

Treasury. While it is satisfactory to receive commendation regarding the work of the department, both as regards teachers and staff, I would explain for the benefit of the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward), who queried the additional vote of over £4,000 for the Teachers' College, that we are providing extra courses for 36 new students from July to June and increasing the number who will take the new course starting in February. Additional lecturers have been appointed, and we are endeavouring to make up for the lag in past years, which accounted for the shortage in teachers.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.55 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 4th October, 1938.

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

QUESTION—AUSTRALIAN WORKERS' UNION.

Registration under Industrial Arbitration Act.

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary: 1, On how many occasions has the Australian Workers' Union applied for registration as a union under the Arbitration Act? 2, What other unions—if any—lodged objec-

tions to such registration? 3, On what grounds were objections lodged?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: I have a statement that answers all the questions of the hon. member. This statement I will lay on the Table of the House.

BILL—LIGHTS (NAVIGATION PROTECTION).

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 29th September.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [4.35]: The Honorary Minister said this Bill was brought down in accordance with the findings of the select committee that sat last year. I have carefully perused the report. A statement has frequently been made in this House that the companies point blank refused to make any offer for the insurance of men who came under the Miners' Phthisis Act. Be that as it may, they were justified in asking for information that the Government apparently did not possess. The Government really took a long shot in the dark. I will not go into all the pros and cons dealing with the evidence that was submitted to the select committee. In reply to a question I asked I learned that over £600,000 had been contributed by the Government to the dependants of those who suffered from miners' diseases. I have consistently voted against legislation of this nature as it has come before us year after year, but on this occasion I may surprise members by giving this Bill my support. In the interests of what I may term social service, an undertaking of this nature should be within the control of the Government.

The Workers' Compensation Act was intended to operate compulsorily in the case of all those who would be likely to come under its provisions. Those employers who are able to pay will no doubt have relieved themselves of responsibility for accident or death by insuring their employees. Another section of the community is willing to take the risk. When accident occurs, the dependants suffer

grievously because the employer proves to be a man of straw and his employees are not covered by insurance. If a claim is made against him, the claimant gets nothing. The Act was intended to make insurance compulsory, and such operations should be in the hands of a State department. When an employer has been careless and has not insured his employees, the workers should not be permitted to suffer. We are told that this Bill will deal wholly and solely with compensation under the Workers' Compensation Act and the Employers' Liability Act, as well as with compensation and damages at common law in respect to injuries suffered by workers during their employment. Such a measure represents a step forward. In all probability the premiums that are charged can be materially reduced. If members will look at the returns associated with the report of the select committee, they will find that the State Government Insurance Office received a revenue of £766,171. No commission was paid on the business obtained and the office had to incur no expense on that account. Private companies collected £715,892, but they had to pay commission to the men who obtained the business for them. The State office would be able to do this business without incurring any expenditure for commissions, and everyone would be covered by insurance. Already employers have to submit to the Taxation Department a return setting out the persons who are working for them. This provides a reasonable method of assessing and collecting the amount that would be payable on the wages disbursed. I support the proposal before the House because I am a strong believer in the compulsory protection of employees.

Another form of insurance might well be considered at this stage. An alarming number of fatalities and accidents has occurred through fast-moving motor cars and motor trucks. This State is a long way behind others in dealing with this question. I am not suggesting that the State Government Insurance Office should take up the matter, but I do think that when these vehicles are licensed an extra £1 per vehicle might be charged, and that the additional money should form a trust fund. The income from the additional pound should produce a revenue of anything from £60,000 to £70,000 a year. The money could be used for the assistance of people who were injured, or the dependants of those who were

killed and could get no redress because the person responsible was without means. Those two things should be compulsory. If the State Government Insurance Office, which so far has operated illegally, becomes legalised and definitely fixes a rate of premium, something will have been accomplished.

I have read the Bill closely. I feared that under it the Government might possibly be enabled to enter upon ordinary disease, sickness and accident insurance. I hope that is not the intention of the measure. I believe it is not so, because all that will result under Clause 6 will be to validate existing contracts. This means that in future the State office will not engage in fire or marine insurance. I acknowledge that the Government will be quite justified in insuring its own employees against accident, and its own buildings against fire risks. That in the long run must mean a considerable saving to the State.

The Bill provides that the State Insurance Office shall be under the control of a Minister of the Crown. In that respect I hope the House will agree to an amendment. I would like to see the control vested in the Government Actuary as one of those who will supervise this Government activity if it is legalised. In such circumstances I believe there would be no fear of the office going outside the scope of the measure. I am pleased to see the reference in Clause 7, Subclause 6, to—

the equivalent of the amount of taxes in relation to profits or income liable to be paid by insurance companies (other than life insurance companies) under the laws of the State, which the said State Government Insurance Office would be liable to pay if it were an insurance company subject to such laws and liable to pay such taxes.

We are often told of the advantages derived from State enterprises. However, those ventures are placed in a highly favoured position, having no rates or taxes to pay. For example, the Railway Department has in various parts of the State cottages which receive all benefits accruing to the owners or tenants of other buildings. Nevertheless, they are entirely exempt from rates. That is an unfair advantage. The Bill should pass the second reading, but should be held up until such time as the Bill to amend the Workers' Compensation Act now before another place reaches this Chamber. Then we shall be able to insert an amendment

placing private insurance companies in exactly the same position as the State Government Insurance Office in the event of the Government entering upon classes of business other than those mentioned in this measure. The State Office should not have an unfair advantage in the matter of compulsory workers' compensation and third party risk. The Government will have ample scope for the performance of useful services if it concentrates on the forms of insurance mentioned in the measure. I support the second reading, and hope that the Minister will agree to the postponement of the Committee stage as I have suggested.

HON. C. B. WILLIAMS (South) [4.51]: Everyone knows that without State insurance the mining industry of Western Australia cannot function. That fact was acknowledged by the National-Country Party Government as well as by previous Labour Governments. If the mining industry does not function, this country will go back to the aboriginal state. It is useless for members to be hypocritical by talking as they have talked.

The **PRESIDENT**: Order!

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: If that statement is in any way offensive, I will withdraw it. However, it was offered in a perfectly friendly spirit.

The **PRESIDENT**: I am sure the hon. member did not mean the remark.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: It was not meant to hurt the feelings of any member. I assure you, Mr. President. As regards insurance of miners by private companies, the fact remains that no private company wants the risk. Private companies could get that business now if they wanted it. They could now be competing with the State Insurance Office. However, the business is of no use to them. Let us not shut our eyes to the circumstance that if they did take it, that position would not suit the State, because of the need for continuity of insurance, taking the good with the bad. That is essential. Private companies may be prepared to insure young miners without any dust in their lungs; but when the risk becomes enormous, in say 10 or 15 years' time, the private companies would wash their hands of it as a non-insurable risk, probably after having secured a couple of millions in premiums. The Third Schedule risk might mean bankruptcy to them. This State has men affected with dust. The risk in mining is something altogether

different from the risks in other occupations. Men in the mining industry to-day develop tuberculosis. The miners, mine owners and the Government together contribute towards the miners' relief fund at the rate of 2s. 3d. per man per week. Men suffering from tuberculosis do not come under the Workers' Compensation Act or under any form of insurance. They do come under the Mine Workers' Relief Fund, the three-party scheme. If private insurance companies cover these risks, not for a moment will the workers or the companies or the Government continue to pay contributions as they are now doing.

I hope Parliament will do its duty. It can do its duty. That is why I do not like hypocrisy with regard to State insurance. Mr. Holmes has pointed out what this Council can do to stop State insurance. However, nobody has done it, and nobody wants to do it. If private insurance companies took control of mining insurance, the miners and the Government would adopt another scheme. The mining industry employs upwards of 15,000 men. Of these about nine-tenths are under State insurance. We should pass laws that will do justice to the people generally. There were hundreds of men employed in shypoo shows that have been foisted on the public. Celebration and Edjudina employed large numbers of men, and when the poor fellows got hurt there was no compensation for them either under ordinary insurance or under the three-party cover. The big mines on the Golden Mile have contributed, and so have mines on the Murchison and at Wiluna.

I would not have risen to speak but for the fact that if there is to be continuity of insurance for the mining industry, there must be State insurance. If claims become too heavy in the years to come, the State will have to find the money. The time will come for an enormous bill to be footed.

Hon. A. Thomson: The State is putting in a fair issue to-day.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: It has had to foot two-thirds of a million. Mr. Thomson did not read quite far enough when quoting from the report of the select committee. The Government footed that bill because of its desire to put into operation the Miners' Phtthisis Act of 1926. At that time the Government tried to persuade private insurance companies to cover the risk. In fact, the Government of the day paid the first year's

premiums. After all, the State Insurance Office gets only the rough stuff.

Hon. A. Thomson: It gets a lot of good stuff as well.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: If members carry out their intention not to legalise State insurance, there is no need to have it for Government employees, because their will be no Government employees. Farming is bankrupt, and wool is down about as low as it can possibly be. The only bright spot in our country is, and for many years has been, goldmining. There is a little bit of butter in the South-West, and it will become a good item. Certainly the butter industry will be there long after the mines have gone. Let us be honest to our traditions. Let us bear in mind that we cannot allow our miners to be insured by private companies which will walk off, as they did previously, without a week's notice, cancelling all policies as soon as the risk becomes real. If that is going to happen, we can safely reckon that of the 17,000 men employed in the industry, no fewer than 12,000 will receive the maximum amount of compensation provided under the Workers' Compensation Act, namely, £750.

Members cannot reasonably argue that private companies have not had an opportunity to undertake this class of insurance because, had the mining companies been able to secure cover from any of the private companies, they would have availed themselves of it long ago in preference to insuring with the State Office. I ask members to be honest to the industry and to the people engaged in it, and to enable the Government to obtain a million pounds or two from the industry while it is prosperous, so that the State will be in a better position to meet the charges that will inevitably have to be met when the claims become heavy. Undoubtedly private companies will not accept this class of insurance. We have been told that the getting of the business is more costly to private companies than to the State Office, but a cheque from a mining company can be handled just as cheaply by an insurance company as by the State Office. The insurance premiums are calculated on the wages sheet, and there could be no greater expense for the collection of those premiums by the insurance companies than by the State Office. I hope the Council will pass the measure on this occasion. I am not at all pleased at the

Labour Government's having modified the measure as it has done. Still, that has had the effect of winning over one member to support the second reading, and I trust that more will be influenced in the same way.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move—

That the debate be adjourned till the 18th October.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I must oppose an adjournment for a fortnight.

Motion (adjournment) put and passed.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Personal Explanation.

HON. J. M. MACFARLANE (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.3]: I desire to make a personal explanation. When speaking on this Bill a few days ago, I intimated that I would oppose the second reading. Since then I have been in touch with one of the principal health officers, and after having had a long discussion with him, I have concluded that the right course to adopt would be to support the Bill. Therefore I wish to advise members that in view of the later information received, I shall support the Bill.

BILL—ALSATIAN DOG ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 29th September.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [5.5]: I hope the House will agree to the Bill. The most destructive dog in the bush is the cross-bred dingo, and the Alsatian cross is far worse than any other. In the South-West, in places on the coast, these cross-breeds are killing yearling calves, and one of the dogs was seen tackling the cows as well as the calves. I should like to see the breed banned entirely, because it is a dangerous dog when at large, but after it comes into contact with pure-bred dingoes, the cross-bred is much worse.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.6]: I am raising no objection to the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—FAIR RENTS.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 29th September.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [5.8]:

I consider that this Bill contains very unreasonable proposals, and I cannot understand its being re-introduced in the original form. The $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. allowed above the Commonwealth Bank overdraft rate would return $5\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. on capital only when 100 per cent. of rents could be collected. There is no provision to guarantee the payment of rents; nor is there any allowance for the loss that would be incurred during the time houses were unoccupied. Therefore, to average even $5\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. on capital under these proposals would be impossible. Provision is made for valuations and for appeals to the court, but the costs incidental to such proceedings would be a further charge against the $5\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. I would like to ask the Minister whether, under such provisions, he would care to invest even a small portion of his wealth in, say, half-a-dozen houses to be let on the goldfields. I feel sure that he would not. However, supporters of the measure admit that the effect would be to retard the progress of the building trade which, in my judgment, is a very serious aspect of the matter. Those chiefly concerned about the passage of the measure are certain people on the goldfields. It is rather remarkable that in spite of the boom conditions prevailing on the goldfields, nobody cares to risk the investment of much capital in the building of houses. Evidently investors remember the depression period when houses could not be let at any price.

Hon. C. B. Williams: In the last few years nearly a thousand new houses must have been built there.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: That is not many considering the progress of the goldfields in that time. Possibly cheap homes can be built on the goldfields under the provisions of the Workers' Homes Act. I understand that the board will now accept applications for the building of houses on any part of the goldfields, and I would favour that policy rather than the passing of a measure of this sort which, I consider, will amount to confis-

cation of private property. I am satisfied that many people on the goldfields could do much to assist by building their own homes, but there is just a desire to avoid the obligation and risk and leave the building of homes for someone else to undertake. I have had some experience of house property, and I say definitely there is considerable depreciation in this class of business. Certainly there are times when serious loss is experienced in various ways.

The clause providing for the valuing of the property in order to arrive at a fair rental appears to be too risky. An investor might build a house at a cost of £1,000, and the valuation would probably be written down to £800, so that on £200 of his outlay he would get no return at all. There are times when houses remain empty, and there are times when the rents cannot be collected from the tenants. Bearing these factors in mind, I am satisfied that to average even $5\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. profit on the capital would be impossible. Furthermore, clients of private banks would not be able to approach the Commonwealth Bank for financial assistance, which most people need when building houses for speculative purposes. If they had to go to private banks, they would not be able to obtain the money at $4\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., the ruling rate at the Commonwealth Bank. They would have to pay more like $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for the accommodation. Therefore that class of investor would be completely debarred from raising money. Seemingly, the basis for arriving at the rent should be the overdraft rate of the private banks, not that of the Commonwealth Bank. Seeing that similar legislation last session received such strong opposition, I am surprised that the Government has re-introduced it without modification. Personally, I cannot understand what is behind its re-introduction. Apparently the measure has been sent along here in order to fill in time, though I am loth to accuse the Government of doing business in that way. Last year's measure received the opposition of 75 per cent. of the members of this House, and as this Bill is practically identical, I see no reason why there should be any thought of its meeting with success on this occasion. I shall certainly vote against the second reading.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [5.15]: When the second reading was moved, we were informed that the Bill had been in-

introduced with the object of providing for persons who pay rent for dwellings, protection from the rapacity of some landlords. As a representative of the Metropolitan Province, I made some inquiries and, so far as I have been able to ascertain, in the great majority of instances rents paid in the metropolitan area are most moderate. From that standpoint there is no justification for the introduction of such legislation. During the course of the debate, I have noted that invariably the instances of rapacity quoted have concerned landlords on the goldfields. The more the position is examined, the more must we feel convinced of the justification for landlords, who have had the courage to build houses on the goldfields and accept the risks inevitably associated with goldfields districts, receiving returns from their investments much in excess of those prevailing in other centres. Mr. Craig quoted a conversation he had had with a goldfields worker during a railway journey. The experience was interesting and served to emphasise the position in that part of the State. When asked why he had not built a home for himself, the man responded in effect, "Do you think I am a mug? When the goldfields go down, I will be left with a house on my hands." In the "West Australian" of the 7th September was published quite an interesting letter written by a former resident of the goldfields. He had invested his savings in property and related his experiences in the course of his letter, the concluding paragraph of which read—

Take my case, for instance, as a builder and prospector from the early days. It was the common saying then that "money made on the fields should be spent on the fields." Acting on that principle, money was spent there by me to the extent of £4,000. We were among the rest of the heavy losers.

I take it he is referring there to the time when the depression existed in the mining industry.

We now have only a little property left and, there is no hope of ever getting the money out of it that was spent by us. The passing of this so-called Fair Rents Bill will result in a further loss to us as we now, in our old age, have one-fifth of the property left. As well as this, I am a cripple through the heavy work,

There is an instance of a man who invested in property the money that he had made in his early years on the goldfields.

Hon. G. Fraser: And he wants one investment to make up the deficiency on the other four!

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No, but he had the courage to invest his savings in goldfields property and now he is to be deprived of at least portion of his returns. The remedy is very simple, and is the ordinary one to which we resort when we seek to deal with any economic condition. We must provide the means whereby the demand shall be met by the supply. The remedy is certainly not to be found in the introduction of legislation that will interfere with the natural law of supply and demand. If man-made laws seek to alter or tamper with natural laws, then the former will be swept aside every time. That has been our experience in the past.

Fair rents legislation was introduced in New South Wales, but experience proved it useless because it was opposed to natural laws. In that State other means had to be sought whereby the demand could be met by the supply. Similarly, in New Zealand a like experience resulted and lately Senator Keane has issued an interesting pamphlet on "Housing," in which is fully explained the position both in New South Wales and in New Zealand. I commend that pamphlet to the attention of members, who probably received copies themselves. A scheme was introduced in New Zealand by which the Government provided the funds and, under the guidance of local authorities, who borrow the necessary money from the Government, arrangements are made for the erection of buildings. Apparently, the fund originally was £1,500,000, and it was availed of by various local authorities. There is some sense in a scheme like that. In Western Australia, we have the Workers' Homes Board, and surely a scheme could be drawn up whereby reasonably cheap houses could be erected under conditions that would provide for payment over a shorter period than is deemed necessary in more settled areas. Such a provision would be fair and certainly there should be some difference in the conditions governing such a scheme as between the goldfields and the metropolitan area. In New South Wales the position was met by co-operative building schemes, which have worked wonderfully well. If the Workers' Homes Board cannot undertake the work, it might be possible for some such scheme for co-operative building to be introduced in Western Australia.

I stress my contention that the housing difficulty could be overcome by that means, but it certainly cannot be overcome by a measure such as that now before the House. I regard the Bill as merely destructive of principles that are recognised as wise in connection with investments. In my view such legislation would result in the diversion of capital that normally would be available for the building of houses into other channels such as share investments or industrial enterprises. In the past money has been invested in building properties with advantage to both borrower and lender. With the introduction of fair rents legislation, such conditions will be wholly altered. That was the experience in New South Wales, where it was discovered that instead of encouraging builders to erect more houses, operations in that direction were curtailed. In the circumstances, the Bill should be rejected.

On motion by the Honorary Minister, debate adjourned.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 29th September.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [5.29]: The Bill has been reviewed and criticised thoroughly by previous speakers, and its defects have been dealt with exhaustively, particularly by Mr. Baxter and Mr. Parker. Members will recall that Mr. Parker acted as chairman of a select committee to which a somewhat similar Bill was referred last session. That committee took evidence, presented its report and made certain recommendations. This House passed a Bill based on the report of the committee. The Bill was returned to another place and the recommendations of this House, instead of being received with that courtesy which is usual between the Houses, were overlooked or ignored. I have said that the Bill presented last year resembles in character very much the Bill now before us. In fact, there is but little variation, as a comparison of the Bills will show. Having regard to what was done by this Chamber last year, and to the criticism which has been offered on the present Bill, my opinion is that this House can do but one thing—reject the Bill. I have studied the measure carefully, and quite

agree with the views expressed by the members to whom I have referred.

I do not intend to take up the time of the House by dealing with the points that they have already so fully debated; but I ask myself this simple question: would this Bill, if passed, be of benefit in promoting industry or helping the establishment of industry in this State, and would it assist in providing work? The more one studies the Bill, the more one is convinced that, if passed, only one result would ensue, and that is the undoubted prevention of the establishment of industries here. Members must bear in mind that the first thing a man or a company seeking to establish an industry in any country would do, would be to study its industrial legislation. If such a person were to find legislation of the character that this Bill proposes, he would, on comparing it with similar legislation in other countries, feel impelled to come to one conclusion, namely, that this is no place for him. We shall not help the workers of this State if we pass the Bill; we shall be doing them the greatest possible injury. We would also destroy the future prosperity of the State. For those reasons, and bearing in mind what was done last session, I say unhesitatingly that I shall not support the Bill.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.34]: Twelve months ago, a similar Bill was presented to the House for consideration. As Mr. Nicholson said, it was referred to a select committee and as a result of the committee's recommendations, we made some amendments to the Bill that we considered were definitely necessary and then passed the second reading. In my opinion, we returned to another place a very good amending measure. The way in which the recommendations of this House were received by another place, however, was such as to cause me to believe that the Government was not so anxious to have the parent Act amended as we were led to believe. If my memory serves me aright, when that Bill was returned by another place, eight amendments were submitted to us for consideration. Of these we accepted four and rejected four. The Bill was then sent back to the Assembly and the Minister in charge gave it very scant consideration. When speaking finally on the Bill, the Minister for Employment said—

The amendments agreed to by the Council, although desirable—

He admitted the amendments were desirable, and apparently the remainder of the Bill was desirable—

—although desirable, were not very important.

He went on to say that the other amendments were obnoxious. One would have thought that after this House had given way except for four amendments, some spirit of compromise would have been shown; but the Minister, on being asked whether he proposed to give further consideration to the Bill, merely said that that was not his intention, and the Bill was thrown aside. In view of what was done by another place on that occasion, I can assure the Government it is not going to get my vote for this Bill. That is one reason. Other reasons are that I find quite a number of the suggested amendments are such as are unacceptable to me. My vote will be cast against the Bill.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.39]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 11th October.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.10 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 4th October, 1938.

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

QUESTION—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

Appointment of Woman Medical Officer.

Mr. RAPHAEL (without notice) asked the Minister for Employment: 1, Is Dr. M. A. Radcliffe-Taylor being considered for appointment to fill the position occupied by the late Dr. Lovegrove? 2, Has the Government given consideration to the fact that there are Western Australian male doctors available to fill that position? 3, Has it considered that about 99 per cent. of those to be examined under the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act are men? 4, Have the men's feelings been considered in view of the proposal that a woman shall conduct the examinations?

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT replied: 1, Applications for this position were called in the usual way by the Public Service Commissioner. Favourable consideration is being given to the application of Dr. Radcliffe-Taylor. 2, 3, and 4, So far as I am aware, the matter has not yet been finalised.

BILL—FREMANTLE GAS AND COKE COMPANY'S ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: In the metropolitan area, as is well known, there are two gas-supplying authorities, namely, the Electricity and Gas Department of the Perth