

On motion by Mr. Seward, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.42 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

*Thursday, 18th October, 1945.*

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

### QUESTION.

#### COLLIE COAL STOPPAGE.

*As to Wages Paid to Government Employees.*

Hon. G. W. MILES (for Hon. H. Seddon) asked the Chief Secretary: In view of the decision of the State Arbitration Court that the Government must pay for the time lost by the Government employees as a result of the Colliery coal strike:

1, What was the amount involved in each department in the payment of salaries and wages for this period, and what was the total amount of salaries and wages?

2, What was the estimated loss of revenue of the various departments concerned and the total amount lost?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: The decision of the court applied only to the departments administered by the Commissioner of Railways and the amounts involved were approximately as under:

1, Railways, £6,000; Tramways, £2,000; Electricity Supply, nil; total, £8,000.

2, Railways, £5,000; Tramways, £6,500; Electricity Supply, £5,000; total, £16,500.

#### BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £1,800,000.

Read a third time and *passed*.

#### BILL—NATIONAL FITNESS.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [4.37]: No member of this House can fail to realise the true significance of national fitness in the community, and the measures

adopted by the various voluntary organisations for many years past are at last bearing fruit, in that our governing bodies are becoming conscious of their efforts. It looks as if there will be some co-ordination of effort in order to maintain the fitness of our race. It has always interested me to realise that, so far as their attitude to work is concerned, human beings can be divided into two groups. In the first group, which I think is by far the biggest group, the members look upon their work as the only thing that they were brought into this world to perform. When their work is over they usually put up with their leisure hours, awaiting the onset of work once more.

I find that many individuals in our own community have no knowledge of how gainfully to use the leisure time given to them. The second group is one that has been taught, from its early days, to appreciate other avenues of interest, apart from work, and its members know how to use their physical resources in exercise, or other means of pleasure or entertainment, or to increase their fitness. I have felt for many years that a system of true education would provide some means whereby the individual would be able to use his leisure hours to the best advantage. I feel that national fitness, starting with youth, will eventually provide for the grown adult a true means of spending the spare time allotted to him in life and that, if he is given a proper education in his early days, it will continue to be of benefit throughout his life, and his time will be suitably used.

The question has always been how this education should be given. Many countries have attempted this education. We saw probably the best example of it in those countries which afterwards became Fascist. I have in my hand a small book published in Italy called the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, which means National Leisure Hours Organization. The expansion of that effort in Italy in theory was ideal, but we know where it ended. It ended in the youth being marshalled for the use of the State and eventually in a militaristic way. This is a mistake that we must avoid at all costs, and it would seem to me that the correct method would be to allow the voluntary organisations to advise the governing body rather than that the governing body should direct the youth organisations.

Going back a little in the history of the present national fitness movement, I believe that the change from the old method of co-ordination to the one contemplated under this Bill occurred because of a difference of opinion between the then co-ordinating bodies or committees. From information I have gathered, I believe that it was a genuine difference of opinion and because of that methods were adopted by the Director of National Fitness in the State at that time. The methods were used apparently to gain control, with very good intent, by packing their votes, by having their own bodies supporting them and by subscribing to, and becoming the members of, the central co-ordinating body. So much difference of opinion existed that I feel sure the Minister did the right thing in disbanding the whole organisation.

I am afraid I cannot see that the present method was adopted simply because there was a difference of opinion between the leaders at that time. A method has been adopted which, in my opinion, will lead to exactly the same result, should we ever get an unscrupulous controller, as happened in Italy. I am not speaking in any way politically, nor am I suggesting that those in charge of the Bill have anything but the best intent, but under the Bill as it is worded, I see a very real danger of someone looking for youth to use as a means towards gaining power. Therefore I consider that the measure should be scrutinised with this in mind. Members will note that the Minister will do practically all the appointing. The Minister will appoint the council; the Minister will appoint the 21 extra persons apart from the civil servants to the council. The council in turn will then appoint its committees, and will call upon the chairmen of the various committees to form a co-ordinating committee so that the direction will be practically from the top downwards, whereas, in my opinion, the direction of this youth organisation should be from the youth up to the head.

If we peruse the Bill a little further, we will find that the powers of the council are enumerated. In Clause 11 (c) we find that the council is to encourage the development of national fitness in accordance with the advice or directions or recommendations of the Minister of State for the Commonwealth charged with the administration of the Commonwealth Act. In other words, the Minis-

ter in charge of national fitness can direct the State council as to the methods to be adopted, and then the council will direct the co-ordinating body as to the methods it shall adopt. Thus members will see that this power could be used by anyone wishing to dominate the movement. Surely we should avoid the mistake that led to the recent disastrous war when youth organisations were so marshalled for military purposes that eventually they had to be used for war!

We have heard from time to time of our own National Fitness Council desiring to expand so as to produce not only physical fitness but also a desire for art, culture and the things of real importance—things non-materialistic—in our midst. This might be used as an excuse to say that this is the method by which it can best be put into force, but in the book I have referred to, all sorts of organisations are mentioned—from choir schools, bands, and orchestras to travelling theatres, swimming pools, tennis, national competitions and excursions, even to the extent of assemblies and week-ends. This is obviously the point to aim at. We have heard that our organisation intends to do the same thing, and the organisation in Italy was something very much akin to what our organisation could become under the Bill.

Under the organisation in Italy, there was a president, but he was also the secretary of the Fascist Party. Without casting a reflection upon anybody, the person in charge of physical fitness here is the Minister who obviously adheres to some political party or other. The governing body in Italy was divided into seven branches—general business, organisation, administration, sports, culture and art, excursions and welfare, the lastnamed of which was supplemented by a health inspectorate. I suggest that we should scrutinise this Bill very carefully, not with the idea of criticism of its present guidance, but to prevent our youth from being led again into the recently-passed disaster. Under the measure the Minister will appoint the director of physical education and fitness as well as the secretary and treasurer of the council, and the council of national fitness will be a completely Government-nominated body. Even the co-ordinating committee will be one appointed by the council for investigational purposes only. I suggest that we might give the

voluntary organisations credit for much of the work that has already been done for national fitness.

We are very fortunate in those who have been chosen to guide national fitness activities as director and assistant director respectively, and no-one could in any way state a case against either Mr. Halliday or Mr. English, both of whom have had this movement, and especially youth, at heart; but I come back all the time to the point that those people are not appointed by a voluntary organisation but by the Government. I can see no reason why the director of physical education should not be appointed by the council; in fact, I do not quite see why the cumbersome organisation of both council and co-ordinating body is required. It may be that there is an explanation of that, but I believe the director should be responsible to the body and not to the Government.

I am sorry to say that there is already—and I have made fairly extensive inquiries into this matter—some ill-feeling arising because of the disjunction of the voluntary organisations and the control. One finds that the whole credit for all these displays, and all the efforts that are taking place, is being given, in newspaper publicity, to the National Fitness Council, whereas a considerable portion of the work is done by the voluntary organisations. There are individuals who have been trained by the national fitness organisation, such as the leaders of organisations. They underwent a three-months' course under the direction of the National Fitness Council, and they do get post-graduate courses. But they must go out as a body doing voluntary work, and they have done over the years.

It takes more than three months to train a man to be a leader of youth, and those leaders must give their whole hearts to this work. They do it voluntarily, but they cannot at present take any concerted action without a review by the departmental officers—the director, assistant director and staff of the National Fitness Council. While I do not decry for one moment the work these officers are doing, I think there should be a greater division of the honours when one realises the immense amount of work these voluntary organisations do. In the associated youth clubs there are many organisations. There are many churches and church

organisations which have a deep interest in this matter. I also instance the Lawn Tennis Association, which is keenly interested in the youth of the country. But under this organisation, unless the Minister likes to appoint some of their representatives to the council, they will have no actual say at all. Surely it would be much more democratic to ask those voluntary organisations to nominate for appointment by the Minister those they desire to direct the affairs of youth.

I have never thought that because a Government body gives money towards an object it should have the controlling interest, and I certainly do not think that because the Commonwealth Government has contributed towards the national fitness campaign, the organisation should be such that the council must carry out the directions of the Commonwealth Minister in charge of the Act; nor do I believe that because the Commonwealth Government donates money to the work, those voluntary organisations that have rendered such wonderful service to our youth in the past and which are now able to get recognition, if we do it properly, should be deprived of all voice in the controlling interest of the national fitness movement. I shall be most interested in going through the amendments which Mr. Baxter has placed on the notice paper because, from a rough glance at them, I perceive that they are very much akin to my own views of how this council and this national fitness movement can be remodelled. I will vote for the second reading, but I sincerely trust that members will consider this matter very sincerely from the point of view of whether this Bill, while it may do immediate good for the youth of our State, could not be moulded against their interests in the future.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

#### BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Received from the Assembly and, on motion by Hon. H. S. W. Parker, read a first time.

*House adjourned at 4.57 p.m.*