

bers will block the Appropriation Bill until this Austrian and Bulgarian sawmilling is finally disposed of. This is one of the worst departmental scandals I have ever heard of. It is natural that the Woods and Forests Department should want to get as much money as they possibly can; but their taking steps against the State sawmills, in which large sums of the country's money are invested, whilst this other man has not invested a shilling, is a thing that we ought not to tolerate.

Vote put and passed.

This completed the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure on account of the State Trading Concerns.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

House adjourned at 4.7 a.m., (Thursday).

## Legislative Council.

Thursday, 4th April, 1918.

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

### MOTION—COUNCIL BIENNIAL ELECTIONS—AN ADJOURNMENT.

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

“That in the opinion of this House—(1) With reference to this year's biennial elections, there should be no sitting of the Legislative Council for at least one month prior to polling day; and (2) With reference to subsequent biennial elections, there should be no sitting of the Legislative Council for at least two months prior to polling day.”

I have been prompted to move this motion because of the prospect of a somewhat extended session. In the “West Australian” of Wednesday, 25th March, an account is published there of a meeting of the parliamentary supporters of the Government, and in the report of what took place, the Premier stated that members were going ahead with the business which was on the Notice Paper of the Legislative Assembly. The Premier was asked when he hoped that the session would be closed, and the reply was, “When the House finishes the work on the Notice Paper.” I find that on the Notice Paper of another place there are no fewer than 15 Bills to be dealt with and in the case of 12 of those Bills the second reading has not yet been moved. Some of those Bills are of an extremely contentious nature, and according to what has been said by some of the members of another place, the measures will not get through without considerable discussion. Therefore in view of the very lengthy Notice Paper, and the express determination of the Premier not to close the session until the Notice Paper has been cleared, it seems to me that there is

a possibility of the session lasting several weeks and possibly a couple of months. In the case of the biennial elections in connection with the Legislative Council, the writs will be issued on the 9th of this month, nominations will close on the 22nd and polling day is fixed for the 11th May. In other words the poll will take place five weeks from next Saturday. I am not one of the retiring members, but it will be establishing an undesirable precedent indeed if the House be sitting immediately prior to the elections being held. It would place the retiring members at a disadvantage as compared with those candidates who are not retiring members. It might not be so bad in the case of the members for the Metropolitan Provinces and also for the Fremantle Province, although it would certainly inconvenience them considerably. All the members of this House know what an extremely busy time it is for candidates when elections are taking place, and it will be almost impossible, or at any rate, extremely difficult, for even the metropolitan and Fremantle members to attend to their duties here and also attend to their work in connection with the elections. How much worse is the position of members representing remote provinces of vast extent? If this motion be carried I do not wish it to be made an excuse for unnecessarily suspending the Standing Orders or for rushing the business through. This Chamber is supposed to be a House of calm review, and it has sometimes happened in the past—I do not say it has happened under the control of the present leader of the House—that legislation has been rushed through with so much haste that the House might justly be called the House of hasty legislation. We do not want a repetition of that, and in bringing forward this motion I do not, as I have already stated, desire it to be made an excuse for suspending the Standing Orders, for hastily dealing with legislation, or for in any way interfering with the business of the country. I suggest that the terms of this motion may be given effect to without the Government programme being in any way interfered with. If the motion be carried the Government will have two alternatives to adopt. The first, and I do not suggest it as a desirable one, is that the Government should jettison some of the Bills which appear on the Notice Paper of another place and possibly in that way terminate the session at the end of next week. There are, however, many objections to that. Personally I do not think it would be a desirable course to follow, but there is a better plan than that which I could suggest to the Government, and it is that we should next week get through what the Government may consider essential in this House; for instance the Appropriation Bill, and then that we should adjourn for a month at least, that is to say, adjourn for the elections. In the meantime the other place could be going on with their lengthy programme of legislation, 15 Bills in all, and 12 of them not yet at the second reading stage. Then when this House would meet again there would be ample work for members to go on with and possibly the session could be closed in a week or perhaps a fortnight. If the course I have suggested be not followed a grave injustice will

be done to retiring Council members. Furthermore, an undesirable precedent will be established, a precedent which will unquestionably infringe the rights of members of this House. The motion is divided into two parts. The first part refers to the biennial elections to take place next month, and the other refers to future biennial elections, and it is suggested there that in the case of future biennial elections the Legislative Council should not sit for two months prior to polling day. Some of the members of this House, more especially the members for the North Province, may consider that this period is short. Personally, I think it is short in the case of some of the Provinces. The words of the motion are, "at least two months," so that there is nothing binding. It might be better to make it three months, or that the House should not sit after February. The motion is one that will commend itself to all members of this House and I hope it will be supported by the Government. If it is carried I believe it will strengthen the hands of the Colonial Secretary and enable us to carry out the suggestion which I have made, that we should adjourn for a month and then that the other House should go on with the lengthy programme of legislation before it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.43]: Whilst I cannot agree to the motion, I am entirely in sympathy with all the remarks which have fallen from the hon. member. If I may be permitted, I would refer first of all to the latter part of the motion, that is the part which contemplates a permanent arrangement.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: It is merely an expression of opinion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Quite so. I would remind hon. members that years ago it was the practice to hold the elections for the Legislative Assembly at about the same time of the year as the elections are now held for the Legislative Council, it being generally agreed that that was the most convenient period of the year. Unfortunately, although the elections for the Legislative Council are definitely fixed in the Constitution, and must be held at a time which will permit of the new member taking his seat on the 21st May, the date on which the Legislative Assembly elections shall be held is not fixed. The life of our Legislative Assembly is limited to three years, the three years to run from the date on which Parliament actually assembles. That arrangement worked well until the dissolution of Parliament at an unusual season of the year upset the whole of the previously arranged method. It seems to me that it has been a mistake, a serious oversight, that the dissolution occurring in 1905 should have been allowed to disorganise the proceedings of succeeding Parliaments. It would have been only a common sense proposal that Parliament, which was dissolved at the wrong season of the year of 1905, should either have extended its life by a few months or curtailed it by a few months in order that it could at once have got back to the reasonable season of the year for holding the elections. I hope that the present Parliament will take that course, either by shortening its life for a few months or extend-

ing it for a few months, and thus revert to what is commonly recognised as the most convenient season of the year for holding elections. Not only is that the more convenient season of the year for the election, but the only season of the year to hold an election if the business of Parliament for that year is to be effectively carried out. If we have a general election in October, Parliament cannot possibly exercise any control over the finances of the country for the year that is affected. As the late Parliament, the dead Parliament, would have had no opportunity of exercising that control it inevitably occurs in one out of every three seasons that Parliament has no opportunity of exercising any control over the finances of the country. That reason alone justifies the extension by a few months, or the curtailment by a few months, of the life of Parliament, so that each new Parliament can commence its proceedings at the beginning of the financial year. In 1905 there was a dissolution in August. The result of the general election following, and of the present provision under the Constitution under which our Parliament runs for three years from its first meeting, has been that we have been gradually drifting nearer and nearer to the end of the year, until the last general election would have been held actually at Christmas time. To avoid that inconvenience, the Governor was induced to dissolve Parliament a month or two earlier than would have been the case. The sentiments expressed by Mr. Kirwan in regard to future elections appeal to me. I intend making representations which I hope will be approved of, to the effect that whatever steps are necessary shall be taken in order that we may get back to a convenient season for our general elections, and that each new Parliament may meet at the beginning of the financial year and exercise proper control over the finances of the country. If that is done, the necessity for the motion so far as future sessions are concerned would never arise, because Parliament meeting either towards the end of June or the beginning of July would invariably have concluded its proceedings long before the time came round when the biennial election of the Legislative Council in April or May would take place. So far as the present session is concerned, the Government hope it will be brought to a conclusion in time to allow members a reasonable opportunity of conducting their campaign. Of course, I realise that even if hon. members started their campaign to-day, some have such large provinces to travel over that they could not hope to cover them in the time. It is hoped that the session will be brought to a conclusion speedily. If the motion is not passed I will undertake to do this—that if, at the end of next week, which would be the time contemplated by the hon. member when this House should adjourn, it appears that there is no immediate prospect of the early termination of the session, I will consult with hon. members as to their desire to adjourn for the election for the Legislative Council. That would be a far better course than to arbit-

rarily fix a certain date after which we should not sit. That would be an unprecedented course to follow. It must be obvious to hon. members that if it should happen—and it is not likely to happen in our Parliament here—that there was any person anxious to obstruct the passage of a certain measure, the fact of one branch of the Legislature being determined to adjourn on a certain date would tend to encourage such person in pursuing his tactics. It is never desirable to fix a date absolutely for the rising of one House of Parliament. I will endeavour to have an alteration made in future so that the trouble we have got into on this occasion will not arise again. If at the end of next week there is no reasonable prospect of bringing the session to an immediate conclusion, and if it is the desire of hon. members that we should adjourn over the Legislative Council elections, I should offer no opposition to such a course.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [4.50]: I think the motion is one which every hon. member could readily support. It seems to me that the leader of the House, while offering an alternative, attaches far more importance than is justified to the time of the election of another place. Between the 1st July and the natural dissolution in October of another place there is ample time for that Chamber to regain—what I am afraid it has lost—the control of the finances of the State in a more satisfactory manner than has been the case in the past. Another place seems to show very little respect or regard for the feelings of members or prospective members of this Chamber, which is very discouraging to members of this Chamber. I notice in the recently promulgated platform of an important section of the supporters of the Government, a plank for the abolition of this Chamber. Is it possible that this has a certain amount of support from the Government? This extremely pliable Government always endeavours to please everybody, and the section to which I have referred is an important section of their supporters. If the Government were faced with the alternative of going out of office or pleasing that section they would please that section and the House would be abolished as far as they are concerned. Speaking seriously, it is unfair that hon. members who will retire should be placed at a disadvantage in regard to their re-election as against those gentlemen who aspire to seats in the Chamber for the first time. It simply means that an hon. member has either to absent himself from the Chamber for several weeks in the course of his campaign, and thereby to that extent disfranchise his province, or else he has to remain in his seat in the Chamber and prejudice his chance of re-election. No single branch of the Legislature should be able to place the other branch in this position. I do not think the argument in regard to the time of the dissolution of another place has any bearing upon the question. If the Government would only regain what they have lost—the control of another place as well as of the finances—there should be no difficulty

in getting financial proposals ready and through both branches of the Legislature in time for any dissolution in October or even September. I hope the motion will be carried unless hon. members see fit to accept the incomplete solution of the difficulty which has been held out by the leader of the House. Personally I am not inclined to forget on this occasion, as on other occasions, that this branch of the Legislature has its rights as well as the other branch, and that these rights and privileges should not be encroached upon in any way. I support the motion moved by Mr. Kirwan.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.54]: It may be urged that those who are affected by this motion should not take any part either in the discussion or in a division upon it, on the ground that they are prejudiced parties. I am taking the risk, however, and will also take the opportunity of thanking Mr. Kirwan for bringing forward this motion, even if it is going to be used by the leader of the House simply as a means of indicating what the Government think is a fair and reasonable thing. I suppose we all agree that our first consideration should be the welfare of the country. What is demanded in our consideration of the welfare of the country? Surely it is that the fullest consideration should be given to all important measures. I hope the carrying of the motion will not mean the suspension of the Standing Orders and the rushing of financial legislation through this Chamber. That seems to be a most important point of view and, as far as the Legislative Council's rights and privileges and feelings are concerned, I only say ditto to the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Kingsmill. He not only has great experience in political affairs inside and outside the Chamber, but we recognise he has peculiar qualifications for speaking on the rights and privileges of this Chamber. With regard to the leader of the House, I deeply sympathise with him but I would like to ask him, without offence, what would be the position of affairs if a very strong opponent had appeared, or were to appear, on the horizon in the province which the hon. member represents? I think he would be justified, or his colleagues would be justified, at any cost in ensuring the return of this distinguished member of the Legislative Council. Take the ordinary member of this Chamber, who also has his feelings—political feelings at any rate—as well as the leader of the House. I recognise the Colonial Secretary does attempt and successfully carries out the onerous task of reconciling his duties to his colleagues and his Government with the duties and responsibilities of this Chamber, sometimes in circumstances of extraordinary difficulty; therefore, I suppose that is the explanation of the curiously well-balanced speech he made just now. I want to ask the mover of the motion to give me light on this aspect. Suppose the motion is carried, what effect will it have on the legislation, and the ordinary methods of procedure adopted in the closing days of the session? Will he specially note that the leader of the House was careful

to speak of "shortly" and "speedily" without giving any specific date, but the mover will appreciate the importance of the position. Surely this National Government, at a caucus meeting, might be able to find out from their own supporters, whom they are able to keep up until 5 o'clock in the morning to support them, what they desire to drop. As soon as the Government can get that the position is entirely altered. As far as I am concerned, my constituents really live around this Chamber—it is hardly an exaggeration to say that, and it is a pleasure to me to walk round my constituency. I have great sympathy with members who are contesting seats in remote portions of the country, because it is impossible for them to be there and also attend to their functions here. But will Mr. Kirwan tell me, supposing this motion is carried, and supposing the slightest notice is taken of it, and we adjourn this day week for a month, what effect will it have on the political situation in the country in another place? What will become of their legislation? When will we meet again after the elections, and will we have the power and opportunity again of discussing the financial proposals which have to come before us? The leader of the House has told us, when reference has been made to discussing the financial proposals, that we shall have an opportunity later on. We have important taxation proposals coming on and I want the mover of the motion to tell me how far the privileges of the House will be protected so as to discuss the important financial measures that have to come before us. The Estimates I am prepared to pass without looking at them, but the taxation proposals, and possibly the loan proposals, must be fully discussed by us.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: It is in our own hands.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It is not altogether because we recognise our position. I always support the leader of the House in the conduct of business, except the rushing through at the last moment of important financial Bills which require our careful consideration. I hope Mr. Kirwan will deal with the points clearly and at some length, if necessary, to make it evident to me, and to others, what the position of affairs will be if we carry the motion and adjourn for a month.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [5.5]: While I am not quite prepared to vote for the motion, I am absolutely in accord with the object of it, and I have been thinking during the last few days how extremely unfair it is that those ten members who have to submit themselves for re-election should have to be absent from the House while some important discussion is going on. It is not fair to the country to be deprived of their services. It is not fair to their constituents, and I go further and say that those who do attend the sittings of the House will always, supposing they are absolutely human, and most of the ten men are human, are to a large extent in their votes and speeches governed by the hopes they have of winning the election. It would be impossible for anyone who is not human to be governed by anything but that. Therefore, in those circumstances, it is a quite

fair and reasonable proposal that we should adjourn for a month. My reason for not supporting the motion is the very excellent one given by the leader of the House, that is, that if any particular date is fixed we shall not be able to sit after, and opportunity may be taken in the way suggested by members. I think we would be wisely advised to place ourselves in the hands of the leader of the House, and I am sure he will carry out, as far as he possibly can, the desire of the members of this Chamber, as expressed this afternoon.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South—in reply)

[5.7]: The Colonial Secretary seems to think that if this motion is carried it will encourage certain members in another place to continue tactics that might prevent useful legislation being passed. That is the sole objection, I take it, offered by the Colonial Secretary and Sir Edward Wittenoom. If I thought that would be the result of the carrying of the motion, I would undoubtedly fall in with the suggestion made, and in that case withdraw my motion, but I fail utterly to see how that can be the result. It will put an end to all ideas of obstruction in another place because it will show those members how utterly hopeless it would be to obstruct. My proposal is that this House, at the end of next week, should adjourn for a month. The other House would then go on with legislation, and I cannot see how any successful stonewalling tactics could possibly extend over five or six weeks. Any attempted obstruction must collapse between now and when this House meets again. Therefore, so far from being an encouragement to members in another place to adopt tactics of that sort, it would rather be a discouragement, and every member who is acquainted with parliamentary methods knows how discouraging it is when obstructionists see there is no possibility of another place adjourning but will remain sitting over such a long period. Therefore it would be almost impossible to succeed with the tactics that have been referred to by hon. members. I think it would have the opposite effect to that which is feared. If the Government, on the other hand, say they will jettison certain legislation and prorogue at the end of next week, that would be an encouragement to members in another place to adopt the tactics suggested, but the alternative suggestion I made would put a stop to those tactics because they could not be carried over such a lengthy period. I sincerely hope the motion will be carried, so that we will make an absolute certainty that at the end of next week we shall have a clear month in which to travel throughout the electorates—those who are retiring. So far as the remarks of Mr. Sanderson are concerned, and the effect of the carrying of the motion upon the speed or otherwise of such legislation that will go through this Chamber, I do not know whether the hon. member was in the House when I was moving the motion but I stated that I did not wish, in fact I would not have brought forward the motion, if I thought it would be used as an excuse for suspending the Standing Orders, and rushing legislation hastily through. I think this House, particularly as it is

a House of review, ought not to suspend the Standing Orders except under extreme circumstances, and what I would suggest is this: there is no reason why the House should not sit even on Friday of next week. I understand the Estimates have got through another place.

The Colonial Secretary: With the exception of the Loan Estimates.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I would suggest that the Government should get through what business they possibly can during next week and adjourn. There is no reason why we should be left here during election time, and I sincerely hope the majority of members will agree to the proposal. It is not fair to the retiring members that we should ask them to sit here while the elections are on. While I am not a retiring member, I am deeply concerned in the coming elections. When one of the hon. members for the South province (Mr. Cornell) enlisted, I promised him that if he was not back in time for the biennial elections I would do everything I possibly could to secure his return, and I promised that I would do what I could and try to fill his place in fighting the election. In pursuance of that promise, I decided to go round the various centres of the South province. There are, however, two important centres—Ravensthorpe and Esperance—which I fear it will now be absolutely impossible for me to visit, but I intend to do the best I can, and Mr. Dodd will help me in the matter, although he cannot travel as much as I can. I am extremely interested in this matter, and this motion if carried, and we adjourn at the end of next week, will assist me.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes . . . . .	16
Noes . . . . .	5

Majority for . . . . . 11

#### AYES.

Hon. J. F. Allen	Hon. J. W. Kirwan
Hon. R. G. Ardagh	Hon. C. McKenzie
Hon. H. Carson	Hon. H. Millington
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. J. A. Greig	Hon. C. Sommers
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. J. Duffell
Hon. J. W. Hickey	(Teller.)
Hon. W. Kingsmill	

#### NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: From the remarks made by Mr. Kirwan in reply I take it I shall be observing the spirit of the resolution if I regard a month as being four weeks. I do not expect the hon. member really meant a calendar month. He does not mean that the House shall not sit after the 11th, but means that there shall be a clear four weeks allowed.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: The resolution is simply of a general character, and I spoke of sitting up to the end of next week. If necessary the Colonial Secretary could meet on the Friday, even perhaps the Saturday, to finish important business. It has been done before.

### BILL—EMPLOYMENT BROKERS ACT AMENDMENT.

#### Second Reading.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South) [5.20] in moving the second reading said: I desire to thank the Colonial Secretary for having put the Bill through its initial stages. The measure passed with very little opposition in the other place. There are only two clauses in the Bill, and it is not of a highly contentious nature. The principal object is to provide that where charges are made by the employment broker for hire the fees shall be paid in equal proportions by the employer and the employee. This principle has been in operation in several of the Eastern States and in New Zealand for a considerable time. I am not prepared to say that it is in operation in all the States, but it is in Victoria, in New South Wales, in Queensland, and in New Zealand. In regard to the big industries, most of the engagements are effected on the job. It is the casual employees, such as the casual hands employed in the country, the hotel and restaurant employees, servant girls and others, that usually go to an employment broker's office to secure engagement. It is to such employees, who are really the weakest in our industrial life, that the Bill applies. They have no strong unions, such as miners, carpenters, engineers, and other tradesmen have, to protect their interests; they are the weakest section of the community, and it is desired to give them rather more protection than they have hitherto enjoyed. There has been a great deal of discontent in regard to the fees which are charged by employment brokers, both as to the amount and the number of fees. Some of the employees pay as much as £5 a year for their jobs. That is to say, they secure a job of a casual nature, they pay the full fee, and when their employment ceases they go again to the registry office to secure another job; and so on throughout the year. It has been a very great hardship on those employees, and consequently the Bill makes it compulsory that the employer shall pay equally with the employee. This, I think, will serve to obviate a good deal of the discontent to which I refer. It seems only a matter of justice that the employer should pay equally with the employee. The employer is seeking someone to help him with his work and the employee is seeking an employer. It is a sort of mutual understanding, and surely it is not asking too much that each should pay an equal share of the fees. Another aspect of the position is this: I have always been under the impression that if there is one department of our industrial life which we could honestly say should be in the hands of the State it is this department of finding work for the employee and finding an employee for the employer. It seems to me to be the

duty of the State to undertake that work. But the Bill does not go that far; it does not seek to abolish the employment brokers, but merely to regulate the charges. The Bill also provides that the Governor-in-Council shall have the power to prescribe the fees, to fix the fees which are to be paid in equal proportions by the employer and the employee. I hope the Bill will commend itself to members. All parties in another place supported it. The Premier was responsible for the abolition of a clause relating to a reduction in the employment broker's fees. The reason given by the Premier was that the time was inopportune to reduce charges of any kind, considering the financial stringency. I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

Hon. C. SOMMERS (Metropolitan) [5.26]: I will oppose the Bill. I have listened to Mr. Dodd's remarks, and I remind him that this is a time at which employment is very plentiful, particularly amongst the classes he has referred to. Indeed, the difficulty is to get help of any description at all. When we remember that we have a State Labour Bureau which provides free employment for all who care to use it, and that that bureau is run at a loss, surely it is a fair thing that employees using private offices should pay a fair charge for services rendered. To begin with, the fees charged are always set out clearly in the office. I think it is the general custom that the employees pay half the first week's wages. If the employer has to pay half of it, he will be still further inconvenienced. Take farm cooks. I can quite understand that it costs many of them £5 a year in registry office fees, because the custom with many of them is to pass in regular procession. They stay only sufficiently long in employment to provide enough money to go on a spree. The employer has to pay good wages and provide good food and accommodation, and if he has to pay a portion of the fees in addition, it will be a further impost upon him. In the metropolitan area the mistresses all declare that it is almost impossible to get help of any description. I say no injustice is being done to servant girls, because they have only to offer their services to be readily snapped up at good wages. If the employees do not desire to use the free State bureau it is only fair that they should pay the fees charged by private brokers. I am convinced that if any competent domestic servant were to insert an advertisement in the newspaper to-morrow stating that she desired employment she would get dozens of replies offering good accommodation and remuneration. It is very difficult to get an agricultural farm hand at all. I think it is a most inopportune time for the introduction of the Bill. The discontent referred to by Mr. Dodd, if it does exist among employees, will only be removed to the employers if the Bill is passed. The State employment bureau is run at a loss, and the people who conduct the private offices have to give a great deal of attention to a discontented class of applicant. Certainly the private brokers fully earn their money.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.30]: I intend to support the second

reading of the Bill and if there is anything which would strengthen my support it is the words which have fallen from the last speaker, Mr. Sommers, who stated that there was a great deal of difficulty in getting employees on farms and other places at the present time. These institutions, situated as they are in various parts of the State, are very well known and old established, and have been the means of bringing the employer and the employee together. Under the circumstances, I fail to see why the whole of the expenses of obtaining employment should fall on the individual who has his labour for sale. I contend that the provisions of the Bill are equitable and just and it is the duty of the employer to pay a small amount when he is successful in obtaining suitable labour. The scale of charges has already been fixed and they are not extortionate. I am satisfied that it will be necessary and good, and perhaps for no other reason than that put forward by Mr. Sommers, I have pleasure in supporting the second reading, and I hope it will be passed.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [5.33]: I desire to support the remarks of Mr. Sommers. Those who have had experience with hands know that frequently men take positions and then throw up their jobs from time to time and the employer is mulet in the charges which he has had to pay for obtaining this labour. There will be a greater tendency than ever for these persons to throw up their situations and there will be a tendency on the part of registry offices to conspire with those seeking situations. These employment brokers are looking after the fees but I give them credit for looking after the interests of their clients in the country. They have to compete with the Government Labour Bureau, which has no trade to build up, while the employment brokers have to make their business and keep a number of good employers' names on their books, so that their business can be carried on. The fact that these employment brokers are existing side by side with the Government Labour Bureau goes to show that the workers themselves appreciate their existence, because the registry offices have not the advantages that the Government Labour Bureau has. The Government Labour Bureau engage hands and issue free railway passes to the hands engaged. That is notified to the employer and the cost of the free pass has to be paid by the employee or the employer at the earliest possible date. If the money is not paid the local police in the various centres help the bureau in obtaining any moneys that have not been readily forthcoming. This is a distinct advantage, and when we see that private brokers exist, there must be some really good reason for their existence under the conditions which they have worked in the past. It seems to me quite unnecessary for us to legislate and place further obstacles in their way. As an employer of labour I have met employees and have asked them why they prefer to pay a fee to have the engagement fixed up by an employment broker, when they could have gone to the Labour Bureau without cost. They can usually give a satisfactory reason why the fee is paid to the registry office. Sometimes the employer pays the fees and the

train fares. I object, as an employer, to have it laid down in an Act that these expenses shall be paid. If this Bill is passed the employers will have a stream of men passing through their hands. These men will take employment, will eat the meals of the employer for a few days and then leave. The employer will discover that they are no good and dismiss them. Employers will have to pay the registry offices half the fees and receive no benefit. It is only a matter of arrangement, and it seems to me that a very good system has grown up in the past. The worker has been satisfied to pay the fees. It has enabled them to get better engagements but the employer has been mulet in certain costs. It seems unnecessary that we should lay down in an Act of Parliament the fees that should be paid. I am opposed to the measure because we have a system that has grown up and has proved satisfactory. I do not think we should interfere with the private employment brokers. They must, through the competition of the Government Labour Bureau, know what they have to withstand. I do not know why we should harass the employment brokers, when we know that the Labour Bureau has the advantages, which I have mentioned, by way of competition. I feel that this is an undue interference with the employment brokers and therefore I shall oppose the Bill.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH (North-East) [5.40]: I support the measure. I fail to see any objection to it being placed on the statute-book. To my mind there has been no argument advanced this afternoon to show why the employer should not pay half the fees charged by these registry offices. On the one hand the employer wishes to buy labour and on the other the employee wishes to sell his labour, and I fail to see any reason why an employer, in engaging hands, should not pay half of the fee. If the employer, in engaging employees through the registry offices, pays nothing it is not fair. In Victoria, Queensland, New Zealand and New South Wales, an Act similar to this Bill is in existence and has worked satisfactorily. In my opinion, if this measure is passed here, it will do a lot of good both to the employer and the employee.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Perth) [5.43]: In introducing a Bill such as this I submit that one of the first considerations that should weigh with members is whether the necessity exists for correcting a wrong that is supposed to be suffered by someone or other. Mr. Dodd, in introducing this Bill, has not suggested that any wrong exists which requires to be redressed. In regard to the employment of any individual for any position, there are only two persons concerned, the employer and the employee. The custom has been established, as far as the employment brokers are concerned, that only the employee should pay, and no doubt that may supply a reason, and a very wise reason, for the Bill. It must be recognised that part of the cost of engagement has to fall upon the employer, and if no provision is made for refund, the result would be that an employee could simply snap his fingers and, after a day or two's stay in a place, could

leave that employment. He would not have the same interest to remain in his employment as he has when carrying the responsibility for the fee. It has been mentioned that many employers have paid the fee, and in addition have paid also the fares of employees going to their destination. This is a matter that could be arranged just as easily as the matter of effecting the sale of a property. We might as well introduce legislation to provide that in the case of auctioneers and land agents the commission to be paid should be divided equally between the buyer and the seller. The established custom is that the seller pays the commission. Mr. Ardagh pointed out that the one party sold his labour and the other bought it. The analogy is thus fairly well established between the two classes of cases I have referred to. Personally, I would hesitate to make such a comparison, but the suggestion has been made, and has appealed to me. If we look upon these two classes, taking the land agent on the one hand and the employment broker on the other, we find that in the past the employment broker has charged the seller of the labour a fee for the engagement, and that the seller of the property pays the commission to the land agent. The benefit naturally accrues in a large measure to the person receiving the money on the sale of a property being effected, and it is only fair that the person receiving the money for certain employment should at least have some interest in his or her employment. If we divide the fee I fear it will only lead to an unnecessary restlessness and a continued desire on the part of many to shift from their employment for unreasonable causes. I am quite at one in the desire to see established a proper method. I have it on good authority that the position of the employment brokers is far from satisfactory. They have a very hard lot, and experience great difficulty indeed in making an ordinary decent livelihood. Whilst it is true that under the Bill they would not suffer any diminution in the fees, that the only alteration would be that the fees would be divided equally between the two parties, the fact of passing the Bill would probably result in the employers deciding not to go to those employment brokers with the consequence that a certain useful class of people would disappear from our community. It is acknowledged that they have served a good purpose in the past and if the Government were to adopt the same methods as the employment brokers, and make a charge, there would be a cessation of the existing unfair competition. On the one side we have the Government running the State Labour Bureau, which has been in existence for a long time. It has been admitted to-day that notwithstanding the existence of that bureau many employers have found it desirable to go to the private employment brokers. If employers are, so to speak, driven into the State Labour Bureau, an injustice will be done to the taxpayers generally. If the supporters of the Bill desire to see it passed they should at least endeavour to introduce such other legislation as will provide that the existing bureau or establishment controlled by the Government should be put on a

basis similar to that of other employment brokers, and that the Government should make the same charges as are made by private employment brokers, so that this unfair competition will no longer continue. Until that is done, until we have some reasonable and proper method, I will object to the Bill. Mr. Dodd, in introducing the Bill, said that a similar measure is in operation in some of the other States and in New Zealand. I am not aware whether those States have free Government labour bureaux as we have.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: I think they have in New South Wales. In New Zealand charges are made.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is evident, therefore, that whilst this legislation may be in existence in certain States, the conditions existing there are not the same as exist here, and until the conditions are made similar here and the Government bureau is put on a similar basis to that of other employment brokers, I will strongly oppose the measure. The Government are out looking for funds, and it seems to me this is an admirable opportunity to try and improve their financial position. No doubt the improvement would be only a small one, but frequently it is in the small improvements that savings in the gross are effected. The Government could set an excellent example in economy and thrift if they were to start by introducing a charge in connection with the State Labour Bureau. If this course were followed, probably substantial benefits would eventually accrue.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.54]: This is not a Government measure, but personally I intend to give it my support. It is not as though we were departing from established custom. As the mover has pointed out, it is the practice all over the Commonwealth that the fees should be divided. In New Zealand not only are the fees divided, but in the case of a very small weekly salary, under 5s., the employer pays 2s. of the fee and the employee 1s.; and as salaries rise in scale so does the proportion paid by the employer increase until, where the salary is over £1, the fee charged to the employer is 7s. 6d. and that to the employee 2s. 6d. It has been suggested that under present conditions employees do not value their situations when they obtain them. I am not prepared to accept the argument that if they had to pay only half the broker's fees they would value their situations still less. But I think from the point of view of the employment brokers and also from the point of view of the employer, the application of this amending Bill would have a good effect. The original intention of the Government Labour Bureau was to find work for people not only out of employment but also unable to pay fees. I know that a great many of those who approach the Government Labour Bureau for work are not only unable to pay fees, but require assistance to get to their places of employment if at any distance. I am firmly convinced that the private employment bureau, if well conducted, can give greater satisfaction to the employer and the employee than can any State institution. Although I am not going to dispute the value

of the State Labour Bureau, particularly in finding employment for those who have no money to pay fees, the private bureau, keeping in constant touch with certain employers and getting to know the employees well also, can do a very great service. But the trouble is that very large numbers of employees will not go to the private bureau, because of the fact that they have to pay the whole of the fee. I have frequently heard the statement made that if one wants a certain class of labour it is of no use going to a private labour bureau, because the employees resent having to pay the whole of the fee, and that one is much more likely to get satisfaction from advertising in the newspapers or by going to the Government Labour Bureau. I think if the Bill is passed and the payment of the fees placed on an equitable basis, the private labour bureaux will find far more employees coming to them for engagement than at present. Mr. Sommers and others have pointed out that in these days the difficulty in regard to employment is not that the employees cannot get employment, but rather that the employer cannot get employees. That being the case, I think the difficulty will be to some extent removed if the employee is given to understand that at a private bureau he will have to pay only a proportion of the fees. I feel confident that a system which has worked satisfactorily in other places will work satisfactorily here, and that it will become the practice of the better class of employees to go to private bureaux when they have to pay only half the fee. Thus the arrangement will be satisfactory, not only to the private bureau, but also to the employer and employee alike.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [5.58]: I listened with great attention to the introductory remarks made by Mr. Dodd. Knowing how thoroughly the hon. member explains anything he undertakes, and how accurately he gets up his facts, I am sorry to think that his case in this instance must be particularly weak, because he had so very little information for us. I look on this proposed legislation as altogether unnecessary. Although Mr. Dodd said there is a very great deal of dissatisfaction existing, I really cannot see how this can be. There is no compulsion as to how people should endeavour to get employment. It is optional. They have three avenues, namely, the private employment brokers, the State Labour Bureau, and the advertisement columns of the newspapers. If the employees are not treated fairly by the private employment brokers, they can go to the State Labour Bureau, and if they are not there treated properly they can turn to the newspapers. As it has been said this afternoon, that class of worker can get a situation very readily without going to the brokers at all. Therefore, I can only imagine some of the reasons for going to the brokers. I find in the circular which I have before me there are six of these institutions making a living in the City and why interfere? It looks like another case of interfering with private enterprise. If the brokers had the whole business in their hands I could understand it but employees have three opportunities given to them, so that there is no monopoly. A person can go to the Labour



Bureau or to the advertisement columns of the Press or to the employment broker. The Labour Bureau is conducted by the Government at a loss, therefore every privilege is given them. One wonders, even on the explanation of the Colonial Secretary, that if the charge is excessive, why do not employees avail themselves of the Labour Bureau when they have the opportunity? The argument put forward as to the employer paying half the cost seems absurd. If a man has 25 employees it would only cost him £5 a year, therefore the whole thing seems unnecessary. As to the making of regulations, once that is embodied in an Act, goodbye to employment brokers because we shall have the Government some day gazetting such regulations that brokers will not be able to live. Because if the Government study themselves they will gazette regulations that brokers will not be able to exist under, for the Government have their own bureau to consider. I do not see any argument put forward to show the necessity for the Bill. There cannot be any injustice existing and if the clause enabling the Government to make regulations is passed, it will give the Government, who are interested in this matter, an unfair advantage. For these reasons I feel compelled—and I apologise to Mr. Dodd for being so compelled—to oppose the second reading.

On motion by Hon. A. Sanderson debate adjourned.

#### BILL—VERMIN BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

##### Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister) Bill recommitted for reconsideration of Clause 13 and the consideration of a new clause.

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 13—Insertion of new section in Part 5:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

“That in line 2 of the proposed new Section 46A after ‘occupier’ the following be inserted:—‘within the meaning of this Act or the Rabbit Act of 1902.’”

This is necessary as Part 5 of the Rabbit Act is incorporated in this Bill. The definition of ‘owner’ is different in the Vermin and Rabbit Acts and ‘occupier’ is not defined at all.

Amendment put and passed, the clause as amended agreed to.

New clause:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move—

“That the following be inserted to stand as Clause 5:—(Section 13 of the principal Act is hereby amended as follows:—(a) By inserting after the word ‘scale’ the following words:—‘in respect of pastoral holdings’; (b) By adding to the section the following words:—‘in respect of other holdings the same number of votes as he would have for such holdings at an election of members of a roads board under the Roads Act of 1911.’”

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Would it not be better to place in this Bill the exact wording of the section of the Roads Act?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The clause now proposed makes the provision absolutely clear. The number of votes is set out in the parent Act applying to pastoral holdings and, as far as the other holdings are concerned, the number of votes is prescribed in the Roads Act.

New clause put and passed.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Bill again reported with further amendments.

House adjourned at 6.13 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 4th April, 1918.

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

[For “Questions on Notice” and “Papers Presented” see “Votes and Proceedings.”]

#### BILL—GRAIN ELEVATORS AGREEMENT.

##### Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending the Bill.

##### Second Reading.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [4.38] in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill is to confirm an agreement that has been entered into by the Minister in charge of the wheat scheme (Hon. C. F. Baxter) with John S. Metcalf Company, Ltd., of Canada, relating to the preparation of plans, specifications, and estimates for bulk-handling grain elevators; for separate drawings, plans, specifications and estimates for storage bins for the construction of same in advance of the main scheme; for plans, drawings, specifications and estimates for temporary machinery and plant to work same pending the completion of each elevator as a whole; and for the supervision of such work as may be ultimately carried out in connection with the said plans and specifications during the period of five years computed from the date of approval of Parliament. The construction of such storage bins as I have indicated is an integral part of a complete bulk-handling scheme. It is desirable to provide storage bins now, and it is equally desirable that those storage bins