act is concerned. Many, and unfortunately too many, of our people do not know that for the home defence of Australia conscription is as plainly set forth in this Act as it is in the Acts of Germany or any other continental nation. Our friends who advocate conscription desire that the saving clause should be amended or suspended. Were that done by any means whatever it would be a distinct breach of the mandate given to Parliament by the people. I think it would be against the best interests of Australia, if it moved a single step in the direction of amending that section; and until we get an appeal from the Imperial Government based on the fact that

they have passed legislation applying to compulsory military service at home and abroad, no action should be taken. Until that is done Australia, or any true Australian, has no right to interfere with our existing legislation. If this movement only applied to Australia there would be very little to worry about, but, unfortunately, it is not centred in Australia. We know that at the commencement of the war—and Mr. Lynn can bear me out—a section of the British press did all that was possible, unsuccessfully, to force the hands of the Imperial Parliament in the direction of conscription. I was very much struck by the reasons advanced by prominent thinkers and leading newspapers in England. This campaign failed in its object and the reason given for the failure was that it was due to the success of the voluntary system. If anyone had said that within twelve months of the outbreak of hostilities four millions of men would have joined the colours in England they would not have been taken seriously. The latest English newspapers reveal the fact that since the outbreak of war and up to the middle of last August no fewer than four million men joined the colours. We have only to come to our own little Commonwealth to find that 140,000 men have volunteered for service. Does that fact not prove that there are enough men offering? Has anyone in authority ever suggested that there should be conscription?

Hon. A. G. Jenkins: Lord Kitchener and the Australian Minister for Defence.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Lord Kitchener is the most maligned man to-day, maligned by the Northcliffe press, and for the simple reason that he would not adopt conscription. There may have been a shortage of men at the firing line, but even if conscription had been adopted that shortage would still have existed. Better results might have been obtained by conscription, but I have not yet been able to find that it has been possible by conscription to put up better results in the way of inducing men to join the colours than has been done by our voluntary system. Another point has been made much

of by agitators for conscription. They say that the present voluntary system is unfair in its application and unfair in its incidence. It may be unfair to this extent, that certainly a good class of men have gone but in all movements the best class always lead. Without drawing an invidious comparison between the class of men who went from this country, with the first contingents and the class going away to-day, I say that without doubt the best class certainly did go first and they set an example for the others to follow. All that has been said about the unfairness of the incidence and the application of the voluntary system can equally be said about the unfairness of the incidence and the application of conscription, that is, if we take it from the view point that it is going to be detrimental to the future of the nation. All conscription Acts undoubtedly provide that the flower of the manhood shall go first. The young unmarried men must be the first to go; then the young married men without families follow; then the provision is for young married men with families, and these gradations are carried out until the age of 60 years is reached. If we want an academic argument we can put up as good a case against the unfair incidence of conscription as we can against the unfair incidence of the voluntary system. I do not think that the lack of men has been a factor in our lack of progress up to date; as a matter of fact, I think that more men have been available than have been actually required. But there is one factor that must appeal to everybody and it is the shortage of equipment and munitions of war. That, it must be recognised, has had a lot to do with our inability to make that rapid progress which many of us desired to see. This is the very point upon which I would be much concerned if the advocates of conscription were to gain the day. The production of munitions is almost entirely in the hands of the working classes. We cannot produce commodities unless we have the human labour to apply to the manufacture of these commodities. Not only is the production of munitions in

the hands of the working classes in the United Kingdom but also in Australia. Another factor is, that the trades union movement embraces the greater percentage of the workers employed in the manufacture of munitions. If hon. members will take the trouble to look at the leading English newspapers and read the opinions of prominent men they will come to the conclusion that there is no disputing the fact that the trades union movement of Great Britain is dead against compulsion, unless it can be proved to their entire satisfaction that the voluntary system has failed. That is the position which appears mostly to me. Before getting away from that point I desire to bring in a new phase of this question which has not, to my knowledge, been heard of in Australia and it has emanated from my esteemed friend and colleague the Hon. J. E. Dodd. In a letter to me dated 8th September. Mr. Dodd bears out what I have already said. He states that the Northcliffe press are misrepresenting the conscription section of the Australian Defence Act to further compulsory service. Mr. Dodd holds the opinion that the trades unionists in England are right against conscription, and he thinks that any attempt to enforce it will almost bring about a revolution. The fact that the Northcliffe press are adopting this attitude as a lever in favour of conscription is sufficient to make every Australian who may be in favour of conscription pause and think before talking. The enforcement of conscription in Australia may mean not success but defeat. It is not a question of how conscription would be taken in Australia. It is a question of how conscription would be received in the Old Country, and I claim that if Australia proceeds in the direction of forcing England to that end, by legislating in the direction of conscription, such an action will certainly be received with disfavour at Home. As I said earlier in my remarks, I sincerely hope that due consideration will be given to the movement in this State as in Australia generally, and allow those who are in a position to say when the time comes whether or not

we should depart from the system we have enjoyed in the past. I hope that aspect will be taken. I am prepared to adopt that aspect and to say no more against conscription in Australia provided my opponents will sit quiet. There is just one other feature in regard to the Press which I deprecate and which I do not think has been conducive to the progress of the allies. The Press almost universally have not given to the public at large the true fighting capabilities and resources of our enemies. It is all very well to refer to them as huns and other names but I think the Press and those responsible for what appears in the Press have a duty to perform and that duty is to let everyone know that we are up against a stiff proposition: that we are up against nations that can not only fight, probably as well as our own men, but are better equipped, and I am perfectly satisfied that if the truth is put fairly and squarely to the people that we can win through without conscription.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH (North-East) [5.3]: I second the motion and in doing so I say that in my opinion it is time enough for Australia to go in for conscription when the old land has found it necessary to do so. They should first take the lead in this matter and as a consequence it is almost unnecessary for a motion of this kind to be moved in Australia either for or against conscription. There is a good deal one might say in favour of conscription and a good deal might be said against it. Personally I think the first thing that might have been done when it was found necessary to call for one hundred thousand men to assist in this terrible war was for the authorities to have taken into consideration the class of people whom they would have obtained. By that I mean to say it was quite unnecessary for the authorities to have allowed so many married men with large families to have been amongst the first to enlist. What do we find to-day? We find a large number of those men who have been killed have left behind widows with very large families of small children to mourn their loss. This is to

be regretted to a great extent. Probably those who have been controlling this business did not think it necessary to take that into account, but it must come home to everyone now the great loss we have sustained in Australia of the flower of the land who have gone to the war, and that amongst those lost have been men we can ill afford to lose, men who have left behind many little ones and widows to mourn their loss. As far as compulsory service is concerned I think that had we in Australia at the commencement of the war gone in for compulsory home training, from the cadet to men physically fit, up to fifty years of age, a lot of good would have been done towards getting recruits in case they were needed to go to the front. At the present time Australia has no doubt done its share but it looks as if it will be necessary to do a great deal more before this terrible war is over and as a consequence I think, like the mover of the motion, that members of Parliament should not be exempt. We should be liable to be called on to fight for our country as well as those for whom we make the laws. Rifle clubs and voluntary training are doing a great deal of good towards recruiting but I think it should be compulsory for men physically fit to be compelled to go into training, and those who cannot shoot be taught to shoot in case they are needed during the currency of the war, at any rate. That is all I wish to say.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [5.7]: I desire to say only a very few words in regard to the motion which I trust this House will not carry. I hope the House will not carry the motion for the very reason given by Mr. Cornell in moving it. Towards the close of his remarks the hon. member said that he was satisfied to allow those placed in a position of authority to decide. Why prejudice our position by telling them what they ought to do. There are three classes in the community. Those who believe in conscription—and although I do not intend on this occasion to argue in favour of conscription I say unhesitatingly I do believe in it. But there are three classes

in this community, those who believe in conscription and advocate it, those who are utterly opposed to it, and those who are prepared to allow those in authority to decide and not only loyally abide by their decision but to endeavour to promote and assist them. And if the Imperial Parliament says that conscription is necessary or the Federal Parliament says that it is necessary we will loyally abide by the decision and help in every possible way. Why does the hon. member ask us now to pledge ourselves against a proposal which may or may not become necessary? The hon. member has pointed out that in Great Britain four million men have joined the colours, and in Australia one hundred and forty thousand. We have to remember that of the male population of Great Britain those who have volunteered constitute no less than twenty per cent., and of the male population of Australia those who have volunteered constitute only five per cent. We as a community pledged ourselves that to the last man and the last shilling we will help the Empire in this terrible war. It is not for us to dictate to the Commonwealth Government or to suggest to the Commonwealth Government how our obligations are to be carried out. Of the male population of Great Britain twenty per cent. have volunteered and of the male population of Australia only five per cent. have volunteered, and I think there is very little doubt that our full twenty per cent. will be required. I am prepared to leave it to the Commonwealth Government to say how that twenty per cent. will be made up. There is no need for a lengthy discussion on this motion or for those of us who believe in conscription to advocate it now, and I do not see that any good would result from trying to get resolutions in favour of conscription carried in this Chamber. I do not propose to take that course and I hope the motion will be negatived. Before resuming my seat I wish to endorse the remarks which the hon. member made as to the courage and quality of the men who have gone to the front from Australia as

whole and from Western Australia in particular. Let me express my sentiments of pride and gratification—sentiments I am sure are shared by other hon. members—at the highest honour which a soldier can gain being obtained by a West Australian, the son of a gentleman who for years sat in the Parliament of the State, and who sat for a while in this House, and whose unworthy successor I happen to be. It has been my pleasure and privilege to have known and esteemed the recipient of this honour; it is no surprise to me that he won it and that the deed by which it was won was not any spectacular display of sudden heroism but that it was done steadily, “hanging on”—that is what Hugo Throssell was given the Victoria Cross for—and thereby encouraging others and saving the situation. Knowing his characteristic it was no surprise to me to know how he earned this great honour.

On motion by Colonial Secretary, debate adjourned.

PAPERS—POWER HOUSE, EAST PERTH.

Debate resumed from the 12th October on the motion by Hon. H. P. Colebatch, that the remaining files and contracts relating to the erection of the electric power station at East Perth now lying on the table of the House be returned to the Commissioner of Railways.”

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. M. Drew—Central) [5.13]: In the first place I must express my appreciation of the action of Mr. Colebatch in unreservedly withdrawing the incorrect statement he had previously made to the effect that a large proportion of the material required for the electric power house had been obtained from German makers. But I think he has to some extent spoiled his attraction by asserting that the mistake was made because of the erroneous opinion which had grown up owing to the secrecy displayed by the Government. As I showed clearly in a previous speech the Government maintained no secrecy in connection with this matter. It has already been pointed out by me that the full history of the power house was

placed before members in the reports of the Commissioner of Railways for the years ended 30th June, 1913 and 1914. The contract with Merz and McLellan was explained, the names of all the firms who secured contracts were given, full details were published as to the class of machinery which they had to supply, and it was also stated in the report for 1914 (page 16) that the contract for switch-gears and transformers had been let to the Allgemeine Elektricität Gesellschaft, but that the outbreak of war with Germany automatically cancelled the contract. In addition to that, as far back as 31st December, 1912, information supplied by the Premier appeared in the *West Australian*, which, among other things, stated—

Mr. Merz had been instructed to proceed with the preparation of all necessary plans and specifications for a new power house capable of providing all the current necessary for the tramway service, together with the lighting of the City.

Following on this, there was published in the *West Australian* of 7th January, 1913, information regarding the intentions of the Government and the arrangements entered into by them. On top of this, the entire agreement was unfolded again when the Electric Light and Power Bill was before the Legislature in November, 1913. In view of all this, the charge of secrecy cannot be sustained, even with a shadow of proof. The Premier and the Commissioner of Railways took the public and Parliament absolutely into their confidence in regard to every important detail connected with the works, and if there was an erroneous public opinion, it was not due to any action or inaction on the part of the Government. Nor can Mr. Colebatch come here and gracefully plead rumour as the ground for his blunder when the reports of the Commissioner of Railways, which give the truth of the transactions, were handed to him by officers of this House last session and the session before. Then again, he does not appear to be sure that public tenders were called,

and he says the answer given by the Premier in the Legislative Assembly in September, 1913, was not the answer supplied to him by the Commissioner of Railways. That is so. The Commissioner's reply stated that there was nothing in the files to indicate whether tenders had been invited in London or elsewhere. That is a complete reply so far as the Commissioner of Railways was concerned. He had nothing on his files in reference to the matter. It would have been strange if it had been otherwise. All the transactions in reference to calling for tenders took place in London and were recorded in the files in the office of the Agent General. The Premier himself was aware that tenders had been called, and so gave the Assembly the information it desired. The agreement with Merz and McLellan stipulated that tenders were to be called and made returnable to the Agent General's office in London, and this was done. Tenders were advertised in the weekly engineering journals in England. No advantage could be gained, and only waste of time incurred, by calling for tenders in Western Australia. The plant could not be manufactured in the Commonwealth. Agents might have tendered, but only on prices obtained from manufacturers in the Mother Country. As regards the Tender Board, this was a transaction outside the usual functions of the Board, which deals with ordinary supplies. The plant had to be provided to the designs and specifications of Merz and McLellan, and no object or saving would have been gained by passing the business through the Tender Board. After going carefully through my notes, I find Mr. Colebatch's charges may be summarised under a few heads. Firstly, that the term "secret contract" applies to the arrangement with Merz & McLellan, and what is worse Merz & McLellan were given a free hand, local experts not being consulted; secondly, the cost of the works has largely exceeded the estimate of Merz & McLellan; and thirdly, the Government made an arrangement with the Perth City Council which will result in heavy

loss to the State. I do not know what Mr. Colebatch means by saying that the arrangement with Merz and McLellan was a secret contract. I do not know whether he implies that whenever the Government enter into any form of agreement with any individual, firm or company it should forthwith hang a copy of the agreement on the Town Hall, fronting Hay-street, for public perusal or that they should hire a bellman to go round proclaiming the contents of the agreement.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Or hang it on the walls of Parliament House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: What the Government did in this instance was what the Government of Victoria did, what the Government of India did, and what the city of London did; and the Press and Parliament were fully informed, as I have already stated, in regard to almost every feature of the affair. What the Government of Western Australia did was to engage the best available talent in the world—so far as they could see—to advise and direct them in connection with the installation of electric power. And, having so engaged such talent, they gave it full freedom of action. It would be a strange course to adopt, after agreeing to pay a firm such repute as Merz and McLellan large fees to act as consulting engineers, to have subjected them, as Mr. Colebatch insinuates, to the control of local men. If we had local men who were qualified to sit in judgment on Merz & McLellan, surely it would have been a useless expense to employ Merz & McLellan at all. Those local men should have been selected to do the work if they were diligent enough to have shouldered the responsibility.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Are Merz & McLellan still going?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Colebatch endeavoured to startle the House with what he considered a fresh and alarming piece of intelligence. I had dragged it from its hiding place after a nine hours' perusal of the files. The discovery was this: "As far as

August, 1913, the railway authorities cognised that Merz & McLellan's estimate of capital cost would have been increased from £205,000 to £40,000." But Mr. Colebatch, in his comments, cleverly evaded the reasons for the increase. He could easily have seen that the estimate was exceeded, in the first place owing to the capacity of the plant being exceeded by one-third.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: I mentioned that.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member mentioned it and passed it over. It should be obvious to—

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member in order in misrepresenting me in this fashion? I not only mentioned the fact that the estimate had been increased, but commented on the fact that the Premier had further increased it; and I commented to some extent on it.

The PRESIDENT: It is not a point of order. I allow the hon. member to stand up and make that personal explanation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I said that Mr. Colebatch said so, but in his comments he evaded the question. It would be obvious to even the dullest comprehension that if a plant is enlarged by one-third the cost must be increased correspondingly, or nearly so. Another reason for the increase was that the number of ring main sub-stations was added, and the third is the general increase in price of all machinery between the time of making the estimate and the letting of contracts. If Mr. Colebatch had closely followed the course of political events, he would not have been under the necessity of devoting nine hours to an examination of the files to discover that the estimate had been exceeded. That fact was trumpeted by the Premier two years ago. In a speech delivered by Mr. Cadden in the Legislative Assembly on 31st November, 1913, when introducing the Bill for the ratification of the agreement with the Perth City Council, he said—

I say we have entered into this after very careful consideration, and on the

best advice procurable. Whilst the cost of the power station is going to be greater than first estimated, it is due to two reasons. Shortly after the estimate for the erection of the power station was got out, a general rise in price of approximately 43 per cent. took place in the old country. Moreover, the machinery necessary for the economical and safe working of the power station can be supplied only by a very limited number of firms. We are restricted in the choice of machines from different firms, with the result, of course, that when there was so much demand for electrical machinery and plant in different parts of the world, the prices jumped up considerably, to 33 per cent. in most cases, and at least to 10 per cent. On the other hand, we first proposed to erect a generating station of 9,000 kilowatts, but eventually, after considering all things, the extending of the tramways, and electric lighting and the supplying of current for all purposes, from Fremantle to Bellevue, and the possible electrification of the suburban railway system, we decided to increase the power from 9,000 to 12,000 kilowatts, and after it was also shown that it would be more economical than the plant we had previously proposed. And then again we have increased the size of the power house, the foundations of which and the structure itself will cost about £40,000. We have increased the size in order that it may take an additional unit, and with that additional unit the Station will eventually have a capacity of 16,000 kilowatts, which it is believed will be sufficient to supply the requirements of the Government for the next 25 years, including the electrification of the railway from Fremantle to Northam.

In that speech the Premier stated that the cost of the power station would be greater than was first estimated, and that it was due to two reasons—a 33 per cent. rise in the price of machinery, and the increase in the power of the generating station from 9,000 to 12,000 kilowatts. In addition to that, the Premier pointed

out that the foundations would cost about £40,000. That speech not only appeared in *Hansard* but was published in the Press, so that there was no secrecy. The Premier unbosomed himself of all the information he possessed in connection with the question. Mr. Colebatch may plead that he had never read the Premier's remarks either in *Hansard* or in the Press. He may not have done so, but that excuse will avail him little when I say that on 17th December, 1913, when I introduced the Loan Bill for that year, I made use of the following words, which are taken from *Hansard*, page 2954, for that year:—

Railways and Tramways.—For that service we are asking £470,000, which includes £350,000 for the construction of the electric power station. It is clear that my words did not fall upon deaf ears, for Mr. Colebatch, who followed me, said—

In regard to the Perth trams, it is necessary, having gone so far, that we should go further, but the electric power station means another half a million on top of the half million already expended.

Mr. Colebatch admitted it was necessary to go further, and two years ago he was in no way scared at the prospect of the station costing half a million, though now he professes to be staggered at the discovery that the Commissioner of Railways recognised in 1913 that the works would cost £350,000. As the Premier explained two years ago, the size of the plant was increased to provide for all probable future requirements, including the electrification of a portion of the railways, which must come. The Victorian Government has already decided to electrify their suburban railways. Again, the estimate originally furnished by Merz and McLellan dealt only with the construction and equipment of the power house and ring mains in Perth, whereas Mr. Colebatch, in arriving at the total cost, includes later figures which cover the Midland Junction transmission line and sub-station, a transmission line to Fremantle and other new undertakings. Those are extensions of the main scheme

outside of Merz and McLellan's original estimate, and from which revenue will be derived from the sale of current outside Perth.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: By robbing other people.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Those increases will increase the output and consequently reduce the cost of generating current. On top of this, Mr. Colebatch, to fit his argument, jumps up another £50,000 and asserts that the power house alone will cost £400,000.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: I said nothing of the kind.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Whereas the whole scheme, including the contemplated extensions will not cost this amount, while the power house itself will not cost more than £295,000. To come to the third count in Mr. Colebatch's indictment, the Government made an agreement with the Perth City Council which will result in heavy loss to the State. The object of the Government in bringing in such a large consumer as the Perth City Council was to enable the purchase of a plant which would permit of economical production and reduce the cost of running the Perth trams. Also to permit of an agreement being made with the Perth City Council for the supply of current to the Government at a considerably lower price than is the case now. The agreement with the Perth City Council still stands as one that can be regarded as in the best interests of the State. Two items govern the cost of production standing and running charges. Standing charges remain whatever the output; but the capital cost per unit is reduced rapidly with an increased output. Although the cost in the initial stages will exceed the original estimate, it will fall as the output increases, and with the support promised and anticipated the date is not far off when it will be advantageous to supply Perth at .75 a unit. This fact should need no emphasising when I state that it costs only .33 to produce the current, not taking the standing charges into account. But we must not overlook the circumstance that the agreement with the

city of Perth, by which we get our lighting at $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. a unit as against $2\frac{1}{4}$ d. a unit, which we pay now, will mean a great saving to the State. The Government at present take 18 per cent. of the current produced by the Perth City Council and they are paying for it at the rate of $2\frac{1}{4}$ d. a unit. That will mean a substantial saving to the State.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Will not the Government supply itself?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No, and it is just as well that I should explain that. The Perth City Council has the right to supply within a five-mile radius of the Perth Town Hall.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: That is a bad bargain.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Those rights were conferred by Parliament years ago, and I do not think the hon. gentleman would want to assist in repudiating that position. Mr Colebatch condemns the agreement between the Government and the council as an unbusinesslike proposal.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: I did nothing of the kind.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member used words which were considerably stronger.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: He was not very enthusiastic about it.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: The agreement would have been all right if the Government had got what they expected to get.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Colebatch told us it is for 50 years. To use his own words, he said—"that the Government have to sell at the cost of production, but, fortunately for the council, and unfortunately for the Government, a proviso was put in that in no case should the cost to the city council exceed .75d." It is hardly likely that the city council, or anyone else, would agree to purchase an article the price of which could be increased at the whim of the seller. But if this agreement is such a bad one for the State, if a gross blunder was committed in making the stipulations to which he now objects, how is it Mr. Colebatch did not detect the blunder at the proper time and place? The agree-

ment with the city council was submitted to Parliament for ratification. It was given in the schedule to the Electric Light and Power Agreement Act, 1913. It was given in that schedule clause for clause, line for line, and word for word; and if there was anything objectionable in the agreement—anything opposed to the interests of the State—it was Mr. Colebatch's duty to have pointed it out then, and not now, when it is too late.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: How did I know that current was going to cost twice as much to produce?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The points I am dealing with now are points which are contained in the agreement and have nothing to do with the price of current.

Hon. A. G. Jenkins: Everything depended on that.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The attack of Mr. Colebatch indicated that it was a most unbusinesslike agreement.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: Nothing of the kind.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If any one is to blame now, Mr. Colebatch must share in that blame. Evidently he saw nothing wrong in it, for he helped to ratify it, and now, after a lapse of two years, he starts picking it to pieces. It may be worth recording here that this agreement with the city council received the generous support of the leader of the Opposition. When the Bill was before the Legislative Assembly Mr. Wilson on the 28th November, 1913, according to *Hansard*, vol. 3 of 1913, page 316S, said:

The Government and the corporation have agreed together to have these works established; the Government are to find the money and establish the works and the corporation are to scrap their own works which they are operating at the present time. They have to undertake, I should imagine by Clause 2 of the agreement, to take from the Government 2,500 kilowatts, the cost price is to be ascertained, and the council are to pay that cost price to the Government. To that extent they become practically joint owners of this power station. I do not see that we can take

very much exception to an agreement of that sort. It will benefit the people of Perth and it must lighten the cost to the Government, who are the largest consumers, as representing the people of the State. If it were not so one might take exception, but seeing that we require so much electric current for our railways and workshops and for other public institutions, it seems to me that we should endorse the arrangement from the point of view of the Government and the city council.

Those were the views of the leader of the Opposition in 1913; and even if he has changed his views since—and I am not aware that he has—he would be the last man, if I know him aright, to throw the blame on the Government for an act in which he participated. There are other statements made by Mr. Colebatch which are equally open to attack. The assertion that the 40-cycle system necessitates alterations to the existing appliances throughout the metropolitan area is incorrect. The question of periodicity does not affect the consumers, as their motors are all new due to the change from the direct to the alternating current. But the other points touched on are so petty as not to call for serious attention. My endeavour has been to show that there has been absolutely no secrecy in regard to the contract with Merz & McLellan, that, as a matter of fact, it was proclaimed from the housetops. And I have also attempted to prove that the agreement with the city council was a wise one from the standpoint of this State, and that if it was not a wise one Mr. Colebatch cannot disclaim responsibility because he permitted it to pass through this House without raising his voice in opposition. I have shown there were good reasons for the increase in the cost of the plant, that those reasons were stated publicly two years ago and that Mr. Colebatch's attempted exposure is not only belated but that his piece of sensationalism is extremely stale.

On motion by Hon. J. F. Allen, debate adjourned.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 14th October; Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

[Hon. J. F. Cullen had moved that the following be inserted to stand as a new clause:—"Any settler or other person, who has given to the board a mortgage or bill of sale under this Act, shall, at any time, on tendering to the board the full amount of balance due, with interest and costs, receive from the board a full discharge of such mortgage or bill of sale."]

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I not only oppose the proposed new clause but intend to move to amend the section in the original Act in a directly opposite form. The proposed new clause would be dangerous. Section 15 of the Act states—

Notwithstanding any provision of the Land Act, 1898, the Transfer of Land Act, 1893, or any other Act or law to the contrary, the interest on all advances made under this Part of this Act, and also the principal of all advances made under this Act for the purposes mentioned in paragraphs (a) and (b) of section nine shall be, and until fully paid shall remain, a first charge in priority to all other encumbrances—(a) upon all lands held by the applicant for agricultural, farming, or grazing purposes, and owned by the applicant, and all such lands held by him under contract for the purchase thereof, or under conditional purchase or other lease, or as a homestead farm, at the time when such advance was made, or the commodity in respect of which such advance is deemed to have been made was supplied, under this Act; and (b) upon all crops to be sown in or grown upon such lands and the produce thereof; and (c) upon all implements, live stock, and the progeny thereof, and other chattels supplied to the applicant under this Act.

That is the security which the Government take in return for supplying applicants on credit with seed wheat or

other cereals, fertilisers, hay, chaff, implements, machinery, live stock, flour, and other commodities, and making advances to enable settlers to pay for the agistment of live stock and stud fees. The Government take a mortgage for what they directly advance, and are protected to the extent of that mortgage. What the hon. member desires is that, as soon as the Government are paid, they should release the security. The Act provides that the Government shall take control and distribute the surplus to the merchants, storekeepers and others. If the amendment is carried, the Government will be able to recover the amount owing to them and, instead of the surplus being distributed, it will be handed over to the farmer to do what he likes with it.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: How long are the Government to remain the guardians for these men? Is there never to be a discharge?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Under the new clause there would be no protection for the storekeepers and other creditors. The Government desire to protect the whole of them. They will pay themselves first and distribute the balance.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: For how long?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The third schedule stipulates the various items and the Government will distribute on that basis.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: For how long; to all eternity?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: So long as the farmer owes money which comes under the schedule.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: He always owes money.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: He is contracting fresh obligations every year of his life.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Section 21 states—

Any surplus of the proceeds of the assigned crops and other securities of an applicant in the hands of the Colonial Treasurer after satisfaction of the interest on advances made under this Part of this Act, and also the principal of the advances made under this Act, for the purposes mentioned

in paragraphs (a) and (b) of Section nine, may, in the discretion of the Colonial Treasurer, be applied in or towards the discharge of the other debts and obligations of the applicant in the order set out in the Third Schedule to this Act, or in such other order as may from time to time be prescribed by regulations under this Act.

There is the direction of Parliament as to what shall be done.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: When you have paid yourselves and distributed the surplus, you should discharge the mortgage.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is correct, and I have an amendment to cover that. A farmer might owe the Government £200 and other creditors £800, and if the new clause were passed he could pay the Government the £200, take his title deeds and snap his fingers at the other creditors.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You do not discharge the mortgage until he distributes the balance?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Not until he discharges all his obligations.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: The Minister has spoken with a very partial knowledge of the position. According to him, Egyptian bondage would be nothing to what the unfortunate borrowers from the Crown will be saddled with. He does not say that they will ever be released.

The Colonial Secretary: Yes, when they pay their debts set forth in the schedule.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: The Minister is getting more and more bogged. How many years do the Government propose to act as guardians for the settlers' creditors? According to the Minister there is to be no end to it. A borrower might quickly discharge his obligations out of one crop. The board will have control of the crop and if there is enough to pay the Government and some over, the surplus is to be distributed. If the Government are not paid out of the first crop, the Act gives them power to draw on the second crop, and if there is then anything over the Government are directed by the Act how to distribute the surplus. The borrower, however, would

like to know when he can get his discharge if he is ready to pay the Government. According to the Colonial Secretary he might never get it. Other creditors could at any time come on the farmer who has borrowed from the Government to recover what he owes them. If there are sufficient assets, any creditor can come in, pay off the Government and realise on the rest. The Government at present are not protecting the other creditors at all. All they have pledged themselves under the Act to do is, that of the things which come into their hands, they will distribute the surplus in a certain way. Even while that prevails, if any creditor chose he could pay the Government, sue the borrower and take all he had. The Government cannot protect the other creditors.

The Colonial Secretary: Parliament has done so.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: No; the Act does not do so. The Act simply provides that of the proceeds of crops coming to the hands of the board under that measure the board will take only what is due to the Government for the Government, and distribute the balance to the other creditors. It presupposes that, when the Government are paid, they will not go on and take the farmer's next crop and distribute the proceeds of that amongst the creditors. That was never intended. It would be a monstrous law that a borrower, having once come under the Crown and become a kind of slave to the State, could never claim deliverance unless he could prove that he did not owe anybody a shilling. How many people in this State to-day could say that they owe nothing? People are always owing. Business is largely done on credit. Does the Minister wish to provide by this measure a perpetual slavery to the Crown? The Minister's reference to Section 15 was beyond the question; the basis of his argument is Section 21. Let us pass the new clause and leave other creditors to the redress which every creditor has against a debtor. My amendment is common law and common honesty.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The carrying of the amendment would amount

to a gross breach of faith with the merchants and storekeepers who stood to the settlers. Under the existing law the Government can take a settler's crop and pay themselves out of the proceeds, and then distribute the surplus among the different grades of creditors. Some settlers come along now to the Government, saying, "We owe you £200; we want to pay that off and get rid of the mortgage." It was intended that some protection should be given to storekeepers and merchants who have been carrying the settlers so long.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS: Section 21 was inserted in the principal Act for the protection and benefit of the farmers; not in any way for the protection of the Government. That provision was enacted at the request of the farmers themselves, in order to save them from absolute ruin. Certain storekeepers and others to whom farmers owed money were threatening to proceed and obtain judgment and sell up the farmers lock, stock, and barrel. The Government, by agreements which were not legal, agreed to take the proceeds of crops and pay themselves and distribute the surplus among the creditors. Those agreements were not binding, and Section 21 was inserted in the Act in order to make them lawful. That was done for the benefit of the farmer; not for the benefit of the Government at all. The passing of the amendment means that the farmer, if so disposed, can pay off the Government and then snap his fingers at the rest of his creditors. Possibly there may be some means of overcoming that difficulty by inserting other words in the proposed new clause, but to pass that new clause in its present form simply means what the Colonial Secretary has stated. I am sure the Committee does not want such a position to be created. I quite agree that the farmer should not be put in eternal bondage; but Mr. Cullen's amendment would have the effect of releasing the farmer from paying anybody but the Government. Under the new clause a farmer might, immediately after paying off the Government, dispose of his land and let the other creditors whistle for their money. There may be

an opportunity of reviewing the position between now and half-past seven.

Sitting suspended from 6.10 to 7.30 p.m.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

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

- 1, Permanent Reserve.
- 2, Grain and Foodstuff.
- 3, Government Electric Works Act Amendment.

BILL—VERMIN BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 14th October.
Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [7.35]: I suggest that members should consider those who for some years past have been contributing their fair share to the maintenance of this fence, and not allow them to get into the unhappy position in which other settlers have found themselves as the result of too much power placed in the hands of a Minister. The whole position is a most unfortunate one. The settlers in the Gascoyne district entered into an arrangement to have the fence erected for the purpose of preventing the rabbits from spreading across their territory. In doing this they undertook something which might reasonably have been undertaken by the State itself. In all good faith they engaged to keep the fence in a proper state of repair. However, while some have managed to fulfil their obligation, others, through unforeseen difficulties over which they have no control, have been unable to continue their payments. From what I can understand, the Minister responsible is anxious to obtain definite control over those men and their properties. I fear that if we give the power into the hands of the

present or any future Minister, undue stress may be put upon those men. We have seen difficulties placed on certain men in our agricultural areas by a Minister, and we have also seen powers unfortunately exercised by Ministers in respect to pastoral areas. I have in mind several instances of extreme hardship imposed on deserving men through too rigid a departmental administration in times of difficulty and stress. I am in favour of the amendment suggested by Sir Edward Wittenoom. From all I can gather I understand it will enable the Government to collect sufficient money to recoup themselves in respect to the fence, and that by an amicable arrangement the future maintenance of the fence can be provided for. I understand that the rate contemplated in the proposed amendment is quite sufficient to cover the liabilities, whereas the rate desired by the Government will spell disaster to some of the settlers, men who are deserving of the utmost consideration. I am sure the House does not desire to harass those settlers who are doing good work, as well for the benefit of the country as of themselves. I hope the Government will be able to make a satisfactory arrangement with those settlers. I support the second reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [7.43]: I desire to give members clearly to understand that the amendment proposed to be made to this Bill will not be accepted, that if the amendment is carried the Bill will be lost, as it was last year. Not only is there no justification for the amendment, but it will have a disastrous tendency.

The PRESIDENT: There is no amendment before the House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Sir Edward Wittenoom stated that he would move an amendment.

The PRESIDENT: He proposes to move an amendment in Committee.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The whole discussion has been on the proposed amendment. That proposed amendment constitutes an interference

with the securities of the Government for the repayment of a loan advanced for the erection of the fence, and is totally opposed to principles which this House is never tired of professing. The facts are these: A previous Government, at the request of the Gascoyne pastoralists, lent them over £60,000 to erect a rabbit-proof fence. One of the conditions of the loan was that, in accordance with the Act of 1909, they should rate themselves at a sufficiently high figure to pay 5 per cent. interest and discharge the principal in forty half-yearly instalments. That meant £6,600 a year, £3,300 principal and £3,300 interest. They agreed to those terms. If they had not agreed, they would never have got the money. Those pastoralists formed themselves into a board, as they were required to do under the Act, and they struck a rate which they deemed sufficient to meet interest, principal and the cost of maintenance. The Government did not strike the rate. The very men who obtained the loan from the Government struck the rate. That rate was 2s. per hundred acres. Owing to a drought these people could not pay their rates, and the position has arisen that the Government have had to take over control. Now, when the Government have decided to take over, they are being threatened—as happened last year when a validating Bill was introduced—with an attempt to prevent them from rating, if they think fit, on the very same basis as the borrowers of the money considered was fair and reasonable. There is, to be exact, £67,737 owing at the present time; and the present Government extended the period of repayment from 20 to 30 years. That was a big concession. But even on that basis the repayment of principal will amount to £2,257 a year, and the interest to £3,380—to say nothing of the arrears. That means that £5,643 a year has to be paid. A rate based on 1s. per hundred acres will not meet this liability. There are 8¾ million acres of ratable land.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Do you say there is interest to the amount of £3,300?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That was the first year.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It is increasing every year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The principal amounts to £2,257 a year, and the interest to £3,380.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: For the first year, reducible by about £200 a year for every year afterwards.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The principal is reduced, but for a fairly large number of years to come it will be in the neighbourhood of £3,380. That amounts to £5,643 a year. On a basis of 1s. per 100 acres, that would yield only £4,375, whereas the amount to be met is £5,643. That leaves a deficiency of £1,268. To this has to be added the cost of administration. If maintenance be included, the shortage would, of course, be considerably more. But assuming that the fence is abandoned, the shilling rate would fall far short of enabling the board to meet the interest and principal due to the Government. If the Government had held the pastoralists to their original agreement, that is to repay the principal in 40 half-yearly instalments, the amount necessary to be raised annually would be £6,600, nearly £7,000 a year. But the Government showed their consideration for the pastoralists by giving them 30 years in which to pay their debt. Apparently they are not satisfied with this and are endeavouring to get out of their responsibilities with the assistance of this House. The pastoralists of Gascoyne never weary of telling us they do not want to repudiate their obligations. Actions, however, speak louder than words, and when we see two of their Parliamentary representatives in this House intent on passing an amendment which they know from past experience will destroy this Bill, we must accept their assurances with a great deal of caution. Mr. Cullen expressed a desire to assist in protecting the interests of the pastoralists. One would think the pastoralists were about to be robbed. One would not conclude that the object of this Bill was to prevent those gentlemen from availing themselves of technicalities to escape paying the

State the money which is its due. This is not Sir Edward Wittenoom's money, not Mr. Holmes' money, not Mr. Cullen's money, not money belonging to the members of the Government, but the money of the taxpayers of this State. The action of the Parliamentary representatives of these districts strongly indicates that all they desire is to get rid of the responsibilities of the Gascoyne pastoralists, and that they will do so if the opportunity is afforded to them.

Hon. F. Connor: That is a pretty general statement.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am judging these people by their remarks, and the action of their Parliamentary representatives. I have given figures to show—

Hon. F. Connor: That is a reflection on the members representing the northern provinces. I want the hon. gentleman to withdraw that statement. He says that the Parliamentary representatives of the North are trying to get the pastoralists of the Gascoyne area out of their responsibilities. I say that it is not right. I ask that the statement should be withdrawn.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: What I said was that actions speak louder than words.

The PRESIDENT: If the hon. gentleman said that, no doubt he will withdraw.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Certainly I withdraw the remark. Anyone would think that we were trying to do something which would unjustly deprive those pastoralists of what they had a right to, and would not conclude that the object of the measure was to remove technicalities to enable the Government to secure money which is the property of the taxpayers of the State. The money is not Sir Edward Wittenoom's money, it is not Mr. Holmes' money, it is not Mr. Cullen's money, neither does it belong to the Government, but it is money belonging to the taxpayers of Western Australia.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The only thing the pastoralists object to is to the Gov-

ernment repairing their fence and charging them for the repairs.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We have taken over the fence. It is, therefore, necessary to repair it and maintain it. The reduction of the rate so that the moneys raised would be insufficient to meet interest and principal must affect the securities of the Government. But the abandonment of maintenance, to which Mr. Holmes referred, would have a very much worse effect in that direction. The present pastoral leases expire in 1928, 13 years hence, and the fence at that date should be in a rabbit-proof condition, so that if new lessees come in they would derive some benefit from the tax which would be imposed on them. If the fence is abandoned now, the Government in 1928 could not justly tax incoming lessees for something which had no actual existence, for something which had ceased to be of any use. The only proper course for this House to adopt, I contend, is to pass the Bill as it stands. Any other course will savour of an attempt to prevent the Government from recovering a just debt. And it must not be forgotten that the Treasury will not be able to get back a single sixpence unless this Bill becomes law. Let the Legislative Council trust the Government in this matter. I think it can be shown, despite the remarks of Mr. Hamersley, that in our dealings with the necessitous we have never been guilty of oppression. The Government resent any attempt to bring pressure to bear upon Parliament to prevent them from procuring repayments of this loan. It cannot be charged against the Ministry since we accepted office that it has ever persecuted struggling settlers. If they have shown any fault it has been on the side of clemency. I would, therefore, urge the House to pass the Bill as it stands. The cases for generous consideration can then be submitted by the Parliamentary representatives of the Gascoyne district. The Government are threatened with an attempt on the part of members to pass retrospective legislation to amend the Act which has been in existence for six years, and to so amend

it as to destroy the securities of the Government to the extent of £66,000.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

MOTION—COMMONWEALTH CONSTITUTION REFERENDUMS.

Debate resumed from the 13th October on motion by Hon. J. F. Cullen—"That, as it is now practically certain that war conditions will continue beyond the date intended for the referendums on alteration to the Commonwealth Constitution, and that a large proportion of the manhood of the Commonwealth who are fulfilling the highest patriotic duty in defence of the Empire will be disfranchised in consequence, this House is of opinion that the Government of this State should urge the Commonwealth Government to postpone the referendums."

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East—in reply) [7.55]: I am sorry my voice because of a cold will not stand to me for a proper reply to the Colonial Secretary. I desire to say a few words, however. The Colonial Secretary's reply may be summed up in two statements, that the motion comes too late, seeing that the Federal Government have made all the arrangements for the referendums, and secondly for the Government of this State to intervene by making representations to the Federal Government would be an intrusion into the domain of the Federal Government. The first objection would have been lessened a good deal if he had replied to me at once, when my resolution was moved. Time is the essence of the business, and if the Colonial Secretary had replied straight away much time would have been saved. But there are yet two months to the date of the referendums, and on a vital matter of this sort I do think the Colonial Secretary and his colleagues might have fallen in with the suggestion. Two months would have been ample for representations from this Government to the Federal Government, and if they had been effective and had brought about the

delay of the referendums, at least to the limit of the time allowed by the Referenda Act; that would have carried the date into March, after the harvest had been completed. There is no need to delay the House by labouring that point. The other objection, that this is an intrusion, is based on an utter misconception of the relationship between this Parliament and the Federal Parliament. It would have been no intrusion at all. It would have been entirely within the Constitutional rights of the Government, as representing the State of Western Australia to approach the Federal Government with representations and petitions. It would have been a Constitutional right. I would just like to remind the Colonial Secretary that a few years ago this question of intrusion actually did arise in connection with the Federal Parliament itself. The Federal Parliament, with the support of the Ministers of the day, carried a resolution expressing strongly an opinion on a burning question before the Imperial Parliament. That was an intrusion and the Federal Government transmitted that resolution, an absolute intrusion, since there is no possible relationship between the Commonwealth Parliament and the Imperial Parliament that would justify such an action. But the relationship of this State to the Commonwealth Parliament is entirely different. There is a State house in the Federal Constitution, not representing individual voters but a House to represent the States as States, and to preserve their sovereign rights and status. It would be a perfectly justifiable thing for this Parliament, through the Government, as representing the State of Western Australia, to make representations to the Federal Government. Having dealt with the constitutional aspect, I want in a few words to impress this House with the gravity of the situation. This Parliament represents the State of Western Australia, and cannot shake off its share of responsibility for the action of the Federal Government in rushing the reference to the people at this

juncture. What is the position of affairs? At least 140,000 of the voters are away from home on the great duty of defending the Empire and helping to destroy tyranny and barbarism. Probably by the date of the referendums, the number will be increased to 200,000, and these will be picked voters of the Commonwealth. They have gone away rejoicing in a Constitution which is the finest and the freest and the very latest in the world, and before they come back, and while their backs are turned, there is a conspiracy to alter that Constitution. I say conspiracy advisedly. A power outside the Federal Parliament has gone to Ministers and said, "Here is your chance; a great number of the people who do not believe in us are away. Now is the time." They bring such pressure as Ministers themselves have admitted that the Federal Government join in the conspiracy to act behind the back of the 200,000 who are away. That is not all. These outside "wire-pullers" say to Ministers, "Hold it during harvest time. There will be nearly as many voters disfranchised, and they are our enemies. The people on the land have no time for us and our pottering with the Constitution. So get behind their backs too." Furthermore, postal voting has been abolished, and some 70,000 to 80,000 people will be disfranchised, all being distant from the polls. And they too are the enemies of those in power. Therefore rush on this referendum and get it through. The position is this: The Federal Government are taking advantage of the absence of 200,000 men who are fighting the Empire's battles, and of the busiest moment in the life of the primary producers of the country, a time when they cannot leave the vital work of their life to provide sustenance for those at the war. And the Federal authorities are rushing on the referendum in the hope of thus dishonourably snatching a victory. Surely the position is unworthy. If ever extraordinary action could be justified it is in view of such a position. Yet our Government say, "Oh, no; it is only the life of this State that is involved, and we do not care." We have already sacrificed

our savings bank to please our brother labourites of the Commonwealth Government. We have sacrificed the interests of our own State to please our fellow politicians in the Commonwealth, and now it is only our State. A little while ago all those Ministers were States rights men. When the first proposal to potter with the Constitution with a view of taking away the power of the States and exalting the Commonwealth was launched, all these Ministers were against it, and some of them had the courage to speak out in the teeth of party feeling. What has changed them? Something has changed them. They have now made up their minds to let the very life of this State be wrested from it. They know that by frittering away the necessary powers of the State we shall be forced into unification. They have openly said so. Take away the essential power of State Government and the State will be impotent and we shall be forced into one unified Government. Is it conceivable that any democratic mind should contemplate the Government of Australia from a little point on the Eastern seaboard? Such a concentration of the idea that democracy is always fighting, the centralising idea that democracy needs to do battle with, and we have Ministers saying already, "We are content for our State to be wiped out, and for all the States to be merged under a unified Government. This is not the time to point out how completely such an attempt must break down as time goes on. But Ministers say, "It will be an intrusion to approach the Federal authority on the matter. We have already intruded into Imperial questions, but we dare not say a word to our fellow labourists at the head of the Federal Government." If the Government will not do this it is vain to pass this motion in this House, and probably the best thing now will be to withdraw it. But I will take the opportunity of saying that the confusion, the bitterness, the internecine strife, that must come during the next six or eight weeks must be on the shoulders of the Commonwealth Government,

and must be shared somewhat by their confreres the Labour Governments of the States. I may be permitted to read a few lines from a paper that I do not admire under its present regime, but still it seems to declare exactly the position. *The Times*, the old Thunderer, I will admit descends to bathos sometimes. It is altered entirely under its new control, but this is how it refers to the approaching referendum—

Undoubtedly, if the Labour proposals are forced, Australia will be plunged into a violent contest, and the stream of abuse, innuendo, and recrimination which has already flooded the House of Representatives will overflow the whole of Australia. Meanwhile, in the trenches at Gallipoli, Australians will be fighting for freedom under an alien sky. The contest may not seem as strange to the Australian leaders as it does to us, but is it worth while?

Can we, responsible citizens, contemplate calmly the breaking of the power of the State to exalt the Commonwealth? I hold that every true citizen of the State will be up in arms and will do his utmost to declare an emphatic "No," because the referendum is untimely and because it is dangerous to the State. With the permission of the House I desire to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

MOTION—PUBLIC WORKS, AUTH- ORISATION BY PARLIAMENT.

Debate resumed from the 14th October on motion by Hon. J. F. Cullen, "1, That, in the opinion of this House, the Government should introduce legislation to provide that no public work, undertaking, purchase, or addition to a public work (except as authorised by the Railway Act), the estimated cost of completing which exceeds £20,000, shall be commenced unless sanctioned by Parliament. 2, That the foregoing resolution be communicated to His Excellency the Governor."

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan)
[8.12]: It is not my intention to deal

fully with this motion, because to do so would take up a great deal too much time. I propose, therefore, to touch only on one or two salient points which have suggested themselves to my mind. The first thing is that it is a very significant feature, a portentous feature of the times, of what is taking place in these days, that it should be thought necessary by any hon. member to propose such a motion. To propose, in short, that the Government should pass legislation to prevent unauthorised expenditure—seeing that Parliamentary legislation and the whole system of responsible Government points to nothing else but the avoidance of unauthorised expenditure; that it should be necessary for a private member to bring forward a motion to this effect is, as I have already said, is a very significant sign of the times. It is a pity that it was not brought forward before. But then, again, when I think that, I am met by the conclusion I am forced to draw, that even if it had been brought forward before, even if legislation be introduced now, there is nothing to prevent a Government, such as the present Government, flouting legislation as this present Government has been in the habit of doing, and to treat the voice of Parliament as this present Government has been in the habit of doing as a thing of naught. So I do not know whether, if this motion is passed, it will be very effective. At all events, whether it is effective or not, seeing the principle which underlies the motion, I, for one, must undoubtedly support it. I do not know whether any hon. member has ever been in the habit of doing any kangarooing. I will connect my remarks presently with the subject under discussion. If they have been in the habit of doing any kangarooing, they will be aware that when what is known as the old-man kangaroo comes to bay, he is very often an extremely nasty customer to tackle, and those who undertake the job of killing him often arm themselves with two weapons, one to hold out to the animal which he promptly gets hold of thereby leaving his head open to attack with the other. I am regarding, for the moment, the hon.

the leader of the House as the old-man kangaroo brought to bay. The hon. Mr. Cullen held out a stick to him and the eagerness with which the old-man kangaroo, I mean the leader of the House, grasped that stick, will, I suppose when Mr. Cullen replies, be only equalled by the celerity with which Mr. Cullen will hit him over the head with the stick, which, if it is not in his possession, I have pleasure in handing to him. The hon. gentleman held out the stick—and a rotten stick it was—of the bearing of a public works committee on the subject under discussion. Of course a public works committee has nothing to do with the subject under discussion because, while I plead guilty to having in the past supported that proposal, even in the wildest dreams of those who supported it, it was never contemplated that the approval by a public works committee of an expenditure would mean the setting aside of the opinion of Parliament. Subject to the advice of a public works committee, the approval of Parliament had to be sought for any work, so this stick which was held out by Mr. Cullen is only a stick, but the eagerness with which the leader of the House grasped it as a way out of the very awkward position in which he was placed by Mr. Cullen, and the innumerable instances which he did bring or could have brought forward, reminds us of the sport of kangarooing. Mr. Cullen had some qualms of conscience when he spoke of the Public Works Committee Bill being rejected by this House which I do not share with him because, on each occasion when that measure has been brought before this House, I have supported it and done my best to get it passed. In my opinion it is a good measure, but I know that a majority of hon. members in this House think otherwise. Still, I am quite of opinion with the Colonial Secretary that a public works committee would be a good thing and might possibly act as some check on the wild career of the gentlemen who occupy the Treasury bench if it were brought into effect, but I doubt it. With regard to the instances of unauthorised expenditure, let me say at once that those in-

stances, rare in the past, are becoming day by day more common. The leader of the House gave one instance which was committed by a former Government, that instance being the purchase of the Moola Bulla cattle station. It is a very old saying and one worthy to be believed, that two wrongs do not make a right, and if a former Government did err in purchasing that cattle station it was no excuse for the present Government to indulge in the series of these errors which have been committed in late years. Instances of unauthorised expenditure I have not taken the trouble to look up. I do not propose to go further than one or two mentioned by Mr. Cullen and the leader of the House. Amongst others, it surprised me to the highest possible degree to hear the Colonial Secretary even dare to allude to the instance of the Bell and McArdle contract. Does the hon. member forget that in addition to unauthorised expenditure in that case, his Government have been guilty of disobeying the order of this House. An order was made by this House for papers relating to that contract to be laid upon the Table, and those papers have never been laid on the Table from that day to this.

The Colonial Secretary: What papers?

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: The papers relating to the Bell and McArdle contract. That is a very serious statement. The hon. gentleman had forgotten that fact or I think he would not have mentioned that particular contract. That contract was more celebrated than anything else for the extremely irregular method in which it was adopted and the probability which was pointed out in the course of the debate and which was not refuted, as it might have been had the papers been tabled, that the contractors had means of communicating with one another before the final price was fixed. Now let us turn as an example of unauthorised expenditure to the State steamships. The State steamships I propose to divide into two sections. Let us call them past and present. The past State steamships, the "Western Australia"—goodness knows she is past any-

thing—the “Kwinana,” the “Eucla,” and the “Una,” were bought, I understand, without the sanction of Parliament, out of a vote which was known as the Treasurer’s Advance Account. The Treasurer’s Advance Account was first made available for the purpose of defraying unauthorised and urgent expenditure. In no instance can the purchase of any State steamer come under either head. In no instance has the purchase of any State steamer been either specially urgent or unforeseen. The project was talked of before the present Government came into office. The urgency, if urgency there had been, has existed for years, and by no stretch of imagination can their purchase be classed as urgent. The Government were modest at first for they spent only about £100,000 in buying the first State steamers. I wonder at their modesty because the Government of that day were in a fairly strong position. Unauthorised expenditure is sometimes judged, when its justification is questioned, by the success or lack of success which attends the experiment. That, of course, is altogether a wrong way of judging it. It is adopting a medium of expediency rather than anything else. If the experiment is successful, the action is just as wrong as if it is unsuccessful, only lack of success brings with it more public odium than does success. One of the truest things said in this House was said by the hon. Mr. Sanderson when he remarked that in judging these State enterprises, we have to dismiss from our minds whether or not they are successful; we have to ask, if this State enterprise is successful, is it right? With regard to the State steamships, they were bought out of the Treasurer’s advance and let me say it is a very doubtful question as to whether any expenditure from the Treasurer’s advance is legal expenditure. That money is not appropriated to the use of the year on which it appears on the Estimates. The legal position of the Treasurer’s advance is an extremely precarious one. It is a vote of Parliament upon which an opinion of Parliament is never taken. It is a vote of Parliament which is not put

by the Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means in another place to the Committee. It is only really an appropriation the year after it is spent, and any expenditure therefrom, as I have said, is legally and constitutionally an extremely precarious expenditure. The Government who are in a strong position can perhaps do things which the Government in a weak position cannot do. It is a matter of complete indifference to me what Government are in power, except as I have already said in this House, that I happen to be on excellent terms with the present leader of this House and I appreciate the ability and patience with which he fills an extremely difficult position. That is a predisposing cause to me wishing the present Government a long life, but on the other hand, I want to see this State, which it is the duty of Parliament to govern, although at times it may not seem so, a prosperous State, and I fear the proceedings indulged in by the present Government for some years past do not tend towards the prosperity of this State. A good deal of the action of the Government is regulated by the fact as to whether the Government are in a strong position or not. When the Government bought that section of the State steamships which I have alluded to as the past, they were undoubtedly in a strong position. They had a majority in another place running into double figures and strange to say they were somewhat modest in their demands with regard to State steamships. Now what do we find? I must get back to kangarooping. In the purchase of this last venture of theirs, the “Kangaroo,” they have out-Heroded Herod in their audacity. Instead of spending £100,000 on about four steamers, they have spent £140,000 on one steamer. Now let us glance at the position of the Government. Instead of having a majority of 15 or 16 in another place, they are a Government with no majority at all, a Government which in another place cannot even control the passage of their Estimates, a Government which I say advisedly are frightened to bring before another place the simple question of the purchase of this steamer

or not, a Government which, according to an answer given me by the leader of the House, see no reason to depart from the procedure of other Governments in making this special expenditure under special circumstances the subject of a special Loan Bill. In the first place other Governments have never dared to do such a thing and, in the second place, I can see plenty of reasons why the Government do not adopt the suggestion I held out to them, a suggestion which this House would never have an opportunity to consider because a Loan Bill would never get so far as this House if it contained in one item only the purchase of the "Kangaroo," which was made a few weeks ago. Now let us test this purchase by the criterion of its being unforeseen and of its being urgent. It fulfils neither criterion. It certainly was not unforeseen, and the non-urgency of the matter is shown by the fact that the "Kangaroo" is for the purpose of conveying frozen meat from the Wyndham meat works, which are to be finished in the dim and indefinite future. In the meantime she apparently is not to take the place of the "Western Australia," as we were certainly led to believe.

The Colonial Secretary: No.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: The hon. gentleman says no, but my first question on this subject was couched in these terms: "With regard to the purchase of the Diesel boat to take the place of the steamship 'Western Australia,'" and so on. If the hon. gentleman says that we were never led to believe that this boat was to take the place of the "Western Australia," why, in the first place, when answering that question, did not he, or his colleague responsible for the purchase, say that the Diesel boat was not to take the place of the "Western Australia"? We certainly believed that. I believed it until I read something about the question, until I learned that she draws 23ft. 6ins., which practically means that all the ports on the northern coast are closed to her. She cannot even get into the port of Geraldton.

The Colonial Secretary: She is not to call at Geraldton. She is meant for Wyndham.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Yet she was ostensibly bought as a ship to take the place of the "Western Australia." It appears now from the explanation of the hon. gentleman, since he found out that the "Kangaroo" draws 23ft. 6ins., a fact of which I do not think the members of the Government were aware until it was pointed out to them——

The Colonial Secretary: She could not carry four passengers.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: As I have already said, the present Government are a weak Government dependent for their existence principally upon the reluctance of those opposed to them to take definite steps. The present Government are following the system which has been followed during this disastrous war, and are hiding behind a rampart of dead and dying State enterprises, which have created such a horrible position of affairs that nobody is willing to take over the reins of government. To me personally it is a matter of the utmost indifference what Government are in office, but I do not want to see this country going to ruin at the rate at which it appears to be going: one of the principal causes of that ruin being the State enterprises and the illicit and unfair competition with private enterprise in which the present Government are indulging. Most of the unauthorised expenditure alluded to is in connection with State enterprises. How can capital be expected to come into a country where it never knows the moment, no matter what walk of business or commerce it engages in, when the Government will become an unfair competitor? The competition of the Government is unfair because it is not their money which they use but the money of the taxpayers of the State. With unlimited capital practically—although the limit appears to be coming—as against the limit which private individuals always have to their purses, the Government engage in unfair competition. I might say a good deal about

the State Sawmills, the State Brickyards, and other enterprises which Ministers have embarked on—most of them unauthorised—but I prefer not to do so. I hope that the instance which I have given will be sufficient, if indeed any further stimulus is necessary, for this Chamber to pass the motion. But we have had in the past examples not only of the incurring of unauthorised expenditure but of the making of contracts and agreements which have not been sanctioned by Parliament and which are only reluctantly dragged into the light of day. Those contracts and agreements might well be included in this motion. We may give the leader of the House in that the details of the power house contract were blazoned forth by the Premier years ago. Let the Colonial Secretary have that. But what answer will he make when I accuse the Government of making a secret agreement, the powellising agreement, which they endeavoured to keep secret, the papers relating to which they refused to produce in another place, which came to light only 15 months after it had been made, by which the powellising company, win or lose, were to take out of this country £3,750 a year for a process which is of questionable value? Is that a fair thing for the Government to do? Undoubtedly it is not. The hon. gentleman has talked about posting placards on the Town Hall with regard to agreements made by the Government. Certainly that would not be right, but undoubtedly Parliament is the master of the Government, and the Government are only a part of Parliament, and Parliament should have as early notice as possible if agreements of such magnitude are made. The figures in connection with the powellising agreement, which was so secretly entered into, are interesting. It appears that under the powellising agreement a very large quantity of timber has been treated—24,615,231 super. feet; and there has already been paid as royalty to the fortunate proprietors of the patent a sum of £15,387 15s. 9d. We were led to believe that the rate of payment to these gentlemen would be 9d. per 100 feet super. for

powellising timber which was to be used inside the State, with a maximum of 1s. 3d. per 100 super. for powellising timber which was to be sold either under contract or otherwise outside the State; and yet, if hon. members will take the trouble to work out these figures as I have done, they will find that the powellising company have been paid at the rate of 1s. 3d. per 100 super. feet all through. That is a thing which I cannot understand, and as to which I would like an explanation. As a matter of fact, when one is forced to consider the success or non-success of these experiments of the Government, one is forced to extremely dismal conclusions. In the case of the "Kangaroo" herself I do not know whether hon. members noticed an extract published in the Press of this State dealing with the question of Diesel oil boats. It was an extract from a very well known shipping paper, *Fair Play*.

The Colonial Secretary: That deals with two-cycle Diesel engines. A succeeding issue deals with four-cycle engines.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I have not seen the succeeding issue.

The Colonial Secretary: I have.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: The hon. gentleman needs all the weapons at his command to justify the purchase. The extract I referred to is from the issue of *Fair Play* of the 1st July, 1915, not so very long ago—just 11 days before the cable went instituting inquiries from Professor Sir J. H. Biles & Co. *Fair Play* says—

The "Flower" Motor Ship Co., Ltd., was formed by Messrs. M. Samuel & Co. with a view to showing ship-owners the mistakes they were making in not adopting Diesel engines and using the liquid fuel which could be supplied by Messrs. Samuel & Co. on very favourable terms. In their report for the 12 months ending 31st December, 1913, published in May last year, the directors of the company stated that the first motor vessel built for the company, the "Arum," had completed her trials successfully and would

start loading for her first voyage within the next few days."

It is a strange thing that those very words, "within the next few days," occur in connection with the "Kangaroo."

The directors' report for 1914, which was issued last week—

That is, in June last—

is not pleasant reading for the shareholders, as it proves that the holding back by shipowners in the adoption of Diesel engines has been more than justified. The directors "regret to report that the running of the engines of the two vessels delivered to them, viz., the 'Arum' and the 'Arabie,' has not been as they had hoped"—which is, perhaps, another way of saying that the engines are a failure. It is stated that an agreement has been arrived at with Messrs. Swan, Hunter, and Wigham Richardson by which they have assumed responsibility for the running of these ships, and have agreed to pay the shareholders 4 per cent. per annum interest. The motor vessel "Abelia," contracted for delivery in 1913, has not yet been delivered.

That is on the 1st July, 1914. I hope the "Abelia" has four-cycle engines by this time.

The directors recommend the payment of a dividend of 4 per cent., less income tax. Sir Marcus Samuel is undoubtedly an optimist, but even he can hardly expect shipowners to rush in and order motor vessels after such an experience as is disclosed in the accounts of the "Flower" Motor Ship Co. Had the managers confined their attention to ordering steamers instead of motor vessels, the company would have been in a splendid position at the present time, as the earnings would have been large, and, if necessary, the assets could have been disposed of to return a handsome profit. A dividend of 4 per cent., less income tax, is not one on which the shareholders are to be congratulated.

The Colonial Secretary: This is not the same class of Diesel ship.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I am pleased and relieved to hear it.

The PRESIDENT: I would remind the Minister that he has already spoken on this motion and that he has no right of reply.

The Colonial Secretary: Yes, Sir. That is why I am interjecting.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I accept the explanation of the Minister, and I hope, Sir, that you accept it. It is one of the most ingenuous and ingenious explanations that I have heard in this Chamber. I welcome the Minister's interjections, and, in view of the information which he now has, I wish that I had spoken before he did. However, I shall be very pleased to have this further information if it be correct and not founded on those optimistic hopes contained in the file which purports to deal with part of the transactions relating to the purchase of the "Kangaroo." But even if it is quite as optimistic, I will endeavour to get some comfort from it. Still, I would remind the Minister that it has nothing to do with the case, because unauthorised expenditure even on successful issues is very nearly as bad as unauthorised expenditure on non-successful issues. As I have already said, I take it as a very significant sign of the times that an hon. member should think it necessary to call the attention of any Government to the fact that unauthorised expenditure is, to put it plainly, unauthorised. The second part of Mr. Cullen's motion asks that the motion should be conveyed by message to His Excellency the Governor. That is an innovation in this House. It is an innovation which I am inclined to welcome, and for this reason. If hon. gentlemen will read the section of the Constitution Act of 1889, dealing with authorised expenditure, Section 68, they will find it is as follows:—

No part of the public revenue of the Colony arising from any of the sources aforesaid shall be issued except in pursuance of warrants under the hand of the Governor directed to the Treasurer. It would be unseemly, even if it were not against the Standing Orders, to criticise

the action of the present representative of His Majesty. Therefore, leaving the present representative of His Majesty out of the question altogether, let me content myself with saying that in the past we have had Governors who read that section of the Constitution Act quite differently. Some Governors, very complaisant to their advisers, have not boggled at signing warrants for this class of expenditure without any trouble. On the other hand, other Governors have been only with the greatest difficulty induced to sign warrants of the sort I have described. For the guidance not of the present representative of His Majesty but of future representatives, it is well that it should be known that at all events one section of Parliament has set its face against the continuance of the policy of unauthorised expenditure. And that furnishes a very admirable reason why this motion should be communicated to His Excellency the Governor for the guidance of future Governors. I have a great deal of apprehension that this motion will not do any good to a number of gentlemen who have apparently set themselves up to flout precedent and to spend as much money in unauthorised directions as they wish. I fear that all the motions we may pass and all the legislation we may bring into existence will not have very much effect on them. But, underlying the motion, there is the great principle of constitutional Parliamentary government, and it is because that great principle—which has been observed to a greater extent in most of the Dominions of the Empire than in this—is underlying the motion that I give it my unqualified support.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [8.47]: My chief reason in speaking is to suggest to the hon. member that he should alter the second part of the motion which Mr. Kingsmill seems so much in favour of—

The PRESIDENT: I will put only the first paragraph just now.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: Yes, but I propose to speak to the first portion

merely from the point of view of the good that might be served by sending the first portion to another place instead of to His Excellency the Governor. It seems to me that very much good may result from a discussion in another place of the first portion of this motion. I think that such discussion would show members of all parties and the country generally the extent to which the traditional control of the expenditure by Parliament has disappeared. At the present time, reading the newspapers in the morning, we find that in another place £300 has been knocked off this item and £200 off that, and I suppose the public is under the impression that that money has been saved, that it is not going to be spent. Discussion of a motion like this would entirely remove that illusion. Last year's Estimates, for instance, set forth that in all such enterprises as the State Sawmills and the State Implement Works there would be no expenditure from taxation, that is to say, that the revenue from those undertakings would balance the expenditure and leave a small surplus. As a matter of fact, the expenditure on those undertakings has exceeded revenue by £200,000 in the one year. That amount was spent without a line of authority from Parliament. The discussion of a motion of this kind might illustrate to the public and to members in another place the circumstance that although they are supposed to control the expenditure through the medium of the Estimates, as a matter of fact the present Administration have taken the control of the finances out of the hands of Parliament altogether. We are often told that this Chamber is not entirely representative of the taxpayers and therefore it is right that another place should have practically exclusive powers in regard to taxation and expenditure. Probably we would not mind that so much if Parliament, even if the Assembly, had control over expenditure. But as things are conducted at the present time the Assembly have no such control. They pass what are called Estimates, and then the Government proceed to spend exactly what they like. From this point of view, I hope the hon. mem-

ber will agree to the alteration of the second portion of his motion so that the first portion may be sent to another place for consideration.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East—in reply) [8.50]: The Colonial Secretary's remarks really amounted to this: that the Government are quite willing to be bound as the motion proposes, if the House will accept along with it their proposal for a standing committee on public works. I am not in the mood to-night to use that other stick which Mr. Kingsmill suggested, but I thoroughly agree with him that the stick the Minister has hold of is a rotten one. The Minister is willing to accept this limitation if the House will accept a standing committee on public works. How much more should the Government be willing to accept it on its merits as a constitutional thing! Indeed, my only difficulty about the motion is that it is conceding something to this unlawful Government. It should not. Think of £20,000 without Parliamentary sanction! One pound should not be spent without Parliamentary sanction. It is unconstitutional to do it, and for a Ministry to submit to His Excellency the Governor for payment any account which Parliament has not sanctioned is such an abuse of the Constitution as the whole State should resent. It is an utterly unfair action towards His Excellency. It is a grave offence for Ministers to submit for the Governor's warrant a single amount which goes outside Parliamentary sanction; a grave offence, not only against the Constitution, but against His Excellency the Governor. I do not think any member can have difficulty in voting for the motion. The Minister sees that, for he says that if the House will accept something which is entirely extraneous, which has nothing to do with the Constitution, which is a little fad of the Minister's own, the Government will accept this. The Minister's proposal does not touch the principle at all. It would impose a further restriction. In fact, if he will accept the double restriction, why will he not accept this constitutional restriction? With regard to where it is sent, my object is not to slight Ministers.

but to make sure that it will reach Executive Council. I foresaw that it might not have an opportunity of discussion in another place, or alternatively that it might have strong opposition. To send it direct to His Excellency means sending it to Executive Council.

The Colonial Secretary: No.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Yes, he is the Governor-in-Council.

The Colonial Secretary: There would be no discussion in Executive Council.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: That does not matter; it would go there. However, I am quite willing to accept Mr. Colebatch's proposed amendment, that in the usual way the resolution should be sent to another place.

Question (first paragraph) put and passed.

The PRESIDENT: Before putting the second paragraph, namely, "that the foregoing resolution be communicated to His Excellency the Governor," I wish to say its form is unusual and without precedent in the Parliament of this State. The usual practice when a resolution of this character is passed is for the member bringing forward the resolution to move that a message be sent to the Legislative Assembly asking for their concurrence therein. In this case the member moves that the resolution be communicated to His Excellency the Governor. The Standing Orders do not provide for such a procedure, and I suggest that the proper form of communication between the House and the Governor is by address as provided in Standing Order 344. However, if the House is willing to create the precedent I will allow the second part of the resolution to be put.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [8.57]: Shall I be in order in moving an amendment?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I move an amendment—

That all the words after "communicated" be struck out, and that "by message to the Legislative Assembly and its concurrence desired therein" be inserted in lieu.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [S.53]: Whilst my proposal is new in this Parliament, it is a common practice in the Parliament of New South Wales. When an important matter is being dealt with there the communication is invariably by address to His Excellency the Governor. However, I am quite willing to accept the amendment.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [S.59]: I do not see the least reason why both courses should not be pursued, why the resolution, which in my opinion should be sent by address to His Excellency the Governor, should not also be sent to the Assembly. I have already pointed out that under Section 58 of the amending Act of 1889 the Governor has to sign a warrant for any expenditure. When the expenditure is unauthorised the only reason for it is the warrant of the Governor. I say that in the case of future Governors this may be of some guide to their actions in attacking what, in my opinion, is a growing evil, namely, that they will refuse to sign these warrants unless a good reason is put forward for the signing of them. That is one reason why I think it should be sent to His Excellency the Governor. I honestly think it would be the best plan to send the motion to both places. It is very probable that it will have some little effect. If it has no effect on the Government it will have some effect on His Excellency the Governor. He has this check, in certain directions, on the Government. Although he has this check over expenditure from revenue he has no check whatever on expenditure from loan, but this House has a far greater check over loan expenditure than most members realise. After all, the Loan Bill, the Bill providing for Loan Estimates and the expenditure of loan money, is, in the eyes of our Constitution, an ordinary Bill. It is not a money Bill. Under our Constitution it is an ordinary Bill, because it is only Bills dealing with revenue which must originate in the Legislative Assembly. In view of coming events, it is well that the House should recollect that. We are at perfect liberty to make

what alterations we like and amend wherever we care to in regard to the Loan Bill. With regard to unauthorised expenditure from revenue, I maintain that if an address is sent to the Governor it may have the effect of mitigating the anxiety of future Governors to fall in with all the wishes of their advisers, when the wishes of their advisers appear to run contrary to the Constitution. It would be possible, if Mr. Colebatch withdrew his amendment, for the wording of the motion to be altered in the following way: "That the foregoing resolution be communicated by address to His Excellency the Governor, and that a message be sent to the Legislative Assembly acquainting them with the resolution and desiring their concurrence therein." I think that would meet the case, if Mr. Colebatch is willing to take that course.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [9.3]: I am quite willing to withdraw the amendment I have moved in order that this course may be taken.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I move an amendment—

That after the word "communicated" in the second paragraph of the resolution the words "by address" be inserted.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I second the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I move a further amendment—

That the following words be added to the motion:—"And that the resolution be forwarded by message to the Legislative Assembly and their concurrence desired therein."

Amendment passed.

Question as amended agreed to.

MOTION — AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT AND IMMIGRATION.

Debate resumed from the 29th September on motion by Hon. J. F. Cullen—"I, That, in the opinion of this House, the

Government should appoint an Honorary Commission of three experienced settlers to prepare for submission to Parliament a scheme for attracting and settling on suitable areas in this State a large number of immigrants from Europe after the close of the war. 2, That the foregoing resolution be communicated to His Excellency the Governor."

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [9.9]: The hon. Mr. Cullen has brought forward several motions. The first motion has been withdrawn, the second one I regard as of no value whatever, and the third one deals with this question of immigration. The best advertisement for immigration is to have a lot of happy, contented and prosperous settlers. I would suggest that Mr. Cullen should, if he wishes to advance the cause of immigration, send to any of the societies which exist in England, a copy of the Industries Assistance Act, the amendments thereto, and the discussions which have taken place thereon. The fact of the matter is that we all recognise that this question of immigration and settling the people on the land is of prime importance. That goes without saying. It was the first cry when Governor Stirling landed here in 1829 and since then the population of Australia has gone up by millions. I hope Mr. Cullen will accept an assurance that I am just as keen as he is to settle people on the land. What I ask myself is this, assuming for a moment that we are discussing part 1 of the motion—for we will remember that in the debate on the previous motions moved by Mr. Cullen they were taken in parts, and amended to express the desire of the Chamber that they should be sent to another place and to His Excellency the Governor by address—of what practical value or benefit to Western Australia is a motion of this sort? There has been a question asked in the Federal Parliament about this very subject of land settlement. Possibly the hon. member will be able to answer this question, even if the Minister is not. The question asked is as follows:—

Is the Prime Minister aware that the Government of New South Wales has

set aside about 250,000 acres of wheat-growing land for returned soldiers, and has decided to give them preference in the ordinary balloting for Crown lands? Will the right honourable gentleman represent in a friendly way to the other States the advisability of following the example of New South Wales, so far as their respective circumstances will permit?

To this question the Prime Minister replied—

We shall be glad to do that.

We can assume that the State Government have had from the Federal Government a request to draw up some scheme of benefit to returned soldiers. There is no doubt that the Government, and everybody in the country, are discussing and will continue to discuss this question. Mr. Cullen suggests that three settlers should be selected. Who these three settlers are to be to draw up a scheme presumably at the expense of the country, and submit it to Parliament for approval, we are not told. I do not wish to trespass on the time of the House, or to hurt the feelings of my hon. friend. He is an old campaigner in this Chamber.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Do not have any hesitation.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The debate on a previous motion moved by Mr. Cullen shows that hon. members did not place any value upon it, and I ask, of what possible use will this last motion be? With regard to the returned soldiers, it seems to me that the Government might well be urged to deal with the questions which the Federal Government have specially referred to them. I do not know whether Mr. Cullen, who is following the matter of land settlement up so closely, has had this specific matter brought under his notice. That seems to me to be a practical scheme which we will be well justified, and the Government will be well justified, in taking up. I am curious to know whether the Government have received this request from the Federal Government and whether any steps have been taken to carry out the request to

make special arrangements for the settlement of returned soldiers who wish to go on the land. If the hon. member presses this motion I shall not feel inclined to vote for it. If it would give him any satisfaction at all to have passed a resolution of this kind, I shall not feel inclined to divide the House against it.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East—in reply) [9.15]: I am afraid it is not given to every member to indulge in Mr. Sanderson's happy sense of irresponsibility. I speak as a settler and as a man who takes some interest in the welfare of this State, and I am not satisfied with the growth of the population of this State. Is any hon. member satisfied with it? Is any hon. member satisfied to know that practically for four years past immigration has been little more than a matter of form. The substance of the Colonial Secretary's reply to my speech was that the Government had advisers of their own whom they regarded as efficient, but that if I could bring along three settlers to offer suggestions those suggestions would be dealt with on their merits. There is something in that, but a strange development has happened since. The gentleman who is now keeping warm the office of immigration officer made a speech the other day at the Million Club, and if he had asked me what I thought he ought to say, he could not have very much more happily set forth my views. He stated that after the war there must be an enormous awakening of the people of this State to get population, and it is not too soon to begin to make plans regarding the attraction of that population. That is exactly what I have said. We cannot mature a plan in a night and especially if we want to follow the constitutional course to get Parliamentary sanction for it. It requires a good part of the year and it is not too soon to begin the plans to attract population which will be on the wing when the war is over. When the war is over enormous numbers of people whose homes have been broken up, whose ties of kin have been severed will be looking to new countries wherein

to make their fresh start and some of the finest material any country could desire will be available to that country which takes the trouble to make its resources known and to show that its doors are open to newcomers. With regard to the three settlers, I want to remind the House that some of the keenest intellects are to be found amongst the settlers of this State. There are solid men who have made good and who know the work of land settlement from A to Z and who are broad-minded and big-hearted enough to take a delight in helping their State by putting their experience at the disposal of others. I hope that the Government will be big enough to appraise that properly. Surely grave questions of this sort should not be bandied about or talked about academically. We want the men who know, and the men who know are the men who have been through the mill and have made good. We want the wisdom of the men who have made good and who can tell newcomers the course to take. I do not care whether a new comer has hundreds or thousands to invest. I say to him "Do not hurry to spend it, but first go to some experienced settler and ask him to give you work for 12 months and take you on without your saying a word to him about payment, and leave it to that old settler who dare not do a mean thing. Tell him that you want to learn and that he can pay you whatever you may be able to earn." The value of experience of that sort cannot be over-estimated. What are £2 or £3 or £10 a week compared to the knowledge which an old settler has gained in 20, 30 or 40 years of the climate, the seasons, the markets, the soils, and the chemistry of agriculture? Knowledge of that sort is worth many thousands of pounds and when the new comer has gained that knowledge he knows in which direction to invest his money. I appeal to any man on the land as to whether I am not talking sense, but the Minister says "Oh no, we will ask someone in the office to tell us how to settle the people on the land." That is the mischief of Government administra-

tion. Always go to someone who does not know and he will show you how not to do it. I am not willing to press this motion against the Government. If they say, "We will not make an appointment under any circumstances," it is no use asking them to do so. It was my ultimate object that there should be utilised the practical knowledge of settlers and there are any number of them who could be selected, but another object was to draw public attention to the whole matter. I have succeeded in doing that and now with the permission of the House, I desire to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

House adjourned at 9.23 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 19th October, 1915.

	PAGE
Papers presented	1713
Assent to Bills	1713
Question: Industries Assistance Board, control ..	1713
Annual Estimates, Votes and Items discussed ..	1714
Loan Estimates 1915-6	1745
Bill: Supplementary Loan, £1,300,000, 1s., 2s. ...	1751
Lieut. Thro-sell, V.C., congratulations	1752

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: 1, Audit of accounts of trading concerns—Report of Auditor General. 2, Return of transfers in the Education Department from 1st November, 1914, to 1st March, 1915 (ordered on motion by Mr. Heitmann). 3, Returns of the business done in Western Australia by the various life assurance companies operating herein.

By the Minister for Agriculture: Audit of accounts of State Meat Stalls.

By Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): 1, Report on the Charities Department for the year ended 30th June, 1915. 2, Resolution (A) under the Health Act, 1911-12, adopting model by-laws, passed by the Corrigin and Menzies Boards. 3, Resolution (B) under the Health Act, 1911-12, adopting model by-laws, passed by the Burtville Local Board of Health. 4, By-law of the Melville Roads Board. 5, Amendment of Regulations (Nos. 163 and 96) of the Fremantle Harbour Trust.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Messages from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Permanent Reserve.
- 2, Grain and Foodstuff.
- 3, Government Electric Works Act Amendment.
- 4, Roads Act Amendment and Continuation.
- 5, Cottesloe Beach Rates Validation.
- 6, Postponement of Debts Act Continuance.
- 7, Marriage Act Amendment.

QUESTION—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE BOARD. CONTROL.

Mr. THOMSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: In the case of farmers who, having received advances from the Industries Assistance Board have repaid all such advances, do they still remain in any way subject to control by the board?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: Section 14, Subsection 4B, provides that an applicant may at any time repay the whole of the advance made under the Industries Assistance Act, and should he do so, there would be no surplus in the hands of the Colonial Treasurer to apply towards the discharge of the other debts of the applicant, as provided in Section 21 of the Act. The Government, however, has an obligation to the creditors as per the third schedule