

the request for these powers has been made not so much in the interests of Australia as in the interests of party. I have stated in this House previously that the time is fast coming when Australia cannot afford to continue its party politics with the intensity in which it is being carried on today; and the time is fast arriving when we as Australians must not think of party but of Australia. The menace to our shores is so near and so vast that any consideration given to legislation today must surely be in the interests of all Australians, and not just for some of them.

When the Bill comes to the Committee stage, there will be ample time to deal with its clauses, which I have as yet not touched. But, in concluding my remarks on the second reading, I would once more emphasise that my desires will be to give to all Australians those things which I think each Australian should have, and to transfer to the Commonwealth Parliament the powers needed to carry this out, but to reserve to the State all those powers which are necessary for the proper conduct of our domestic affairs.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 3.35 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 31st March, 1943.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.15 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (3).

CARTING CONTRACTS.

As to Condition of Tenders.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Is one Lambert, carting contractor, who is operating in the Lakes localities east of Newdegate, allowed by the Liquid Fuel Board to drive his trucks solely on petrol? If so, why? 2, When tendering for carting contracts, are all intending contractors, other than Lambert, advised by the Transport Board that the fitting of gas-producers to their trucks is a condition precedent to their tenders being considered? If so, why? 3, Is Lambert allowed to carry petrol necessary for propelling his trucks in a petrol-driven truck from Perth or elsewhere to the Lakes localities? If so, why is he not forced to use the railway system for this purpose as far as Newdegate?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, Upon representations being made by the W.A. Transport Board in the interests of the primary producers, the Liquid Fuel Board permitted vehicles in this isolated area to operate on petrol, during the "peak" season for wheat and superphosphate carting. Representations made by the Phillips River Road Board to the W.A. Transport Board influenced it in securing the services of one Chas. Gibson to operate a petrol-driven truck in conjunction with Mr. W. R. Barron of Ravensthorpe, for the transport of wheat from the Ravensthorpe area. Consideration given to Lambert's transport was only an extension of the facilities provided to Barron and Gibson; that is, all operators were permitted to use petrol during wheat-carting season, this being in accordance with a State-wide policy whereby wheat-carters were granted sufficient petrol to enable them to transport wheat expeditiously. Mr. Lambert operated semi-trailer units specially equipped with bulk wheat tanks of a 10-ton capacity to conform to Government requirements. Due to the heavy loads and poor road conditions greater economy is effected by the use of petrol. Powered by producer-gas the vehicles concerned would be compelled to take lighter loading resulting in an extension of the carting season, which even now does not terminate before the end of April. The excessive corrugations and long gradients on the roads used in this isolated area make this cartage difficult even with the use of petrol. 3, All regular and continuous services in-

augurated by the Transport Board are usually operated by producer gas vehicles because during the greater portion of the year loading is only average, but even these services are granted additional fuel supplies during peak loading seasons. 3, A policy of economy in servicing this district which is so isolated from railway communication demands that vehicles doing this special work where possible should convey some loading on the outward journey instead of running empty.

ARGENTINE ANT.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Has the Government done anything other than issue regulations dealing with the Argentine ant pest? If so, what other steps were taken to bring it under control? 2, How much money has been expended by the Government in attempting to exterminate this acknowledged danger to primary industry?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, A survey of affected areas has been carried out and these determined, and steps have been taken to prevent the spread of the pest to agricultural areas. Actual control can be effected only by householders upon whose premises the pest is found. 2, No segregation showing cost of inspection and control measures has been kept.

PERTH HOSPITAL.

As to Appointment of Matron.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Chief Secretary: In view of the consistent moans by many prominent Western Australians against the exploitation of Western Australia, by the Commonwealth Government, also by Eastern States manufacturers, corporations, other trading bodies and individuals, will the Minister inform the House why the Perth Hospital management passed over Western Australian applications for the position of matron of Perth Hospital and appointed an Eastern States nursing sister to that position?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: Of nine applicants only one was from within the State; the qualifications and experience of one applicant were outstanding, and she has been appointed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. H. L. Roche, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted

to Hon. H. V. Piesse (South-East) on the ground of ill-health.

HON. J. M. DREW (Central) [2.23]: I move—

That leave of absence for six consecutive sittings be granted to Hon. T. Moore (Central) on the ground of private business.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central): I rise to oppose the motion. My reasons for doing so are well known to the older members of this Chamber in that I have expressed myself on this question before. I do not think it right that members of Parliament should absent themselves from their duties in this House and draw pay in respect of responsibilities they do not undertake. The Standing Orders permit any one of us to absent himself from attendance in this Chamber for six consecutive sittings, which represents a fortnight. If a member cannot complete his business during that period he is at liberty to get a fellow-member to move a motion similar to that now before the House. I have been a member of this Chamber for the last 15 years. I was not here very long before a motion of this description was submitted on behalf of the late Sir William Lathlain, a gentleman for whom I had the friendliest feelings. On that occasion I rose in my place to speak along the lines I am following today, because I consider the principle wrong.

At that time it would have been much easier for me as a comparatively new member to have nodded my head in acquiescence, but my views did not permit me to do so. I do not think it right. In speaking in this way I am casting no reflections on anyone; I am merely asking to be allowed to state very briefly my reasons for opposing the motion. I have objected to the member concerned in the motion now before the House securing leave of absence under similar conditions on a previous occasion, and I intend to vote in accordance with my convictions. I shall not plead with any other member to agree with me on this matter, but we should face up to the position. I have obtained from the records of this House the following particulars: In the first session of this, the Seventeenth Parliament, which was held in 1939, this House met on 44 occasions. The particular member concerned in the motion under discussion was present 22 times and was absent on 22 occasions. The next session was held in 1940, during which period the

House met 47 times, and this particular member was present on 16 occasions and absent on 31. During the session of 1941-42 the meetings of the House totalled 56 and this particular member was present on 34 occasions and absent on 22. During the current session, 1942-43, we have met 56 times and this particular member has been present on 27 occasions and absent 29 times. I will leave the matter at that. I have done what I think I should do, and I leave it to members to act as they think proper.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Give us the record of your attendance in the Chamber during those periods. That would be reasonable.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I have not during my 15 years' occupancy of a seat in this House asked for leave of absence. It is open to any member to absent himself for six consecutive sittings without applying for leave, but after that he must secure the passage of a motion granting him leave of absence. I shall vote against the motion.

Question put and passed.

BILL—COMMONWEALTH POWERS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [2.28]: I rise to support the second reading of the Bill and at the outset express the hope that the measure will be passed through all its stages in its present form.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You are an optimist, are you not?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: There seems to be general agreement that the Bill is one of most vital importance and I say that if ever a heavy responsibility was cast upon the members of this House, it is cast upon them now. Duty therefore impels us to consider the Bill free from any bias, taking the larger and more long-sighted view and realising all the time that, first and foremost, we are Australians and are dealing with a matter that will vitally affect the future of our nation. It would be deplorable to allow Party or State bias to influence our judgment in any way. The subject and the times demand that we rise above such influences. If we do less, the consequences to our country may be tragic. To me it is beyond question that the existing Constitution of Australia does not provide the Commonwealth Government with adequate powers in certain spheres which I will include in the gen-

eral term of post-war reconstruction. Many eminent authorities have made positive and convincing statements to this effect.

We also know that from time to time since the 1914-18 war successive efforts have been made by various Governments to amend the Constitution. If anyone disputes this fundamental argument about the necessity for amendment, surely he will be convinced by the opinion of such an eminent Australian as Sir Isaac Isaacs, who was not only a member of the original Convention that framed the Constitution, but was also subsequently Chief Justice of the High Court and later Governor-General of the Commonwealth. There is a man whose opinion must command the attention and respect of every Australian man, woman and child. I propose to quote two extracts from statements made by him on the subject in recent times—

The Australia of 1900 was not the Australia of today, either in regard to our internal, social, industrial and economic structure or to our relation to the rest of the world. We are not constitutionally equipped for the needs of Australia today. I have no hesitation in affirming that it is the absolute duty of the Australian people to face at once the inescapable task of remedying that defect.

When we have by victory secured the opportunity of peaceful progress and development and of making our due contribution to the betterment of man, shall we have the necessary capacity as a nation? Not unless, as I have repeatedly urged, we bring our present Constitution abreast of the conditions and environment of the modern world. Otherwise we shall be far less qualified for our national and international obligations than Great Britain, New Zealand, South Africa and even Canada. That would be both a reproach and a danger. This is now an immediate task.

The opinions of many other eminent Australians could be added in support of this view, but time will not permit of my doing so; nor do I feel that it is necessary. It is to overcome this weakness in the Constitution that the Bill now before us has been introduced. The need is now more pressing and urgent than it has ever been before, because our country is engaged in a life and death struggle which compels us to pledge all our resources if we are to survive the conflict. Already over one-half of the adult population of Australia is engaged on full-time war work, and it seems obvious that an even greater effort will be needed before the war is brought to an end.

We are witnessing behind the fog of war a most amazing social phenomenon. The

whole of our people are now in a state of full general employment, and it is a travesty on our civilisation that at the present time the people generally are enjoying a period of unparalleled prosperity. War has brought about a state of affairs as regards employment which we could not provide in peacetime. He would be a fool, however, who failed to realise that as sure as the sun rises a day of reckoning will come. We will then be faced with the stupendous tasks of rehabilitation. The main obligation of the post-war period will be the maintenance of a state of general employment, because upon that will depend the realisation of all other aspirations, social and cultural. The task will be one that will call for a national effort of the greatest magnitude. It goes without saying, therefore, that the Commonwealth Government must be clothed with sufficient constitutional authority to accomplish the job. In my opinion every one of the powers in the Bill comes within the sphere of what is necessary for post-war reconstruction. I do not intend to debate the individual powers at this stage, but will do so, if necessary, in Committee.

Opponents of the Bill would have us believe that there is constant opposition between the Commonwealth and Western Australia, as if the Commonwealth were a foreign country and powers surrendered to it were lost to the people of this State. It cannot be too strongly insisted that there is no such opposition. The people of Western Australia will surrender nothing; they will merely transfer to the central Government certain obligations which can be more adequately dealt with on a national basis. There will still remain useful functions for State Governments to perform and there will be ample room for closer collaboration between State and Commonwealth Governments. This is a time when resolute action is required and we should avoid uncertainty and hesitation. The primary need in any enterprise is to believe in the possibility of its success. It might appear to some that we are giving away certain of our rights, but the history of civilisation shows that advance can take place only when men are ready to forgo some immediate gain in order to secure a greater ultimate good.

Hon. G. B. Wood: We all thought that when we entered the Federation 42 years ago.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: But what is a period of 42 years in the life of a nation?

Most of the problems that will face us after this war will be of nation-wide significance. They will not respect State boundaries. We will have to face the future not only as Western Australians, but more as Australians. I support the second reading.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan): So much has been said and written and quoted regarding the Bill that I am afraid it would be almost impossible to say anything fresh either in support of or in opposition to it. From my angle it would be very difficult to say anything in support of the measure. I intend, though not at any great length, to express the opinions I have formed after making a careful study of the proposals as they would affect this great State. As has been mentioned by previous speakers a grave responsibility rests upon every member of Parliament to decide this question which, in my opinion, is the greatest we have faced since Federation. I have to confess, as I have acknowledged before, that I was opposed to the entry of Western Australia into the Commonwealth when that course was first suggested. Young as I then was, I worked very hard indeed against the proposal. I have related here previously that the first vote ever I recorded in my life was against Federation. Since then I have learnt much, and especially have I learnt that it was not, anyhow at that time, in the best interests of Western Australia to enter Federation. In my opinion we went into it twenty years too soon. That, however, is another story. Later I strongly supported the secession movement, for I held up to that time, as I still hold, that Western Australia had never been treated as it should have been by the Commonwealth, taking into account the position in which this State finds itself.

I have at all times opposed the granting of additional powers to the Commonwealth, being of opinion that in most things the State is better able to manage its own affairs; but I am afraid that when we made, as pointed out by Sir Hal Colebatch, the present financial arrangement under which we are now working, and followed that step by surrendering all powers of taxation, we gradually gave away the greater part of our birthright. And now the Commonwealth is almost demanding the remainder. Some additional powers may be necessary for post-war reconstruction, but we should be most

careful to concede only those which are essential for that purpose. This Bill, I repeat, is one of the most important measures ever submitted to this Parliament; and yet there still seems to be a lack of understanding of many of the vital issues involved. A large proportion of the powers sought in the Bill have been well screened by the term "post-war reconstruction." It is good to see so much interest being taken by a section of the business community in this matter. Many members of that section fully understand that if the powers now asked for are granted in their present form, they will prove wide enough to enable the Commonwealth Government to destroy all private enterprise by nationalising industry and commerce—to enable the Commonwealth Government, indeed, to gain control over every phase of our daily life.

The aim of the Commonwealth Government is undoubtedly socialisation and nationalisation of all things. We require no further proof of that than certain remarks, already referred to by Mr. Wood, of the Minister for War Organisation and Industries, Mr. Dedman. It is useless for the Commonwealth Government to try to cloak its intentions after that utterance. Very plainly we have been told that we have to be very careful, and on our guard, to see that the powers asked for in the Bill are not granted by this State at all events—especially in view of recent High Court decisions. There is the decision regarding uniform taxation proposals. It seems to me that our safety belt has disappeared, and that once any additional power is given we cannot hope for its return, however injurious the transfer may prove, having regard to the interests of this State. The period of limitation has already been dealt with fully by Sir Hal Colebatch and other members. Therefore I say, briefly, that so far as I am concerned the five-years plan will prove just a myth, and no safeguard whatever. I do not even think that it would be better for the Commonwealth Government to exercise any of the proposed powers at all. In any case, the effect of the legislation would remain. My definite opinion is that any move towards unification and nationalisation would be against the best interests of Western Australia, particularly as we cannot look to the High Court to safeguard the rights of States as we felt we could do in the past.

Another point we would do well to bear in mind is the complete domination of the

large States over the rest of the Commonwealth. This advantage of the large States is materially enhanced by our geographical position. I need only mention the subject of transport, and the plight of our industries and of the business community generally, due mostly to the shocking shortage of materials that is being experienced here. There is hardly a business or an industry which today is not suffering in one direction or another by reason of this shortage. I could quote many instances that would stagger this House, showing the extent to which industry is retarded in Western Australia through this one cause alone. To demonstrate the domination of the two largest States, I need only remind members that of the total of 75 members in the House of Representatives New South Wales returns 28, Victoria 20, Queensland 10 and South Australia six, Western Australia and Tasmania returning only five each. Of the 28 New South Wales representatives, 14 come from Sydney and its suburbs; in the case of Victoria's 20, 14 from Melbourne and its suburbs. It must be admitted that the Senate, which was originally set up to represent the States, takes a strictly party view of all legislation. I wish to say right here that I am against the proposed large increases in the number of members of the Commonwealth Parliament. The distribution of the increased number would, I presume, be made on a population basis; so that the Eastern States would gain a still greater advantage over Western Australia.

I wish to bring under the notice of the Chamber the progress that has been made in industry in the Commonwealth since the outbreak of the war. While I have no intention of wearying members with many figures, I feel that I shall be justified in quoting the difference between the progress of the two largest States and that of the small States. I was somewhat surprised when I heard Sir Hal Colebatch mention that the male population of the State was about 7,000 less than at the outbreak of the war.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: You are wrong. What I said was that 7,000 was the excess of departures over arrivals.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: It is practically the same thing.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: No. You must take into account the number of births and deaths in order to get the actual male population.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: Very well. I did not propose to use that figure, although I intended to quote it to remind the House of the large number of artisans—skilled tradesmen—who left this State during the early stages of the war, mostly because of the advantages offered to them by the development of industry in the larger States as compared with our own. I was intending to suggest to Sir Hal Colebatch that the number of skilled tradesmen who left the State in the first two years of the war was, as far as I could ascertain, between 3,000 and 4,000. I will go further and say that a very small proportion only of those skilled tradesmen has returned to the State.

I have taken the trouble to secure the latest figures relating to employment in industry in our State and in the other States. I find that as at the 30th June, 1939—just before the outbreak of war—the number so employed in New South Wales was 219,500; in Victoria, 193,900; Queensland, 51,500; South Australia, 42,000; Western Australia, 22,100, and Tasmania 13,200. I do not wish to weary members by giving the figures for the years 1940 and 1941, but I propose to quote the figures as at the 30th June, 1942; New South Wales, 285,100, as against 219,500; Victoria, 247,400 as against 193,900; Queensland, 58,800 as against 51,500; South Australia, 64,100 as against 42,000, and Western Australia 22,100—our number had remained stationary since 1939. These figures should give members some idea of the progress made in industry in the Eastern States as compared with the progress made here. I have some later figures, those as at the 31st December last, as follows:—

New South Wales	295,000
Victoria	248,400
Queensland	58,400
South Australia	69,600
Western Australia	23,500
Tasmania	17,700

I hope members will note the huge increase in the figure for South Australia—from 42,000 to 69,600. In our own State there has been at last a little movement—23,500 as against 22,100. The figure for Tasmania jumped from 13,000 to 17,700.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: What was the increase in Western Australia?

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: The figure for 1939 was 22,100, and for 1942, 23,500, an increase of 1,400, compared with an increase of nearly 18,000 in South Australia.

Hon. C. B. Williams: How many less are employed in our mines?

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: The figures I have quoted do not include miners. I will leave the hon. member to address the House—as I hope he will—on that question. He might ask his friend, the Minister for War Organisation of Industry, how many men he has taken from the mines and what the position of the goldmines is today compared with their position when the war broke out.

Hon. J. Cornell: According to Mr. Dedman, the miners volunteered to go out.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I agree it was necessary to take many men from the mines, but whether the mining industry should have been almost strangled, if not quite strangled, is another point. I do not agree with much that has been said in that connection. Although I do not represent a goldfields constituency, I represent Western Australia, or try to do so, in every way I can. There is just one other set of figures I wish to quote while dealing with the question of employment. I refer to the growth of the Commonwealth Public Service. It is positively astounding. Today we have in that service a total of 13,206 drawing salaries from £400 to £1,500 a year. Of these, 7,627 are permanent officers; 4,643 are temporary officers; 821 are on loan from State services—chiefly income tax officials; and 115 are on loan from private enterprise. Those receiving over £1,500 a year number 34, of whom 34 are permanent officers, nine are temporary officers and eight are on loan from the States. There are 286 officers receiving from £1,000 to £1,500 a year; 391 from £800 to £1,000, and 1,726 from £600 to £800 a year. What alarms me is not so much the salaries paid, but the tremendous growth of the Commonwealth Public Service. Every little board, every little committee, every little move in such a direction means additional staff at the cost of the people of the Commonwealth.

To me this measure clearly defines the objective of the Commonwealth Labour Government, which is to control production and the distribution of everything. It confirms the utterances of their leaders that the movement is using the war to implement Labour's policy of socialisation and nationalisation. It is therefore not to be wondered at that all sections of industry, production and commerce, are opposing the Bill in its present form. It should be remembered that private enterprise supplied the capital successfully to

establish and develop many of the great industries we have in the Commonwealth, including a few in our own State. The creation and efficiency of these plants are due to the initiative of private enterprise and, but for that, Australia would not be in a position to equip her Fighting Forces in the manner in which she is doing it today.

Why then, I ask, abolish this system of private enterprise in favour of socialism, especially as the workers of the Commonwealth enjoy a standard of living and working conditions generally far in advance of those prevailing in any other place in the Empire? Speaking of socialisation I am reminded of the interesting remarks of Mr. Beverley Baxter, M.P. of the British Parliament—who is no relation of our Mr. Baxter—which appear in a cutting I picked up this morning. In a paper on politics Mr. Beverley Baxter concluded with these words—

There is one other serious factor working against the Socialists—a factor which you in Australia will now be able to understand from first-hand experience. As long as the country had never experienced it they were able to picture a human paradise under State control. Unfortunately the people are having such a surfeit of it in the war that their stomachs turn at the very thought of it as a perpetual diet.

As someone once remarked to me in North Bay, Ontario: "Many a good mine has been ruined by sinking a shaft and many a hair restorer ruined by applying it to the scalp." Alas for Socialism! State control has been tried out.

I would like to ask why there is this indecent haste to rush through this legislation. To my mind there would not be any adverse effect on the war effort if it were not agreed to, and I am of the opinion that hasty action now may even mean some delay later on. At present the Commonwealth Government has every power it needs to carry on the war successfully. There is nothing that the Commonwealth Government can ask for, as long as it is in connection with the war, that any court in Australia would not uphold. As has been mentioned by previous speakers we have a long way to go to win the war. While I do not think post-war reconstruction should be neglected I would advocate redoubling our efforts to secure complete victory before interfering with many of our present trading and industrial conditions. The wide power given by the National Security Act to make regulations for ensuring the public safety and the defence of the Commonwealth have been extensively used by wartime Govern-

ments, and particularly by the Labour Government since it assumed office.

I do not intend to deal with all the clauses in the Bill but desire to comment on two provisions that, in my opinion, are most vital to the Commonwealth and particularly to this State. I refer to the two paragraphs relating to employment and unemployment and the production and distribution of goods. Let us stop to consider what can happen if paragraph (b) of Clause 2 is agreed to! Today the average citizen is confronted with a maze of regulations, by-laws, rules, ordinances and orders. Such interference with the ordinary rights of citizens demands that the regulation-making power be not abused and that every regulation so issued should be directly connected with the defence power. The present Commonwealth Government has made Parliamentary government a secondary consideration. There should be no government by regulation. Government by Parliament should be preserved. All regulations should be limited to the machinery of administration. Boards and committees should not be created or continued except with Parliamentary approval. We should be careful to avoid corruptive and oppressive effects of great power entrusted to the few.

If Clause 2 (b) were passed it would have this effect so far as our State is concerned: Wherever the relation of employer and employee exists, the Commonwealth Parliament by legislating in regard to that relationship could take complete control so as to exclude the concurrent powers of State legislation. It could compulsorily acquire any business or enterprise where such relationship exists. It could sweep aside all State awards, arbitration tribunals and the like, and replace them by others of its own creation. It could render nugatory State legislation dealing with employers' liability, workers' compensation and the like and replace it with other legislation of its own. It could take power to order any employer to engage any person on such terms and conditions as it chose. In short, it could usurp control of the whole field of commercial activity in Australia, including banking, insurance, shipping, mining and any other sphere of human endeavour where the relationship of employer and employee exists. Worst of all, under this power it could take control of the Civil Service of each State, because under Section 106 of the Constitution, when this Bill is passed by a State Legislature, it abates some of the pro-

tection which that section is intended to confer upon States and their instrumentalities; and when the power has been referred to the Commonwealth the result will be found to be that by the appropriate form of legislation the Federal Legislature has retired the State Legislature from the control of its own servants.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is not right.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I hope this House will see that that does not occur. I would like to quote something that has been quoted many times regarding Governments. It is this: "The most businesslike thing a Government can do is to keep out of business." I am convinced that many of the social reforms we all desire can be brought about, but only if we do not upset the foundations of our national wealth and prosperity. Take away the right of a man to earn by his own work as much as he can; destroy the freedom of a man to save and live on his savings; put the organisation of all industry and commerce under Government control, and the men and women will be ruined, not only in cash, but in character. With every advance in production under the impetus of private enterprise, the nation advances towards the only communism that can benefit mankind—the communism of opportunity. For our survival as a nation, for our success in the spheres of production and commerce, the more the Government keeps in the background and gives place to individual courage and enterprise, the better it will be for the Commonwealth and particularly for this State of Western Australia. In view of the remarks I have made I intend to vote against the second reading.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West): I do not propose to speak at any length on this Bill, nor do I intend to traverse the 14 points embraced in Clause 2. I think, however, it is my duty to make some remarks regarding the necessity for bringing down the measure, thus explaining the decision I have arrived at and the vote I shall give. We have been provided with quite a lot of literature dealing with this Bill. The Commonwealth Attorney General, Dr. Evatt, has had sent to members a substantial contribution covering nearly 200 pages. In addition I have received, I suppose, a dozen small pamphlets both for and against the Bill. I read right through the official proceedings of the Convention. I have arrived at the

stage when I feel that there is no real necessity for this Bill; or that, if there is, the necessity applies only to that portion of it which provides for our Fighting Forces at the conclusion of the war. The powers are to be referred, or transferred which is the better word, although there is not a great deal of difference in their meanings. I understand the word "referred" is peculiar to the Constitution in a number of directions. The position would have been a little clearer if this Bill had said straightout "transferred," because that is what it means. It means transferred, not for five years, but for all time.

I do not pay any heed to the idea that these powers will be transferred for five years. It is absurd to imagine that the machinery provided for in this Bill will be put into operation and terminated suddenly at the end of five years. It is not logical. I am sorry to say that I am far from believing in the singleness of purpose of the Government and its masters in this matter. I believe that the socialistic element, with which the Government has to contend, has had a hand in the framing of the proposals. It is not of much use saying one thing and meaning another. I view a number of the proposals in the Bill with extreme suspicion. For the reason that we in this Legislative Council have a duty to future generations of Western Australians, namely, to preserve the right of self-government, I contend that we should be very careful and slow indeed to part with any powers that we already have. If we consider the powers sought to be taken by this Bill and those we have lost since the advent of Federation, we find there is precious little left for the State, and the time is not far distant when, in my opinion, the State will have to go out of existence as a legislative unit. The best that we can hope for is that we will be sort of hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Federal authorities.

The simple instinct of self-preservation is uppermost in most of us, and it warns me against entrusting this State's destiny to people who, in the main, know very little of us and care less. Most people agree that the Commonwealth Constitution could, in some respects, be reviewed with advantage. Naturally in a young country like this, just passing through its developmental stages, changes suggest themselves. Established policies have to be overhauled and revised, and sometimes amended. Australia has long

recognised that fact. We have had a number of referenda with the idea of amending the Constitution. There is no necessity for me to remind members of the fact that most of them failed to achieve their object. After all, the method of referendum is the correct one, and I contend that in this matter, notwithstanding that we are engaged in war, Australia, if it wants to alter its Constitution, should do so by means of a referendum. The Government, we understand, is not going to scruple to have a general election. If a general election is held I should say that a referendum would be justified at the same time.

This Bill seeks to by-pass the Constitution and to gain widespread powers in a manner never contemplated, seriously at any rate, by the framers of the Constitution. There are indications that certain things may be referred by the States, but I do not think there was at any time the faintest idea that such wide powers would be sought by this means. Of course, to people who are not very particular as to the methods they adopt, the war presents an excellent excuse and an opportunity for the application of that by-pass method, and I am sorry to say the Commonwealth Government has taken advantage of it. It may be retorted that the Government first called together representatives of the States to meet at the recent Convention. We know the history of that gathering. It was unique in that it was, so to speak, a hand-picked body, called together hurriedly, and it was sought to impress upon those who attended the idea of most extreme urgency. The Convention put me in mind of a gang of burglars who had made up their minds to rob a large establishment, but before doing so called the principals together and suggested to them that they should hand over certain property in order to avoid subsequent unpleasantness. That is really what happened.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is exactly so.

Hon. W. J. MANN: The Commonwealth Government decided it was going to do certain things, so Federal Ministers said, "We must be a bit careful about this. We will call together representatives of the different States and ask them what they are prepared to give us. We are going to have these powers, and we may induce them to give them up to us. We can warn them it would be much nicer if it were done that way." That is the position confronting us today.

Someone has described the Bill as representing a justifiable attempt to rectify anomalies to the extent of 10 per cent., the remaining 90 per cent. constituting a brazen attempt to secure powers which the people would most certainly refuse to agree to if consulted by way of a referendum. From the standpoint of the proportions I have mentioned, the figures may be exaggerated, but, generally speaking, they largely indicate the position.

If verification were desired regarding the respective percentages, one has only to read the remarkable effusion credited to the Commonwealth Attorney General, Dr. Evatt, but not wholly claimed by him. If members read the introduction to his pamphlet dealing with post-war reconstruction, they will find that Dr. Evatt stated emphatically that in this matter he had been largely assisted by his Ministerial colleagues, many departmental heads, some lawyers and some students. It is a wonderful production. About 60 pages are devoted to an analysis of the Bill, and another 60 to a remarkable type of self-formulated catechism self-answered. I certainly intend to keep my copy of the document, for I think it will prove to be one of our treasures later on.

Hon. H. Seddon: It will certainly be useful at a later stage.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I think so. In this document, Dr. Evatt shows himself to be very versatile. At times he becomes dramatic; he is always emphatic, always positive. He is always without any doubt, and particularly does he demonstrate that in his catechism.

Hon. A. Thomson: He is always right.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes, he is never wrong. If members peruse the report of the proceedings of the Convention, after having enjoyed themselves by reading Dr. Evatt's post-war reconstruction publication, they will see quite another Dr. Evatt—a different individual altogether. Particularly is this so when they peruse that part of the report of the proceedings at the stage when delegates became critical, when they wanted explanations and sought some light. When members of the Convention asked what was behind the different clauses, we see that Dr. Evatt—he has been a lawyer, a judge, a rank-and-file politician, and is now a Cabinet Minister—often became evasive. Sometimes he was honestly unable to explain, and many times he was inconsistent and confused. Dr. Evatt

failed dismally at that Convention to substantiate what he has laid down in his pamphlet on post-war reconstruction.

Hon. H. Tuckey: He admitted he could not do it.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Let members take these two publications together, and then form their own conclusions. The longer the Convention sat, the greater became the exposure of the hidden purposes behind the Bill. Perhaps some will say that my views are parochial, but it is my honest opinion that the Bill aims at the ultimate elimination of State Parliaments and State rights. That is exactly what the unificationists aim at, and those who are now in office in the Commonwealth Government are there largely as a result of their support of that policy. Irrespective of the results likely to accrue from the Bill, if passed as printed it will alter irretrievably the whole principles underlying the Federation. It will rob it of all the high ideals and set aside all the grandiose statements of the past. It will nullify all those references to the considerations that bound us indissolubly as a people and a nation. The further we proceed, the more it will prove a very pale and puny kind of doctrine.

I cannot help saying that I regard it as a very bold and at the same time impudent attempt to use the war situation in order to further eastern Australian unification designs. If Mr. Curtin and Dr. Evatt succeed in getting all that this Bill asks for, they will have achieved the greatest political scoop and triumph in the history of Australia. There has been nothing in the past to compare with it, and there will be nothing left in the future to tackle. They will have made one big scoop and, if they get away with it, we shall be like the news-man who arrived after the wreckage of the accident had been cleared up—there was nothing for him to see or to write about. There will be nothing left for the Federal people to demand from the States.

Hon. J. Cornell: Like the boy and the apple—"There ain't going to be no core."

Hon. W. J. MANN: In addition this Bill, if passed as presented to us, will give Western Australia the greatest setback it has ever had. I cannot see how this side of the continent could hope to catch up with the other side or how we could hope to expand except by the charity of the people of the Eastern States. My experience—and it is

probably the experience of most members—is that since the first 10 or 15 years after the advent of Federation, we have had to be very chary of accepting glib promises made by the wise heads of the East, and I use the words "wise" in parenthesis with a query mark following. Is it not true that every time an appeal has been made from the East to the West, it has been definitely for the benefit of the pockets and the profits of the East? I cannot recall a single instance in which Western Australia has been approached by the Eastern States when it has not meant 90 per cent. for the East and 10 per cent. for us. Of that, this Bill is another instance. The more I think of this sugar-coated dope which the Commonwealth is attempting to put over us, the more I feel like one of the parties in the story of the spider and the fly, and we know our position in that analogy.

Seemingly the Commonwealth Government has an outlook that will sooner or later have to be corrected. One would think that for all time Australia is going to continue spending at the rate it is spending today. The people are being asked to subscribe to another war loan, and it has been suggested that something like £30,000,000 of the total may be utilised for some social security ideas. There is a much bigger job ahead at the moment than messing around with new social security schemes. There is another kind of security, and that is the one we have to concentrate on. It is the only one that matters, and it matters much to us.

I do not know how long the Government considers the growing impositions on the people can be continued. Already they are feeling that the impositions on them are greater than they are able to bear. I do not quite agree, but that is the impression. In a month's time, when a few pound notes have been extracted from a lot of pay envelopes, there will be such an almighty yell as has never before been heard in this country. At the beginning of the week I was speaking to an employee of one of the largest of the State's instrumentalities. He was complaining of his inability to do certain things for his children. His objects were most worthy; he wanted to give his youngsters a better start than he had had. Without thinking of the matter very much, I casually remarked, "Well, the position will be even worse in a very short space of time." He asked, "How is that?" I inquired what wages he was receiving and he told me, and

I said, "Speaking from memory I believe the Commonwealth will be taking about £1 a week out of your pay envelope." He was amazed, and used language that I would not be permitted to use here, though members may perhaps be able to form some idea of its tenor. That man said he would go to a certain place and tell the boys about it, and then there would be some commotion.

People in Australia have been enjoying a comparatively easy time, and they will have to be prepared to pay a lot more for their preservation than they have done hitherto. I am not complaining of that. What I am complaining of is that the Government has set out to spend large sums of money that are not going to do the people very much good. I think we shall find that for every shilling of benefit a recipient gets, he will be called upon to pay about two shillings in taxation. Instead of devoting the time of the Commonwealth Parliament and our time to dealing with legislation of this sort, I believe that more use could be made of Parliament in order to ascertain how far we could assist in the big job that lies ahead of us. Not long ago I said here that I thought we were probably half way through the war. There were some other persons who thought similarly then, but I notice that latterly numerous qualified observers—not mere guessers such as I was—are warning the nation that we have still a long way to go.

Hon. J. Cornell: The first seven years of this war are going to be the worst!

Hon. W. J. MANN: That may probably be so. The hon. member has uttered a truism for once. For my part, I hope that the first seven years will more than cover it. Now, notwithstanding the magnificent work that Australian soldiers and our American allies have done in the North, a tremendous amount remains to be accomplished; and we have to face up to that position. As I have already said, I fail to see the necessity for the Bill when there are other vital matters calling for attention. Practically the only duty of the Government, until the danger is past, is to concentrate its full energies on the big question, that of defeating the enemy. I may say, without blaming the Government too much, although I consider it is entitled to some blame, that we have a right to ask of it to see that the too numerous section of its recalcitrant supporters is compelled to continue in industry instead of indulging in

obstructive tactics such as strikes and other things of that nature. A wide field of operations is to be found in that direction.

The Commonwealth Government, I am willing to admit, does not countenance tactics of that kind, and has done quite a lot to overcome such attempts; but I do consider that the Government might have exhibited a lot more strength and firmness of purpose earlier in the business. My belief is that had the Government taken a strong attitude in the early stages, much that has happened subsequently would not have occurred at all. I have an idea that the Government may be brought up with a round turn before very long, and that the people are likely to indicate in a thoroughly definite way their displeasure at the manner in which the Government is spending the money that has been contributed by the people. I shall not pursue that aspect much further. I daresay members will realise my meaning. I hope the impression on my mind is incorrect, but I fear that events will prove that the people are not satisfied. These vote-catching ideas, these projects of giving way every time some little coterie demands increased pay and better conditions and other things of that nature, do not get anywhere at the finish. People become wise, and in most instances of the kind the Government does not gain any great advantage. I will say that if the Commonwealth Government now in power thinks that the introduction of some schemes which I regard as purely sops—not a very nice word, but it conveys the position—will prove advantageous to it, the people will show their disapproval as they nearly always do.

As I said before, there is a big job ahead of us in order to achieve what every morning we hope for and what we sometimes get impatient about. I am afraid that a little too much adulation is being bestowed on us. We are being told that we are a mighty fine people, that we are doing a tremendous job, and that things are going well. We are a fine people, and we are doing a good job, and my honest belief is that our soldiers are doing excellently; but there is one thing that is as plain as daylight to me. It is that if our enemies can train and equip more sailors, soldiers and airmen, can provide more scientific weapons, build more tanks and planes and other equipment, supply more ammunition, feed their forces better and keep them in better condition than we keep ours, they will defeat us. That is the way I want to

state my view. We have to realise that the other fellow is not sitting down idle. He is marshalling his forces; and they are great, even tremendous, in Europe. Further, the little brown man in the North also has big numbers.

Hon. J. Cornell: And he is no mean opponent either!

Hon. W. J. MANN: We have to realise that unless we can do the things I have enumerated, there will not be much further use for this Parliament nor will there be much use in our passing Bills. That all means effort for us, as well as for others. It seems to me that the great idea is to say, "Yes, I am doing so and so, but the other fellow has to do a great deal more." That is not going to help. We must all make the effort, as a Government, as a people and as individuals. That is the only way we can win through to victory. The dullest mind ought to be able to comprehend that, although I sometimes think some of the dullards in office do not seem to be able to comprehend it, because they are engaged in all sorts of wild schemes, making regulations and causing irritation to and worrying people who are trying to do something. That has to be corrected, too, and until it is corrected I do not think we shall be doing as much as we might and can do.

I do not intend to deal with the Bill further, but I wish to quote an article that was handed to me some time ago and which I have scarcely as yet had time to peruse. I quote it because it is an indication of the feeling existing in the Eastern States with regard to this proposal, a feeling existing in the minds of people in the larger States as compared with those in the smaller States. It is a cutting from the Melbourne "Age" and is headed, "Powers Bill," with a sub-heading "Opposition of 'Obscure Cliques.'" I shall read portions of it—

Temporary success gained by obstructive factions against the Commonwealth Powers Bill cannot be accepted as a true reflex of public opinion. In South Australia the Bill has been severely mauled and shorn of some subject-matters in which Commonwealth authority will be most essential when transition from a war to a peace economy is to be made. In Tasmania the measure was thrown out, after a close vote, in one of the few remaining strongholds of political and economic conservatism. Amendments have been proposed in Western Australia. It would be absurd to regard these exhibitions of mutilation and wrecking as more than a deplorable episode in the process of en-

dowing the Commonwealth with the powers it will need for the post-war period.

Powers intended for the post-war period! If I could believe they were definitely for the post-war period—

Hon. C. B. Williams: I am not interjecting.

Hon. W. J. MANN: If I could believe that, then my opposition would be toned down, but there is no doubt in my mind that the powers, once transferred, will be transferred for all time. The article continues—

Efforts to kill the transfer plan leave undiminished the strong and widespread convictions of three months ago that a substantial extension of Commonwealth powers is essential, and that the procedure of reference by the States was preferable on many grounds to the inevitable distractions of a referendum in wartime, with all its risks of an ill-informed vote.

Hon. C. B. Williams: From what paper are you quoting?

Hon. W. J. MANN: The Melbourne "Age." I think that takes a little beating! It is a key to the convention idea, which was to get the States together and say, "Keep off the referendum, because we will not be able to put the case to the people in the same way as we are putting it up to the Parliaments of Australia." The article continues—

To expect the country to acquiesce in the destructive efforts of these otherwise obscure cliques would be ludicrous. Apostles of high Toryism in South Australia, Tasmania or anywhere else cannot hope to be the final arbiters in plans of this magnitude and scope.

Obscure cliques! That is what these people think of us; that is what we are in their estimation and what we shall always remain unless we are very careful indeed.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Vote the Bill out and put us on the map.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Vote the Bill out and let us remain on the map! That is the idea! The article continues—

Failure by the States to measure up to the needs of the new times can but strengthen the centralising tendency in Australian government.

There we have it again! The same old cloven hoof!

Hon. A. Thomson: Centralise!

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes. The article continues—

An unbending attitude of mind that clings stubbornly to privileges and powers jealously preserved as an inheritance from the colonial days cannot be allowed to stand in the way of running Australia on a national basis.

In other words, "cannot be prevented from running Australia for the benefit of New South Wales and Victoria." The article continues—

The little coteries who are prisoners of their past—

That sounds nice—

and cannot or will not perceive that the flood waters are abroad, can at the most only delay the refashioning of our political structure to meet the demands of the new times. Unless the dissident States are prepared to modify their attitude the Commonwealth will be left with no other alternative but to prepare a suitable Bill and ask the national Parliament to authorise a referendum.

Well, that is the correct thing to do. If, after a referendum is held, the people are prepared to say that the Commonwealth shall have all the powers and the States none, then I think we can say "Good-bye" to the progress of this State. I shall support the second reading of the Bill because, as I have already said, there is a clause in it dealing with the repatriation of our soldiers, sailors and airmen, as well as the men of our merchant shipping service and everybody else who has risked his life for this Commonwealth. I think that is our bounden duty.

Member: The Melbourne "Age" has influenced you.

Hon. W. J. MANN: If that clause were not contained in the Bill I would not hesitate to vote for its rejection.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East): I desire to make some remarks on this measure. I am pleased to find that I am not the only member definitely opposed to it. Unfortunately, some members opposed to it have indicated their intention to vote for the second reading. Personally, I hope there will be no chance of the Bill's reaching the Committee stage, but I may be disappointed. I have lived a great many years in this State, when it was a Crown colony and during those glorious ten years of responsible Government. Ever since we were thrust into Federation we have been under oppression, which has meant to most of those in my calling depression and has led to a general desire to escape from Federation. We have felt, "If only we could retrace our steps!" How widespread was this feeling may be gathered from the overwhelming vote in favour of secession. I presume that the Commonwealth Government decided to jockey this

measure through with a view to avoiding the taking of a referendum. I feel sure that if a referendum were held in connection with handing over further powers, it would be defeated. This is a serious matter and there is no great reason for this Parliament to pass the measure at present.

The war is not likely to be over for a considerable period. I think that is generally recognised, and it is a little early for us to devote our attention to making preparations for the post-war period. If the present Commonwealth Government had given more attention to the prosecution of the war and less attention to seeking to put the policy of the Labour Party on to the statute-book of this country and trying to force its own ideas on the people, we would probably have done better in connection with the war. The Labour Government claimed before it took over that it had shown it was able to govern the country. It absolutely refused to link up with the Government in power. Mr. Menzies and one of his right-hand men, Mr. Fadden, who succeeded him, both suggested the formation of a National Government, and undoubtedly Australia was looking for something of the kind. That was done during the last war; why not during this war? Only because these people saw their opportunity and openly boasted that they had made up their minds to put their policy into effect! Speeches have been made by them—I do not need to quote the various extracts I have here—showing that it was their firm intention to take advantage of the war to foist their political platform on the people, ignoring the rights of all those not associated with them and who hold different views—a far greater number of people than those who follow union rules.

This was their opportunity and, by a certain amount of jockeying, and the help of Independents in the Commonwealth Parliament, they have had control. Now they are asking us to go out and beg people to provide more millions for them. In my opinion, an enormous amount of money collected from the people is not getting into the right channels. A great deal of it is being squandered in this way. Undoubtedly a great many hope that the war will not finish very speedily because, the longer it lasts the better will be their innings. I consider that the members of the Convention called by Dr. Evatt were sold a pup. A Bill was prepared and placed before those he had called together.

They had discussions to see how far they could agree; but when they attended the Convention they found that that Bill had been withdrawn and something quite new was given to them to consider. They had to view the matter from quite another angle which, I consider, was quite unfair.

Dr. Evatt chose those people with whom he desired to confer, leaving out other members of that Convention who had very little time to consider the measure put before them. When they returned to their respective States, they were supposed to be in favour of the passing of the Bill. As a matter of fact, blinkers were put over their eyes and they were not afforded an opportunity to give fair and reasonable consideration to matters that were suddenly put before them. There is no hurry for us to pass this measure. I think it would be reasonable to say we should have four or five years to consider it. The war will go on for a long time and, in view of what we have seen of the actions of the Commonwealth Government, I think it would be dangerous to put these powers into its hands. It looks to me as though Dr. Evatt in his endeavour to throttle the State and get all power and bring about a dictatorship, has been emulating Hitler. If these powers are given to the Commonwealth Government, there will be very little left for the States to handle. I presume the Federal authorities have made up their minds to get rid of the States, and if we grant these powers we shall have gone a long way in that direction.

I am convinced that the Parliament at Canberra is altogether too far away satisfactorily to control the States of Australia. They have already made up their minds that they will have control. They are discussing the question of increasing the numbers in the Federal House to give, I presume, a very much larger increase to the larger States. They might even go so far as to do away with the Senate. We do not know where we will be. Then, instead of only apeing the Hitler dictatorship we will be under something similar to the de Valera system, which will suit Dr. Evatt. We have already had a taste of that under the pretext of war. We are being governed by a system of bureaucracy and regimentation. Many of those trying to carry on the industries of this State question whether it is worth while attempting to carry on, because they are themselves subject to such regimentation. Many people are

issuing new regulations. First one Minister and then another Minister issues them, and one overlaps another. To grant further powers will only show ourselves as being ridiculous because of the usurpation of authority that has already taken place under the National Security powers.

The Commonwealth Government should not want anything more than it has taken, which is more than is legally just. I cannot understand why it has adopted this scheme unless it was that Mr. Curtin was afraid to hold a referendum on this question. Why was this Convention of the State Premiers and Opposition Leaders held? I am quite sure that Mr. Curtin has no intention of facing the community with a referendum on the question. I look upon this as similar to the Bible story of Esau who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. If we do hand over these powers we will be in a mess; there is no doubt about that! If the Commonwealth Government wishes to clarify its position it has been suggested that it will adopt what Dr. Earle Page suggested a few years ago, namely, the creation of smaller States. My objection to that is that the States of Australia created the Federation. If we fall into this trap the Federation will create the smaller States. It would be a complete turning of the tables and is something I do not look forward to at all. I have had the greatest objection to it. We do not want to alter our present system. The day might arrive when the States will simply say, "Rather than grant more power to the Commonwealth we must take back some granted under Federation." The people want to be in closer contact with their Government and able to get in touch readily with their Ministers.

The Eastern States have been absorbed with the high protection policy which has been the ruin of Australia and this State. One has only to see the figures brought out in regard to the robbery that has taken place over the years in connection with wheat and wool to see the enormous sums that have never reached the pockets of the producers of those commodities. It is a sum which runs into millions. Our people have been robbed of that money. That has taken place to the disadvantage of those who received all these promises from the Commonwealth Government. They received promises of subsidies and high tariffs which all operated to the advantage of the big businesses in the Eastern States. They have

their offshoots in the smaller States. I do not wonder that Tasmania and South Australia view these matters in very much the same light as does Western Australia. The smaller States will be drawn into that position if these powers are granted. We will be, as stated in the Bible, a long time crying in the wilderness, and we will find very deaf ears when we appeal to the Federal authorities for anything at all. We appealed after contributing large sums—millions—to the Commonwealth in land taxation. The excuse for imposing that tax was that it was for the defence of Australia.

A system of compulsory military training for the young people was introduced, and actually it worked out admirably for the whole of Australia, and was a very fine thing. The Labour Government brought that in but a great many of its followers said that it had done wrong and that when Labour got into power again it must put an end to it, and that was done. That training was of the utmost value to the Australian soldiers in the last war. It was of great assistance to the young men who entered the service of their country. Unfortunately, because that had been stopped, all our young people missed that training and were not as ready for this war as they would have been. It was a great blunder when that was knocked on the head, because it was evident even in those days that many of these young people had too much time on their hands and perhaps too much money. Had that military training been continued our position today would be very different. Certainly it would have made better citizens of our young people.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Not so many of them would be going to Barton's Mill.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: That is quite right. I raise this question in relation to the prosecution of the war, bearing in mind that the people have contributed millions in taxation for the defence of Australia, and yet the Commonwealth refused to provide adequate defences at Nauru and Christmas Island upon which our people have relied for their main supplies of phosphatic rock. That question was placed before the Commonwealth Government long before the outbreak of the present war and yet nothing was done about it.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Certainly it was long before Japan entered the war.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes, it was raised much earlier than that. Members will recollect that Nauru was one of the first places to which Germany sent her raiders to bombard during the 1914-18 war. That indicated the importance Germany attached to the deposits there. Despite that earlier experience, the Commonwealth Government neglected to take precautions that were obviously necessary. Today we find ourselves with depleted supplies of superphosphate upon which our production of wheat, barley, clover and grasses so much depends. The Government that was warned at such an early stage was not the present Administration, but a previous Government.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Which consisted of Nationalists.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: This serves to show that those in the Eastern States have no thought or care apart from their own interests, which are largely centred in Melbourne and Sydney.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Do not they require superphosphate in the Eastern States?

Hon. G. B. Wood: It is not required in Sydney, where the main control is centred.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The Commonwealth Government required money and they collared it by way of taxation, applying the funds in other directions. The legal position regarding the Bill has received close attention at the hands of eminent lawyers, but I am satisfied in my own mind that if we agree to refer the powers suggested to the Commonwealth Government they will be lost to us forever. I do not see why we should be in any violent hurry to permit the Commonwealth to exercise the powers enumerated. It will not be affected in the least if we take plenty of time to consider the position. Personally I have been astonished to note the members who have said that they are opposed to the handing over of the powers sought by the Commonwealth but will support the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That requires a lot of explaining.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It does. From my boyhood days I have always been taught to kill a snake on sight. I was taught not to play with it lest it should bite me. That is how I view the Bill. It is a snake, a viper, a boa constrictor.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It is not a carpet snake.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: If it were, there would be some good in it. We know that carpet snakes swallow mice, rats and rabbits, but that is not the position regarding a boa constrictor.

Hon. L. Craig: Is this a zoological Bill?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: As to marketing and the interference with trade that has been foisted upon us, we have had enough of it. I liken the attitude of the Commonwealth to that of brigands.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Do you think the individual States could handle their exports after the war?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Western Australia was exporting before the Federation was in its swaddling clothes.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Quite so, but under very different conditions.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: That was before the hon. member was interested in farming operations.

Hon. G. B. Wood: We did not export our commodities before the establishment of the Commonwealth.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I think we were exporting wheat before the hon. member was born. When the installation of the bulk handling system was under consideration, one of the difficulties was that so many members represented vested interests. To such a degree was this apparent that I asserted that in view of the extent of those vested interests I could not see any possibility of bulk handling being established. Those concerned held the matter up as long as they could. We chartered ships and sent our wheat away. We froze our lambs at Fremantle and despatched consignments, thus showing the merchants here that we could do much better by exporting our commodities. There were rogues in those days—just as there are today. Reverting to the question of superphosphate supplies, even in the early days to which I have been referring we had to import consignments from England. The destruction of the bags was so great that we sought the assistance of chemists to provide us with an antidote. In that they were successful. It is to the credit of Western Australia that our people ascertained that our redgum was suitable for dealing with the bag trouble. As a result we sent home a shipment of redgum, from which tannin was extracted to enable the bags to be treated. This proved so effective that the bags in which

the superphosphate was imported were in use three or four years afterwards in my district.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They had to reduce the acid content as well.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Today the position is that, owing to war conditions and the failure of the Commonwealth adequately to defend Nauru, we have to depend on supplies of phosphatic rock produced from different places around the Australian coast and from neighbouring islands, those supplies being of very poor quality. We are also finding that the quantity of acid used is having a detrimental effect on the bags. I think the Minister informed us the other day, in reply to a question, that an antidote has not yet been found to preserve the life of bags, tarpaulins, etc. The Minister should take back to his department the information I have just given.

Hon. L. Craig: I think the problem has been solved.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It was solved long ago. In 1904, when Mr. E. A. Mann was in charge of the Government department, I told the managers of the phosphate works what should be done. To give the Commonwealth power over employers would be just about the dizzy limit. If the Commonwealth gets that power, we can go out of business, because it would be a power altogether too far-reaching and all-embracing. Already many of us are squirming under some of the edicts that have gone forth and the control that is being exercised by the Commonwealth. We in this country have the right to freedom, but, if we grant these powers, we shall have parted with that right. The authorities in the East have no idea of permitting freedom to anyone. They want to subject us to a dictatorship as speedily as possible, and I am quite averse to anything of that sort. Seemingly the Commonwealth authorities desire to flinch from the States more and more power and, if they get it, it will result in the dismembering of the Commonwealth probably more quickly than they anticipate. I shall vote against the Bill, and I hope that many of the members who have indicated their intention to vote for the second reading with a view to making amendments in Committee will join with me in opposing the passage of the measure at this stage.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.**THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—**

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.34 p.m.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

BILL—COMMONWEALTH POWERS.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [2.18]: The Bill before us is one of the most important ever submitted to Parliament since I have had the privilege of participating in the public life of Western Australia. I shall support the second reading, but not because I approve of the measure, for I reserve the right to vote against the third reading should it not be satisfactorily amended in certain directions at the Committee stage. I would vote for the Bill with a greater degree of confidence had the Commonwealth Government adopted a more reasonable attitude when it broached the subject of post-war reconstruction. Had it consulted the State Governments seeking their co-operation in dealing with a matter of such vital importance, I feel confident the States would have welcomed such an appeal and would have rendered wholehearted help in coping with the work.

On the other hand, the Commonwealth Government threatened Australia with the holding of a referendum even at a time when the enemy was at our gates. It sought to force from the States autocratic powers which, if granted, would have meant the elimination of State Parliaments and our right to self-government. Like the dictators, the Commonwealth Government, under the guise of the exigencies of war, found a way

to gain what they desired through the National Security Regulations, which gave the Government so much power that it became hungry for the exercise of still further authority. The present Commonwealth Government claims to represent democracy, but it can be said with truth that it has become absolutely dictatorial and by the measure now before us seeks to gain complete control over the destinies of the people of Australia. If suspicion has arisen in the minds of many people respecting the introduction of this legislation, it is entirely due to the extremely dictatorial attitude adopted by the Commonwealth Government, and by its methods in approaching the very important subject of post-war reconstruction. For weeks over the air and through the Press propaganda was indulged in threatening the holding of a referendum, and daily was it stressed that only Canberra was capable of dealing with this important matter.

By comparison, the Federal propaganda equalled that of Goebbels in Germany where, day in and day out, the Germans were told that the Nazis were the only section fit to control the country. In somewhat similar strain Australians were told that only Canberra could do the job, which was entirely beyond the capacity of the States. On the other hand, the States, through their Legislatures, had been building up and developing their respective portions of Australia long before the Commonwealth came into being. Let us examine the dictatorial attitude of Canberra! When the thinking people of South Australia and Western Australia began to display doubts about this legislation and its possible effects on the development of their respective States, Canberra actually threatened a judicial inquiry into the actions of those who were exercising their traditional privilege of thinking for themselves, and refusing to be hustled into supporting a measure which may have serious repercussions on the future citizens of this State. Let me quote from a telegram from Canberra which appeared in "The West Australian" dated the 18th January, 1943—

The (Federal) Government is becoming more concerned about the propaganda in South Australia and Western Australia against the Powers Bill. The propaganda seeks to bring about the rejection of the Bill by the Parliaments of both States and the Government takes exception to it on the following grounds—

(1) If successful, it would either force the Commonwealth to face the post-war period with inadequate powers or precipitate the war-