

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 6th February, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. J. DUFFELL leave of absence for six sittings granted to Hon. J. F. Allen on the ground of urgent private business.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [4.40]: The leader of the House did not indulge in any exaggeration when he said that this was the most important Bill which had been brought down or was likely to be brought down during the present session. Hon. members who have given the necessary study, and indeed it involves a comparatively large amount of study, to the measure, will agree that it is practically a compendium of the parent Act; because there are very few parts of the parent Act not altered or amended in this little amending Bill. It is, to new members in particular, somewhat difficult to follow the alterations without close study of the parent Act, and as a matter of drafting I think it would be better for the guidance of members, and to make the purpose of an Act of Parliament more apparent, to delete whole sections of the parent Act and place in the amending Bill the new sections as they would appear when amended. It seems to me it gives members an almost impossible amount of work to ferret out the ramifications of those amendments where in certain sections a line or two or a word or two are struck out and other words inserted which, as they appear in the Bill before us, convey no meaning whatever to those reading the Bill casually. At the same time I would like to congratulate the leader of the House on having excelled himself, if that were possible, in the lucid explanation he gave of those portions of the Bill which he touched upon. There are certain portions which he did not touch upon, and which no doubt he will deal with when he replies. One of the most interesting and ominous parts of the hon. member's speech was that in which he dealt with the introduction of new diseases. The present is a time when, above all other times, this House and the Parliament of Western Australia, and those administering the Health Act should be particularly careful to see that they have a measure ready to deal with practically any emergency. When we have our soldiers returning from parts of the world where strange diseases, old almost as time in those parts of the world, but new to Australia, are

rife, surely we should take every precaution to see that we are safeguarded against the introduction of such diseases, more especially when we remember that it is almost immediately after the introduction of a disease that it displays its most extreme form of virulence. This has been the case wherever new diseases have been introduced. In regard to that disease with the most awful name, bilharziosis—and the name, I fear, is no worse than the disease—which the hon. member touched upon, it is a strange thing that some years ago—I little thought that we should ever have to deal with it in Western Australia—the symptoms and mode of recurrence and the nature of that disease roused my interest, and I managed to look up various authorities on the question. It was brought home the other day to some of us, when an application was made to the Zoological Gardens for a large number of insect-eating birds to be given to the Federal Health Department in order that they might cope with the host of the insects causing this disease, and which is almost as prevalent in the waters of Western Australia as in the waters of Egypt. That is a very ominous fact, and, when that is joined to the somewhat casual habits of our soldiers who return from these strange lands, it behoves us to be extremely careful indeed to see that the utmost caution is exercised to prevent any serious outbreak—I am sorry to learn that there have been cases—of this most awful disease, the more awful because, as I have already said, it is practically already naturally introduced. Again, we have the hon. gentleman saying that there is a possibility of the introduction of cholera. It is with a view, I understand, of being able to cope with the possibility of such a terrible visitation to this land of ours, that the regulations are proposed to be introduced regarding the supervision of second-hand clothes shops and second-hand booksellers. I understand that a very fruitful means of transmission of cholera germs is second-hand clothing. I have already said that this little amending Bill is practically a compendium of the principal Act. What I mean is that the Health Act has been in operation since 1911 and that the various provisions of that Act, dealing with various activities of the department throughout the State, have been on trial since that time. This Bill now represents the effort of the Health Department after some years of experience of their Act to bring it into line with actual experience, and to provide a proper working instrument for our future use and guidance in place of the measure which we have at present. I think the cogitations of the department should receive every consideration at the hands of hon. members—every fair consideration, but not too much consideration, because, after all, departments are there to make things easy for the departments, and very often in making things easy for the departments they make things harder than perhaps they should be for the general public. It is for this House to hold the balance between the general public and the department, not too blindly accepting anything that the departmental officers say—

although it may be perfectly true—but seeing by what means the objects of the department, who of course are only working for the good of the State, and with what minimum of inconvenience to the general public, can be achieved. As regards the clauses relating to dairying, the leader of the House has said that it is desired to be made possible, and indeed he has almost foreshadowed that the policy of the Government will be, that the retailer shall bear the brunt of practically the whole of the inspection of milk.

The Colonial Secretary: There is a special clause as regards the responsibility of the wholesaler.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Exactly. If the impression I gathered was wrong, I shall be very pleased; but my impression was that the future policy of the Health Department in dealing with milk was to proceed as much as possible against the retailer, and then to allow the retailer to take his chance of recovering damages from the person who sold the milk to him wholesale. That is a very comfortable position for the department, and a very good illustration of what I have been saying, that we have to consider the public convenience as well as the departmental convenience. The attitude, I say, is a very good one for the department, but it is a mighty poor one for the retailer. I think that possibly if the thoughts of the Health Department were turned in this direction, it would be feasible so to control the sale of milk throughout the State as the sale of other perishable articles is controlled, and that when an inspection takes place it shall take place without any very great hardship to the retailer, but still be an inspection which would amply protect the public and which would arrive at the object we all wish to arrive at, the ensuring of a thoroughly pure milk supply. After all, the milk supply is one of the arteries of the public life and one of the main factors of the public health. The inspection should be carried out without inconvenience and without anything in the nature of what might almost be described as injustice to the retailer of milk. It is easy enough to get a conviction occasionally against the retail dealer, but in my opinion it would be a mighty hard thing for the retail dealer to establish a sufficiently strong case to enable him to recover damages from the wholesale supplier. However, that is a matter which we shall later consider at greater length. I should like to ask, would it not be possible for the Government to give consideration to the possibility of establishing a milk market under municipal control or under Government control—under whatever control they please? I suggest a milk market, a distributing centre for each centre of population, to which the milk can be sent and from which it can be distributed.

The Colonial Secretary: Clause 36 of the Bill makes special provision for the sampling of milk on its way from the producer to the retailer.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I am indeed glad to hear that, and I hope the provision will be taken advantage of as much as possible. But still I would like the Colonial Secretary to give my suggestion any consideration he thinks

it is worth. With regard to frozen meat, the Bill provides that persons who wish to sell frozen meat shall advertise the fact as efficaciously as possible. But the definition of frozen meat is somewhat vague. Frozen meat according to the usual definition, as we understand it, is meat which comes from outside the State in freezing chambers. Now it is well known that even our local meat—at all events the greater proportion of the meat sold in our shops—is put away in freezing chambers; and I take it that it is sometimes frozen. Is such meat to be classed as frozen meat? There is nothing to say that it is not. The definition simply states that frozen meat is meat that has at any time been frozen—a fairly obvious truism, and one apt to cause a good deal of confusion in the event of cases coming into court. And, after all, it is only when cases come before the legal tribunals that we discover the efficacy or the inefficiency of Acts of Parliament. That is a subject to which a little consideration might be given in Committee. The leader of the House did not say anything on this subject, nor—if I remember rightly—did he say anything on what I understand are the fairly drastic provisions in this Bill regarding food and drugs. I do not think the hon. gentleman said very much about food and drugs. From his power of observation he undoubtedly knows that the sections of the Health Act relating to food and drugs have caused a good deal of controversy, and have roused a good deal of public feeling on both sides. I am sorry the hon. gentleman did not explain more fully the precise effect of the clauses dealing with food and drugs. Now I come to what is after all, having regard to the state of public feeling at present, the crux of the Bill; and that is the clauses dealing with venereal diseases. Every member I suppose has received a letter from a body known as the Citizens' Vigilance Committee of Perth, Western Australia, which letter entreats individual members of the Legislative Council to do their best to provide an opportunity for public discussion between the second reading and the Committee stage, on the ground that the amendments proposed may affect the liberty of any citizen in the State. I do not know that what is generally called public discussion does very much good. What we class as public discussion as a rule is the holding of public meetings; and I do not know that the holding of public meetings, again as a rule, arrives at any very sound or very just estimate of the public feeling. The greater the crowd of the public, once more as a rule, the more liable they are to accept, in some cases, even the most ridiculous propositions that can be put before them, if only the public meeting is large enough and the speakers are impassioned enough—and speakers at public meetings, especially on subjects like this, always are impassioned. Moreover, we have to take into account the faculty some speakers have of appearing in deadly earnest. That is a great asset of some public speakers. While I do not hold that public meetings, as a rule, do very much good, yet there is, in my opinion, no doubt that further inquiries should be made into what has been done under the existing

Act and what is likely to ensue from the passing of this Bill. The leader of the House has given us an outline of the departmental view of the clauses of the Bill relating to this somewhat delicate subject, the treatment of venereal diseases. I say "the departmental view," and I say it with all respect and without wishing to cast any doubt whatever upon the facts and figures supplied by the hon. gentleman. But we have to remember, after all, that it is the departmental view. We have to remember, too, that some author—I forget who it is, but I have read him lately—says that the true liberty of any people is engendered not by the laws which are passed by the Parliament of that people, but by the fact that the people feel that they are responsible for the making of their own laws. That, I think, is true. The feeling of responsibility which exists in any community, the feeling that each individual member of that community has, after all, an ultimate voice in the government of the country, is what supplies true liberty to any community. That being so, it is well that we should pay attention to the representations of bodies such as the Citizens' Vigilance Committee, who, I understand, have done very good work, although I personally do not agree with some of the conclusions which they draw. I consider, however, that we should accede to their demands and give them the opportunity they wish for, if not public discussion, at all events exhaustive inquiry between the second reading and the Committee stage of this measure. With that object it is my intention at the proper stage, when the second reading has been passed, to move that the Bill be referred to a select committee of this House, in order that all sides may have an opportunity of laying their views before that select committee, and in order that we may avoid in this House a discussion which is distasteful to the House and still more distasteful to the people outside.

Hon. J. Duffell: Will the Colonial Secretary agree to that?

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I understand the Colonial Secretary sees no objection whatever.

The Colonial Secretary: No objection at all.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Let me say, too, that my experience, which now extends over a good many years, has shown me that in a Bill of this sort, a Bill of an intensely technical nature, next to an introduction such as the Colonial Secretary gave us, the reference of the Bill to a select committee saves the time of the House. There is no doubt whatever about that, if the House has confidence in the select committee and if the select committee do their duty; and let me say, also after a good many years' experience, that I have seen far more good result from the efforts of select committees than I have ever known to result from the efforts of such bodies as Royal Commissions, which we have had sitting for the last year or two. There is not the least reason why the committee should not report next week or the week after. Select committees after all have an incentive to get their work done as quickly as possible, but the same incentive does not apply to Royal Commissions. So far as my experience goes we have had very much more tangible, better

and more practical results from the efforts of select committees than we have had from Royal Commissions, however expensive they have been, and God knows some of them have been very expensive. Select committees do better work, quicker work, and are altogether more suitable. That is the reason why it is my intention to move not only to allow the Citizens' Vigilance Committee an opportunity to lay their views before the House, but to allow anybody else who wishes to place their views before us to come forward. The close examination of the Bill which I have given it leads me to believe that more people are affected than I previously thought. After all, Parliament is the highest court in the land, but when you get down that what I may call the petty sessions cases of its jurisdiction it is rather hard of access, and the only way in which petty sessions cases can come before Parliament is by the medium of a select committee of the House. A select committee will be able to examine and form a just estimate, and I hope the experience that has been gained by the Health Department during the time the clauses with which we are now dealing have been in operation, will lead me to say that in so considering this evidence the committee will have an opportunity which I do not think has been afforded in any Parliament in the British Dominions so far, for they will see the practical effect of legislation which is new in the British Dominions. In the little pamphlet which accompanies the request made by the Citizens' Vigilance Committee there are extracts from the final report of the British Royal Commission on venereal diseases. It is almost worth the trouble of passing an Act and putting it into operation for a few months or a year or two to arrive at a just estimate as to how an Act will affect a community and what changes are necessary after the experience has been arrived at. This Commission on venereal diseases is so to speak dealing with the report in the dark. It is dealing with matters of opinion, not actual results of investigations such as our select committee will have an opportunity of dealing with. We have had an Act in operation which was passed after considerable discussion in this Chamber. Let me say how much I deplore the fact that Dr. Saw is not with us, and may I say with the added information which he would have been able to bring before us and the large store of knowledge which he showed on this subject on the last occasion we were dealing with this matter. His valuable assistance will not be given on this occasion. We have to discount the extracts from the final report of the Royal Commission because the Commission had not the advantage we shall have of seeing an Act of the kind they speak of in actual operation. They object to the notification of the cases. In the extract they say—

No system of notification of venereal diseases should be put in force at the present time. When experience has been gained of the operation of improved facilities for diagnosis and treatment, the question of notification should be further considered.

There we have in a few words the greatest recommendation for the course we are follow-

ing that we possibly can have. As we have now already the experience gained, how much better are our opportunities in arriving at a just estimate of the value of the legislation we have and that proposed to be enacted in the Bill before the House. While attaching every importance to the departmental aspect of the case, and at the same time attaching importance to the public aspect of the case, hon. members must not be misled by the use of a phrase which is so often used by the public, "interference with the liberty of the subject." I do not know any Act of Parliament to which this phrase cannot be applied, and is rightly so applied. Every Act of Parliament as an interference or restriction of the liberty of the subject for the benefit of the whole community. The liberty of the subject must be curtailed so that the community will be the gainer. So that I ask members not to be led away by this telling phrase. No doubt I have used it myself, and I do not regret it. Probably I shall use it again. In this case, however, I ask members not to be led away with the phrase which I may describe as somewhat specious and misleading. I have already said that at this juncture when the danger of the introduction of outside diseases on the one hand is imminent than it has ever been in the history of Australia, and when the value of life is greater by far to this State and to the Commonwealth at large—greater by far because each life means more to us to-day than it ever did before—we must prepare for the protection of the lives of such weapons as we have at hand. If interference with the liberty of the subject is necessary it must take place. At all events with the procedure which I advocate we can ensure that both sides, in fact all sides of the questions dealt with in the Bill will get a fair hearing, and I hope the House will arrive at a just estimate. I am glad to find that amendments of the midwifery legislation are contemplated in the Bill which will have the effect, and it should have the effect in a country where progress is being made and where science is going ahead, of raising the standard of the profession. I hope the conclusions arrived at in the Bill that midwives who have not qualified by examination shall be restricted to practice when a doctor is on the premises is carried out. That is eminently common sense, and I hope it will be adopted. I support the second reading of the Bill very strongly, because I believe that the Bill is an honest effort on the part of the department to correct errors which during some years of administration have been found in the parent Act, and in order to allow the department to place their views fully before the House, I am advocating a reference of the Bill to a select committee. Under those conditions I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the measure.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.10]: The proposal made by Mr. Kingsmill and its acceptance by the Colonial Secretary will have the effect, as Mr. Kingsmill has indicated, of shortening the discussion, at any rate as far as I am concerned; and so long as the hon. member does not put me on

the committee, I shall give him my cordial support in the course he proposes to adopt. I want to mention two matters which I do not think will be brought before the select committee, and will not be permitted to be discussed in Committee of the House. I do not think it is necessary to touch on the subjects mentioned in the Bill such as picture palaces, milk shops, meat shops, maternity homes, lodging houses, and so forth. It would be much the better thing to leave them entirely alone until we get into Committee. There is a matter of public interest—and probably a select committee will now be appointed since the Minister has agreed to it, but the select committee will hardly think it is within its scope—the £2,000, the amount mentioned by the leader of the House which we are going to receive from the Federal Government in connection with this matter seems to me to be totally inadequate.

The Colonial Secretary: Purely for venereal disease treatment.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: At any rate it seems totally inadequate, and I am surprised that the Government have not rejected it with a certain amount of emphasis. A report prepared by the committee appointed by the Federal Cabinet to inquire into the causes of deaths in the Commonwealth I have before me, and in conclusion the committee say—

Many of our recommendations affect legislation and regulation by the States, rather than by the Commonwealth. We are of the opinion, however, that by reason of the old age and invalidity pension, the Commonwealth is so deeply interested in the results of venereal disease and its control that it should approach the Governments of the States, with a view to securing concerted action. We believe that the Government of the Commonwealth would do well to undertake a reasonable financial responsibility in the furtherance of any well considered scheme for further provision of the means of diagnosis of hospital and other treatment, and for research.

That seems to me to be a matter of very great importance from the financial point of view, and from the scientific point of view. It is surely no reflection on the medical officers of the department, or indeed on the medical profession in the State of Western Australia, that they have not time, opportunity, appliances, or population to work on, to enable them to follow up in a thoroughly scientific manner this question either of venereal disease or the other disease, which I cannot pronounce or spell, mentioned by Mr. Kingsmill. Surely it is no reflection on the medical officers here that they really cannot tackle that question. It is problematical whether we can afford to foot the bill to carry out the provisions of the 1915 Act. I am convinced from the inquiries I have made that a couple of thousand pounds is totally inadequate for the requirements of this State.

The Colonial Secretary: That is one half. We pay another £2,000: that is £4,000 altogether.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It is really not of much consequence, and I will not quarrel with

the Colonial Secretary over that point. My contention would be, first of all, that the whole of this bill should be footed by the Commonwealth Government, and that the administration should be in the hands of the Medical Department of this State. That view is practically supported by the recommendations of the committee appointed by the Federal Government themselves. I am not going to enlarge on that. I am sure the leader of the House will understand that it is in no hostile criticism of the Bill itself that I make these remarks, but simply viewing, as I do, nearly all questions that come before us in the light of our financial position, I am more than satisfied that £4,000 is totally inadequate. I am also satisfied that moral obligation rests on the Commonwealth to find this money.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Forty thousand pounds is nearer the mark.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I simply wish to indicate to hon. members the financial aspect of this question, an aspect which one would never presume to go before the select committee to urge. It is obvious that when we get into Committee we will not have an opportunity of dealing with that point of view, and I therefore thought the best time to do so was upon the second reading. The second point I am unwilling to touch upon. I think, however, it is a very pertinent criticism of the position. I am getting a little abashed when I find myself in disagreement with hon. members and when, inadvertently, I may overstep the mark between relevancy and irrelevancy. I think, however, I can show to the House that I am justified in making this point. I have here letters between the Public Health Department of this State and the Defence Department of Melbourne. They raise a point of public importance which should be considered. The question really is, who is responsible in these matters of the health of the people? The people are not the least interested in the Health Department of this State and the Federal Department wrangling amongst each other. They are indeed vitally interested in the question of public health, and wish the matter to be put on a sound businesslike and workable basis, which they can understand. These letters will clearly show that, in the highest quarters, that is to say in the Department of Public Health in Perth, and in the Defence Department of Melbourne, on a matter of vital importance, these two parties are in total disagreement. The letter from the Public Health Department of Perth is dated the 12th May, 1916, and is as follows—

I have your letter of the 8th inst., regarding the administration of the amending Health Act, 1915. In reply to your inquiries, I have to say that military medical officers must comply with the provisions of the Health Act, but when the conditions of their military duties and the frequent changes which take place are borne in mind, it is obvious that this compliance can only be expected as far as is practically possible.

Not wishing to mislead the House in any way I may say that there are two paragraphs showing that—

The necessary arrangements, however, are being made between this department and the military authorities to ensure that the provisions of the Act are observed by soldiers, etc.

I am not suggesting that the State Medical Department and the Defence Department are at the present time at loggerheads, and it is a very reasonable supposition that they are trying to do their best, at any rate, in a somewhat difficult position. I do say, however, that the existing conditions practically make it impossible to guarantee the continuity of administration, and, sooner or later, if we have the slightest disagreement with these high officials—and even high officials are known to come to loggerheads sometimes—we will have a most disastrous state of affairs, because we have these diametrically opposed opinions put down in black and white from these two departments. I wish to emphasise the line that "military medical officers must comply with the provisions of the Health Act." The letter from the Defence Department is dated the 15th August, 1916, and is as follows:—

With reference to your letter of the 31st ult., relative to the responsibility of the military authorities in regard to the Health Act Amendment Act of 1915 (W.A.), I am directed to inform you that the military authorities are not required to notify cases of venereal disease amongst soldiers to the responsible State department, but they are prepared to co-ordinate with the State as far as possible in the matter.

I do not wish to put a misleading construction on these letters, because I will admit at once that in both of them there is an indication that they hope, or wish, to work together. When trouble arises in the way of diametrically opposed opinions between two important departments such as these, the public concerned are put in an intolerable and absurd position. We have these concurrent powers quarrelling amongst themselves and the public suffer as a result. These are the two points of view I wish to put before the House, in order that they may be discussed and ventilated. The discussion is the other matters will be very materially shortened by the proposal made by Mr. Kingsmill, and accepted by the leader of the House. How we are going to deal with the financial matters and other matters I have mentioned will remain to be seen. Surely the Government can make an appeal to the Commonwealth Government, and draw their attention to the recommendations made by their Committee on this point. What, in my opinion also throws a light on this Bill are the reports we have had from the other States on these different Acts. There is one report on a discussion which took place at the Board of Health of Victoria on the Venereal Diseases Act, and the members of that board adopted the opinion expressed by the Melbourne "Age" that the Act so far had been a complete failure. My own opinion is that it

we have six Acts dealing with this question, and we are to confine our attention to these venereal cases, as seems to be likely to a large extent, and realising, as we do, that the Federal authorities practically say they are going to do exactly as they like, and there is no doubt that they have that power, we shall have an impossible position arising. What I mean to say is, if the leader of the House, or his medical advisers, orders a medical officer to go into a camp, or on to a ship, or wherever it may be, that officer will be ordered off the premises and if he does not go he will be pushed off. I do not wish to discuss the different views regarding these various diseases, but speaking simply as a member of the general public, who is greatly interested, as all must be, in public health matters, whether it is a milk supply or these diseases, I, in common with the people, am entitled to ask that there should be some common sense in dealing with the matter. That common sense is not shown by six Acts of Parliament and another one over and above that. Furthermore, speaking as a taxpayer of Western Australia, I protest most strongly against being asked by our State Government here to provide not only what the Commonwealth ought to take over, that is to say, this public health question, but to supply the remedies for these diseases, in the direction of which the Commonwealth committee, appointed by the Federal Government, has recommended in pretty strong language, assistance should be given by the Commonwealth Government. We believe that the Commonwealth Government would do well to undertake a reasonable financial responsibility in furtherance of well-considered schemes, and I ask any one in this Chamber, or outside, if they consider that £2,000 is reasonable financial assistance afforded to Western Australia.

Hon. H. BOAN (Metropolitan) [5.29]: I do not know that I am very conversant with this subject, but I may possibly be as well informed as many other hon. members of this Chamber. It is a subject which is rather new and foreign to us. The Health Act is a very important one. I wish to make brief mention of one or two items contained in this Bill, which have been considerably commented upon. With regard to the milk supply, I think that is too insignificant to dwell upon. If intelligent people cannot trace the origin of adulterated milk, without this extreme agitation and argument, it is a little puzzling. I maintain we cannot trace it to the retailer. It should not be a very difficult thing to attach the blame to the wholesaler. I am, however, going to pass that by, because I believe the officers of the Government have sufficient intelligence to thoroughly investigate the subject without a lengthy discussion taking place on it in this House. I am sure there are many more important matters awaiting our attention. With regard to the midwifery clauses of the Bill, I thoroughly endorse the proposals, because I recognise it is necessary that due precaution should always be taken. We must not, however, forget the position of the nurses out in the backblocks, where the services of medical men are not available.

The Colonial Secretary: That has been provided for.

Hon. H. BOAN: Generally the amendments contained in the Bill are very welcome. The question of venereal diseases appears to be prominently in the minds of the people, but I cannot help thinking that if we had had some wisdom and a little foresight and grappled with this question at an earlier period we would have been saved a great deal of trouble. Undoubtedly there has been lack of foresight. We should have demanded from the men returning from the front a certificate of perfect health before permitting them to land, but in that respect it is not too late to take action now. There will be many thousands more to return to the State, and that aspect of this important question should not be lost sight of. The proposal made by Mr. Kingsmill that the measure should be referred to a select committee, has my cordial approval. This is a very complex question, and I do not think anyone of us here is capable of handling it. Our good friends, the Vigilance Committee, are working earnestly in the direction of assisting us, as well as assisting the community, and if a select committee be appointed the active members of that committee will be able to give free expression to their views. Some of the members of the Vigilance Committee have already approached me and placed their version of the position before me, but I lack experience in matters of this description. We have in our midst men who are capable of expressing an opinion, and who are capable of handling the subject and discussing it intelligently. The proposal to refer the Bill to a select committee should save a lot of argument. It is undoubtedly the best policy to pursue. If I may be permitted to make a few comments outside the Bill itself, I would like to offer some suggestions which would be for the benefit of the community. I have wondered at times why people have not asked themselves whether there are any avenues to which they can turn their attention with the object of bringing about a better condition of affairs and perhaps to maintain the health of the community. There are many things which could be done outside altogether of those which the law expects of us. The Vigilance Committee, for instance, could do a great deal in the direction of educating parents towards minimising the spread of disease. It disgusts me very much to find in the streets of Perth and the suburbs by day and night many young people who promenade apparently without any object in view. When we were young nothing like that took place, but to-day we find many children of 14 and 15 years wandering aimlessly about the streets unaccompanied by older people. To my mind that is the cause of the whole trouble, and is responsible for the necessity for legislation of this description. Parents and guardians should be instructed by a body such as the Vigilance Committee to explain to their children the risks they incur by wandering about the streets. One important thing which should

be impressed upon the parents is the necessity for making the children realise the importance of being conscientious, open, and honest. The child should have no secrets from its parents. It should be the first duty of the child to tell its parents what has transpired. If a girl has been molested or insulted the parents should be the first to know. It is the rigid secrecy which some children observe which has led to unfortunate results. My observations lead me to the conclusion that the majority of parents go on the wrong track. I cannot understand how it is that parents allow their children to roam about and then neglect to question them. I urge that someone interested, for instance a body like the Vigilance Committee, should make a door to door canvass and point out to parents the evil consequences which are likely to attend the freedom which the children, and particularly young girls, are permitted to have. I have very great pleasure in supporting the motion for the appointment of a select committee, and I trust that the efforts of the gentlemen who may be appointed will be rewarded with success.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE (South-West) [5.40]: I have much pleasure in supporting the proposal that the Bill should be referred to a select committee, so that it may be overhauled. It seems to me that there is very little of the original Act left in the Bill before us. Measures of this description should be couched in the simplest language, so that any individual might understand what he is reading. But as it is, it will be necessary, in conjunction with the measure, to look up all the Acts which have preceded it, to ascertain exactly what the meaning of a particular portion of it may be. My idea is that there should be one comprehensive Act. I admit that there are amendments which must be made, and more particularly in the regulations which are framed under the Act, and those regulations which deal with milk. I was pleased to hear that the Minister realised the necessity for having pure milk. We want to encourage the people to produce a pure sample of food. I fear, however, that regulations will be framed which will be nonsensical and unpractical. I know from reports which I have read that samples of milk have been taken from champion cows in Australia. This milk was sold to the public, and the owners of the cows were punished. The punishment was not because the milk was impure, but because it did not come up to the standard or did not contain the solids or fats or some such other fad as required by law. What we want is a pure article, and I shall rejoice when I find that we have a consolidated Health Act, instead of a series of Health Acts. We should remould the whole of the health legislation. We have seen what the result of many Acts of Parliament has been in connection with road boards legislation, and also municipal legislation. Our simplest method will be to select the most important sections from the existing legislation, and add them to those which are now suggested. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. J. M. DREW (Central) [5.45]: I have studied the Bill in conjunction with the original Act. I spent the whole of this morning and part of this afternoon in making a comparison with the Acts of 1911 and 1915 and I discovered what I regard as an old acquaintance. If I am not mistaken, the Bill has been on the stocks for four or five years, and after a critical examination of the different clauses I have come to the conclusion that the greater portion of the Bill is necessary for the proper administration of the original Act, which in most respects is an excellent one. That is the view I hold, and on past experience the fact that I hold this view is *prima facie* evidence that a fair proportion of members hold views in opposition to it. The measure requires grave consideration, and the suggestion by Mr. Kingsmill that it should go to a select committee is a very proper one. Leaving out the venereal clauses, which require considerable thought, I regard the Bill as a good one. The great majority of the clauses are thoroughly acceptable to me, but no doubt this measure will create a large amount of controversy here, and much more in another place, not only because of what is in it, but because also of what has been omitted from it. Altogether I see no prospect of getting it on the statute book during the present session. Still, if the Bill is sent to a select committee its progress through this Chamber will be considerably facilitated. As the Colonial Secretary said, several of the amendments simply remedy defects in the principal Act. There can be no objection whatever to those. There are other clauses which require explanation. I do not propose to touch upon them now, but the Colonial Secretary will have to supply some information on those points. In regard to Clause 33 the Colonial Secretary did not explain to the House its effect. It gives the Commissioner of Public Health power to prohibit the sale of patent medicines if he considers them in-clause which would lead anyone to that conclusion, but when one compares it with the section in the original Act it is seen what its effect really is. The original Act gives the Commissioner of Public Health power to prohibit the sale of patent medicines if they prove to be inimical to public health. The amending clause goes very much further and enables that officer to prohibit the sale of patent medicines if he considers them ineffectual in their operation. We all know that medical men are opposed to the sale of patent medicines. The Health Department is strongly opposed to such sale, and for years past has been striving with frontal attacks to put an end to this commerce. Now by a little amendment woven into the Bill the department is providing itself with machinery by which its object can be achieved. If the clause is passed as it stands there will be a storm of protest from one end of the State to the other. Medical men do not believe in patent medicines, but very many people in the country do, and if these medicines are harmless I think there should be no interference with their sale. The radical amendments proposed in the clauses dealing with venereal cases, in fact the very insertion of those clauses in the Bill, is

sufficient ground in itself for sending the Bill to a select committee. I have not had time to come to an honest conclusion on the subject and I should require further evidence to assist me in coming to a determination. I feel certain that the appointment of a select committee will have good results and will assist the House in arriving at a wise conclusion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East—in reply) [5.50]: I welcome the suggestion made by Mr. Kingsmill that the Bill be referred to a select committee, and as that idea is evidently acceptable to the House I will have very little to say in reply to the debate except to make reference to those matters directly brought under my notice by hon. members. There is a great deal to be said in favour of Mr. Kingsmill's contention that Bills of this kind, when they make so many and such comprehensive alterations to the parent Act, should come before us in the form of consolidating measures. Mr. Clarke also raised the same question; but his objection from the public point of view is met to some extent by the fact that Clause 60 makes provision that all further prints of the Bill shall contain the whole of the amendments. Thus, anybody securing a copy of the Act as finally passed will have the whole of the Health Acts of 1911, 1915, and 1918. Mr. Kingsmill made reference to the matter of taking samples from wholesale milk vendors. At present there is great difficulty in doing that, because it is necessary to take a sample in the presence of the person selling the milk. Subclause 2 of Clause 36 has been drafted to enable inspectors to secure samples of food, more particularly milk, while in transit from the producer to the purveyor. A large portion of the milk supply of the State comes in by rail, and at present if an inspector wishes to take a sample of milk at the receiving station, he cannot do so unless the consignee is present. Subclause 2 of Clause 36 will get over this difficulty. It is similar to a provision in the South Australian Food and Drug Act.

Jon. W. Kingsmill: What about the establishment of central depôts for the distribution of milk?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is well worthy of consideration. I have made a note of it. The hon. member also made reference to the question of frozen meat. This is dealt with in Clause 31. At the present time the butcher has to label chilled and frozen meat, and whilst there is no technical difficulty in defining frozen meat, there is considerable difficulty in saying what chilled meat is. If the Bill is passed in its present form, all that the butcher will have to do will be to post a notice in his establishment setting out that frozen meat is there sold.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: He will not have to specify which is frozen meat?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No, he will simply have to notify the public that he has frozen meat for sale. The point raised by Mr. Sanderson is worthy of grave consideration, but it is not open to the State Government to demand that the Federal Government shall pay a certain sum of money for our assistance in his way. We in Western Australia consider ourselves rather fortunate in that we

have been able to get more than our due share on a population basis for the carrying out of this work. We have got it because the Federal Government recognise that we are doing more than are the other States. Our expenditure last year was £8,000, of which the Federal Government paid one-half. This year, having dealt with most of the capital expenditure, we expect to be able to carry through on the £4,000, of which the Federal Government will again pay one-half. I agree with the hon. member that it is not enough, and if we can induce the Federal Government to contribute more largely, we shall not miss an opportunity of doing so. The hon. member made reference to old age and invalid pensions in this connection. At present the Government are endeavouring to induce the Federal authorities to realise more fully their obligations in this regard.

Hon. A. Sanderson: The Federal committee pointed that out to the Federal Government.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, and the State Government are endeavouring to make the Federal Government realise their obligations in regard to these pensions. In the past, when an old age pensioner went into one of our State institutions his pension immediately ceased and the whole of the cost of his maintenance was cast upon the State. This is an utterly unfair proposition. Again, an old age pensioner might become insane, and because of this misfortune falling upon him the Federal authorities refused to pay his pension and the State was required to maintain him. The Government are hopeful that the Federal authorities will treat us more reasonably in future. In respect of the letters from the Health Department and the Defence Department quoted by Mr. Sanderson, they had not been brought under my notice before, but I can assure the hon. member that whatever difference of opinion there may be as to the legal obligations between the Medical Department and the Defence Department, they are working together in most complete harmony in endeavouring to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the difficulties attendant upon the treatment of venereal disease. It is in regard to one of those matters that an amendment in the Bill will have an important effect. If the military authorities discharge a man suffering from venereal disease, the military doctor will notify the Health Department. As the Act stands at present it is six weeks before the Health Department can take any steps to see that the affected person is continuing treatment. If the Bill is passed, that difficulty will be to a large extent overcome. Mr. Boan made reference to the question of qualified nurses in midwifery cases. The original Act makes provision that the limitation shall only apply to places within five miles of the residence of a doctor or qualified nurse. When we get beyond that radius the provision does not apply. The amendment we propose to Clause 53 will have the effect of prohibiting any person, even outside that radius, from practising as a midwife if she has been struck off the list. I quite agree with the hon. member that if anything could be done to awaken a greater sense of parental responsibility most of our troubles in connection with this matter

would disappear. I was sorry to hear the expression of opinion from Mr. Drew that there is but little chance of the Bill passing during the present session. If there are in the Bill clauses like Clause 33 referred to by the hon. member, I hope they will not be the means of causing the Bill to be hung up; because the department will be prepared to sacrifice a good many clauses of a minor character rather than see the Bill delayed.

Select Committee appointed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [6.1]: I move—

“That Mr. President do now leave the Chair for the purpose of consideration of the Bill in Committee.”

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [6.2]: I move an amendment—

“That the Bill be referred to a select committee consisting of Hon. J. Duffell, Hon. H. Millington, and the mover; with power to sit on days during which the House stands adjourned, with power to call for persons, papers, and records; and to report on the 21st February.”

I am very glad and very grateful to the leader of the House for his ready acceptance of my suggestion, which I think, indeed, is one that should be followed in the case of not only this Bill, but of all Bills of an intensely technical nature. I am altogether in the hands of the House with regard to both the personnel of the select committee and the number of members sitting thereon. Our Standing Orders provide that a select committee shall, unless otherwise specified, consist of three members; but it may consist of any number, though it is usual to have an odd number of members. The leader of the House I presume, is unable at this juncture to give any indication as to the date of closing the session. There is more uncertainty on that point than even with regard to the weather. I think, however, that the date asked for, the 21st inst, will be well within the bounds of practical politics. I hope the select committee will be able to obtain a room on the premises. At present the Committee room of the Council is occupied by a Royal Commission, and the other room appertaining to this Chamber is cluttered up with the impedimenta of another Royal Commission. Both rooms have for months past been practically closed to hon. members. I hope the select committee of this House, to which after all the Committee room belongs, will have the privilege of occupying it for their purposes.

Amendment put and passed.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUATION.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [6.9] in moving the second reading said: This is purely a continuance Bill, with regard to which it is not necessary for me to say much. The Industries Assistance Act itself continues; there is no period set to the operation of the measure. But pro-

vision is made by Section 15 of the Industries Assistance Act Amendment Act, 1917, that the current year's advances shall continue only until the 31st March. We have already passed two or three continuation measures. The date up to which advances can be made under the amendment Act of 1917 is the 31st March, 1918. It therefore follows that if we are further to assist farmers during the coming season, the operation of the section must be extended for a period of 12 months. The purpose of this Bill is merely to continue the operation of that section for that period. In moving the second reading of the Bill in the Legislative Assembly, the Minister for Industries (Hon. R. T. Robinson) laid upon the Table of the House a statement of the affairs of the Industries Assistance Board. Some hon. members may have seen that statement, but in case others have not seen it I propose to lay a copy of it on the Table of this House for information. I move—

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

On motion by Hon. J. W. Kirwan debate adjourned.

BILL—LOCAL OPTION CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [6.11] in moving the second reading said: This also is a continuance measure. Under Section 76 of the Licensing Act 1911, a local option vote was to be taken in every district in or before the month of April in the year 1911, and in the month of April in every third year thereafter. The provisions of Sections 77 and 78 et sequitur reduced the resolutions to be taken before 1921 to the questions dealing with the increase of licenses and State control; the full local option dealing with the reduction of the number of licenses, discontinuance of the licenses altogether, and no renewals, being held over until after the year ending the 31st December, 1920. A vote was taken in 1911, and resulted in all districts voting for no increase excepting one—Gascoyne—which voted for increase. By the Act 35 of 1913 it was enacted that the local option vote should not be taken in the year 1914 and every third year thereafter, but should be taken in the year 1915, and every third year thereafter. By Act No. 4 of 1915 it was decided that the vote should not be taken in 1915, but that the original vote taken in 1911 should remain in force until the year 1918. The present Bill provides that the vote shall not be taken in 1918, but that the vote taken in 1911 shall continue in operation and effective until a vote is taken in 1921. The Bill deals with the districts. It is necessary that the boundaries of the licensing districts shall coincide with those of the electoral districts. The 1911 vote was taken just prior to the new rolls coming in. The existing licensing districts are not the present electoral districts, but the electoral districts, with one or two alterations, existing at the beginning of 1911. When a further poll is taken it will be necessary to alter all the boundaries of the licensing districts so as to be able to use the rolls of the electoral districts. Meanwhile it is necessary to continue

the existing districts for machinery purposes. In 1911 we were fortunate in being able to induce the Commonwealth to permit the local option vote to be taken with the Federal referendum, and the only cost the State was put to was the extra money involved. This came to £954. It is estimated that to take a local option vote separately would cost between £4,000 and £5,000—hence the desire to postpone the vote till 1921. It is felt that since all the districts, excepting Gascoyne, voted against increase of licenses, and since the other questions of reduction or prohibition cannot be submitted until 1921, it is not worth while spending £4,000 or £5,000 to submit to the electors a question in which they doubtless would take very little interest, and the submission of which would probably result in confirming the vote of 1911. The proposal, therefore, is that the Government be exempted from taking the poll in 1918, and that the result of the poll taken in 1911 stand until the full measure of local option comes into force in 1921. I move—

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

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 6.14 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 6th February, 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.”]

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY — PRESENTATION.

Mr. SPEAKER [4.33]: Accompanied by the mover and seconder of the Address-in-reply, I have waited upon His Excellency the Governor, and presented the Address agreed to by the House in reply to His Excellency's Speech on opening Parliament, and His Excellency has been pleased to reply in the following terms:—

Mr. Speaker, and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly, in the name and on behalf of His Most Gracious Majesty the King, I thank you for your Address. (Signed) William Ellison-Macartney. Governor.

URGENCY MOTION — AGRICULTURAL ROYAL COMMISSION

Mr. SPEAKER [4.42]: I have received the following communication from the member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany)—

I desire to move the adjournment of the House in order to debate a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the large expenditure still being incurred by the State owing to the continued expense of the Royal Commission on the Agricultural Industries of Western Australia.

The subject matter of the letter is in order. If seven hon. members will stand in their places this will decide the question of the urgency of the matter.

Seven members having risen in their places,

Mr. MULLANY (Menzies) [4.43] said: In moving the adjournment of the House, I wish it to be distinctly understood that I have no desire to hamper the development of the Agricultural industry in this State. It will be admitted, at all events by members representing agricultural constituencies, that during the past six years or more goldfields members have been always anxious to assist in doing anything they possibly can to develop our agricultural industry, but I think, and believe I shall be able to show to this House, that the expenditure of State money which is now going on in keeping this Commission in existence is doing nothing, and cannot possibly do anything, to help to develop the agricultural industries of Western Australia. This Commission was appointed by a recent Government. It is a legacy from the previous set of administrators in this State. I have no desire here to touch upon the appointment or the conditions of the appointment of the members of that Commission in any way, neither have I any desire to reflect upon the gentlemen who compose this Commission. I do not wish to give hon. members of this House an impression that I believe that the members of this Commission are, if I may say so, farming the Commission, or that they are making anything out of it. I do not wish to set up that impression at all, for I believe that these gentlemen in carrying out their duties are neglecting their own business, and that in all probability they are nothing whatever in pocket from any fees which they may receive from the State in the conduct of their work in connection with this Royal Commission. This Commission was appointed in September, 1916, and it has now been in existence for a period of 16 months. As the result of their labours up to date, we have before us a bulky report which was presented to Parliament last week. I would like to ask whether anything which is likely to be of value to the State, as the result of the Commission's labours, is to come from this report. The Commission have taken evidence in various country districts of the State, as well as in the City, and they have also taken evidence in some of the Eastern States. I would venture to say that there can be no evidence of any value that is likely to be given in Western Australia which cannot be obtained from the Agricultural Department, or from the departmental officers. Such evidence being in exist-