

# Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 13th May, 1931.

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

## QUESTIONS (2)—STATE GOVERNOR.

*Cost of Establishment, etc.*

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Premier: What is the approximate annual cost of— 1, The upkeep of the State Governor's establishment, including the Perth and Albany houses? 2, The salaries of the Governor and staff, including the domestic staff? 3, Allowances, in lieu of staff. 4, Travelling allowances, including haulage of railway car? 5, Motor transport, and other allowances and costs, if any?

The PREMIER replied: Year ended 31-12-1930—(1) Maintenance of buildings, furniture and grounds, £2,285: less contribution by Governor, £200: total, £2,085. 2, Governor, £4,000; private secretary, £350; typiste, £156; police orderly, £340. The A.D.C. and the domestic staff are paid by the Governor. 3, £251. 4, Travelling allowances, nil; haulage and expenses of railway car, £489. 5, Motor transport is borne by the Governor; office and incidental expenses, £240.

*References to Party Politics.*

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been drawn to a speech reported to have been made by His Excellency the Governor at a function attended by leading business men, on Tuesday, 28th April, in which His Excellency stated:—

I know that it is dangerous for a Governor to rush in where angels fear to tread, but there are some things I must say. In this room are a number of business men who are going through a period of increased respon-

sibility and anxiety. Our race is always seen at its best when really "up against it," and knowing what it is up against. I have been long enough in Australia to have acquired the Australian point of view, and have the intensest sympathy for what Australia has been passing through in the last year. But there has been a great deal of talking, and not much done. Too much time has been occupied, not in the interests of the nation as a whole, but in hanging on to office, and in party politics. (Applause.) I think that a large number of people throughout the country are thinking thus, and are determining to make themselves heard and to insist upon a return to sound Government and sound finance. (Applause.) There is only one thing to do, and when we adopt that method the Old Country will help us to see it through. Perhaps I have said more than I should have done, but I am not sorry.

2, In view of the fact that His Excellency is reported to have cast a serious aspersion on the capacity and sincerity of His Majesty's present advisers in this State, will he refrain from making representations for a further extension of the Governor's term of office?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, I am advised that His Excellency's remarks were not intended to apply to the Government in this State.

Hon. P. Collier: We all thought they were. I was mistaken, too.

The PREMIER: It is not the first time.

## QUESTION—MINER'S PHTHISIS COMPENSATION.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Mines: What is the aggregate annual amount of compensation paid to men rejected from the gold mining industry under the Miner's Phthisis Act?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: Annual amount, financial years 1925-26, £5,109; 1926-27, £20,518; 1927-28, £37,922; 1928-29, £41,101; 1929-30, £47,213; 1930-31 to 30-4-31, £51,775. Aggregate amount, £203,638.

## QUESTION—STATE IMPLEMENT WORKS.

*Water Pipe Contract.*

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware that a contract let to the State Implement Works by the Water Supply Department for water pipes, has

been suspended? 2, If so, is it because the State Implement Works, being the lowest tenderers, were unable to make the contract pay? 3, If not, did they show a profit, and why was the contract stopped?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, No. 3, A profit was made. The contract was suspended owing to large stocks of 4in. pipes on hand and the limited programme of water main extension and improvement works.

#### QUESTION—FARMERS' DEBTS, ETC.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that the amendment to the Agricultural Bank Act, providing for a lien over crops now being sown, will have a grave effect upon the operations of the average farmer? 2, Will it not antagonise merchants and thus kill what little credit is left? 3, Will the proposal recently outlined in the "West Australian," to appoint a committee or Royal Commission to inquire into the future of the agricultural industry be carried out, and will it deal with every phase of agriculture, including tariff, interest and compound interest, penal fines for late payment of taxes, water charges, etc. 4, If a committee or Royal Commission is to be appointed, will it be done as speedily as possible, as the existence of wheat farming is threatened unless prompt action is taken to secure a great reduction in production costs? 5, Has he any information as to when the refunds of the tax paid on sheepskins will be made by the Federal Government?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, No. 3, The Royal Commission is intended to inquire into proposals for the adjustment of accounts, as between the farmer debtor and his creditors. 4, Yes. 5, No.

#### QUESTION—ORPHANAGES, 'SUBSIDY.

Mr. RAPHAEL asked the Premier: Will he consider subsidising those orphanages whose children have reached the age of fourteen years and for whom employment cannot be found?

The PREMIER replied: The condition of the finances would not permit of this being arranged at the present juncture.

#### BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Hire-Purchase Agreements.
- 2, Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment.  
Introduced by the Minister for Lands.
- 3, Traffic Act Amendment (No. 2).  
Introduced by the Minister for Works.

#### BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION.

*Leave to Introduce.*

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Lindsay—Mt. Marshall) [4.42]: I move—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill for an Act to consolidate and amend the law with respect to compensation to workers for injuries suffered in the course of their employment, and for other relative purposes.

HON. A. MCCALLUM (South Fremantle) [4.43]: I hope the House will hesitate before giving permission for the introduction of the Bill. Extensive inquiry and investigation should be made and some justification should be given before permission is granted for the Bill to be introduced. I wish first to make reference to the unseemly Press propaganda that has been conducted recently against the Workers' Compensation Act, propaganda that has been well paid for and instituted by people who had made lots of money out of the Act, lots of money at the expense of crippled men and widows and children. They have indulged in Press propaganda that I suppose has never been equalled. They have concentrated on this Act to try to prejudice the public mind and create an atmosphere so that this Parliament could deal with the measure. The leading journals in this State are repeatedly bringing pressure to bear upon the Government to introduce amendments to the Act, even going so far as to urge the convening of a special meeting of Parliament to deal with the matter. The same sort of propaganda was carried on against the Arbitration Act—unscrupulous propaganda to influence public opinion—urging that Parliament should deal with amendments to the Act. After Parliament had dealt with it, those people wanted special sessions of the Arbitration Court to give effect to their desires. The haste with which those people want to beat down the industrial conditions

of the workers is absolutely unseemly and has been most unscrupulous. In their headings and their featurings there are allegations that the Workers' Compensation Act is a burden upon industry, that this burden should be lifted, that industry cannot afford to carry the burden that this Act has placed upon it. The Act provides for the payment of compensation for human wastage, to cripples and maimed men, to widows and orphans because the breadwinners have either lost their lives or become crippled in industry. If it is termed a burden upon industry to meet those charges, and the burden has to be lifted from the back of industry, upon whom is it proposed that this burden should be placed?

Mr. Raphael: Upon the unfortunate cripple.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: What, if not industry, shall carry the burden? Before I am prepared to vote for leave to introduce a Bill dealing with this question, I want to be justified in the vote that I give. I shall want to know that the so-called burden upon industry will not be placed upon the people who bore it prior to the Act being passed, that the maimed and crippled in industry will not be asked to carry the burden that belongs to industry itself. It is a responsibility cast upon industry to make provision for the breakage of machinery. It has to make provision for anything that goes wrong with the mechanism that is engaged in industry. Is it too much to ask that industry shall also carry the responsibility for the breakage of human beings that may be engaged in it? It seems that it is a burden to provide against the breakage of human beings, but it is a legitimate responsibility to provide against the breakage of machinery. Industry can carry the burden of the breakage of machinery, but broken arms and broken legs are of no account, and are not to be considered at all. Surely it is only right to ask that industry should be called upon to do at least the same for the human units that are engaged in industry as it does in the case of machinery. If a machine breaks, industry has to repair it. It has to be reconditioned and re-equipped so that it can again perform the job it was doing before. Is it too much to ask that the same responsibility be held in the case of human beings? The difference is that if a machine is not patched and repaired and restored to a state of efficiency, a new machine may have to be purchased, and it means big

money in many instances when it comes to a question of buying a new machine. On the other hand, big money is not involved in buying human beings. Plenty of men are in the market for work to-day. There are many unemployed around the country, and industry can replace the human units that are maimed and crippled, hurt, and perhaps fatally injured, replaced far more cheaply than machinery can be replaced. Now the agitation arises that industry cannot carry the burden of having human beings refitted for work. It is no longer desired to give the same care and attention to, and carry the same responsibility towards, the men and women who are engaged in industry as it is desired to give to the actual mechanism that is employed in industry. We have in force an Act which does a certain amount of justice. I am not claiming that it is absolutely complete, or that it is without fault. I made a statement in the House during the last session that we were in office to the effect that we were having certain investigations made and, as a result of them, it was our intention to bring down amendments to the Act. We could see that improvements in the law could be effected with considerable advantage both to those engaged in industry and to the industry itself. Whilst the Act goes a long way further than the previous Act did, it is still a long way behind similar Acts in other parts of the world. It is not unique in any way. In recent months seldom has a morning passed but the "West Australian" has published some statement to the effect that the Workers' Compensation Act contains unique provisions that affect industry in a way that it is not affected elsewhere. It is a fact that in the early part of the century, say 30 years ago, an Act such as ours would have been considered revolutionary. At that time in no part of the civilised world was such an Act in operation. To-day, however, there is no part of it which has not an Act of some description making provision for workers' compensation. In the short period of 30 years every part of the civilised globe has enacted legislation similar to this. We are in advance of some countries, but since we passed our Act other parts of the world have gone ahead of us and are in many ways in advance of us. Every year has seen a considerable advance in almost every country, particularly in industrial countries. Instead of any advance being made

here and of the Act being widened in scope to give greater benefits, we have the outcry that our Act should be mutilated.

The Minister for Works: How do you know that?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I say that has been the outcry. It is required that certain provisions of the Act should be removed, provisions that have been inserted for the protection of men and women engaged in industry. It is sought to repeal them, or whittle them down. I do not expect anything else to come from the present Government.

The Minister for Works: You may yet be agreeably surprised.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I should indeed be pleased if I were surprised, but I cannot expect any good to come out of Nazareth. I should be surprised if any good came out of any Bill that came from the present Government, so far as it might affect the workers. I have read the utterances of Ministers and of members opposite generally. We have read what they have broadcast from one end of the country to the other. I have read the published remarks of the secretary to the Country Party. He was reviewing the work of the last session, was justifying the action that was taken, and answering criticisms from the country. He enumerated all that had been done, and in every instance the things he spoke of as having been done meant taking away something more from the workers. The Government passed measures to lengthen hours and lower industrial standards. He wound up by saying, "We now have an undertaking from the Government that during next session drastic amendments will be made to the Workers' Compensation Act." How am I to believe that anything good will be done by the present Government?

The Minister for Works: You will be terribly disappointed.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I know what their supporters have said. I know how they have gone out into the country and obeyed the dictates of those who lead them. I know they dare not stand up against those dictates. I am not taking any chances when I say there can be no question that this Bill does not propose to improve, from the point of view of the workers, the provisions of the existing law, but that it will mean taking away from them something

they have fought for many years to gain. The rest of the world has gone marching on so far as this particular class of law is concerned. The other day I was looking at the advances that have been made in the United States. Almost every State there has made improvements in many respects since our Act was passed. We are now asked to retrogress.

The Minister for Works: How do you know?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I know what is in the minds of Ministers. Perhaps I know more than the Minister knows.

Mr. Marshall: We have not to be associated with them very long to know what is in their minds.

The Attorney General: I suppose you have not seen a copy of the Bill by any chance?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I am not speculating when I say this Bill will mean retrogression. It will mean taking something away, and lead to a whittling down of the conditions of the workers. I know that members of the Government dare not come down with any other kind of Bill. Their organisations have told them what to do. The Press of the country has been at them every morning telling them what to do. We know they dare not disobey the instructions they have been given. I am not running any risks in that regard. It is an absolute certainty. We do not require to see the Bill to know what it will mean. We know full well what its aims and objective will be without seeing it. Almost every civilised country has gone on effecting improvements to this type of legislation, extending the protection given to the workers, and giving greater benefits and more care to those who are maimed and crippled. In cases of accident provisions have been made for refitting the maimed and crippled so that they may return to industry again. When for the first time in the history of the State we suggested that industrial diseases should be treated in the same way as accidents, we know how that was received. It was said to be a revolutionary step, but to-day there are very few countries which do not make similar provisions. Occupational diseases now carry compensation in the same way as do injuries. One of the main complaints against our Act is that it has given protection to those who contract diseases, as

well as to those who meet with accidents. Prior to the passing of that Act there was what was termed a waiting period. The worker had to be away from his work for several days before he was entitled to compensation as a result of accident. The Act now on the statute-book abolished that waiting time. We said that if the worker met with an accident he was entitled to compensation from the moment that accident occurred. Nearly every country is now following similar lines. Every State in America has either minimised or wiped out altogether this waiting time, as our Act has done. Many European countries have wiped out the waiting time, just as we have done. Previously the worker received no compensation whatever for the waiting period. Whilst we have not given any increase in the percentage of wages, nothing beyond half wages, other Australian States are granting as high as two-thirds. Numbers of American States give 75 per cent. and even 80 per cent., while other States of the Union base the compensation upon the workers' domestic obligations, without reference to wages; for instance, in the case of a married man with a large family. Under those conditions the American worker, even if he is on the minimum wage, is paid sufficient to keep up his home while he is unable to follow his occupation. In that respect there has been continuous improvement in other parts of the world, while our Act still provides for only 50 per cent. I do not know what are the views of the Government on that score. I do not suppose the Government intend to reduce the existing rate of payment, but neither do I expect that they will suggest any increase. If there is any move to amend our Act, consideration should be given to the phase whether there ought to be an addition to the amount made available to the worker suffering from injury. The percentages for various accidents under the Second Schedule should also receive consideration. In the Press propaganda this aspect of the operation of the measure is featured; but other countries grant larger percentages, and in many cases have increased them since our measure was enacted. The same remark applies to various Australian States. The public of Western Australia, however, have been led to believe that the Act is something unfairly imposed upon the industries of the country, something which they should

not be called upon to bear at all. For the weekly maximum our Act provides £3 10s. Considerably more than that amount is paid in many countries, and all amendments in this respect have been on the up grade. I venture to say that in the Government's forthcoming Bill there will be no suggestion of that kind. I look for no improvement in that respect. Probably we can take America as more analogous to our own country in point of wages than are the countries of Europe. With respect to medical benefits, there has been continuous improvement in all countries. Every workers' compensation law that it has been my privilege to examine provides for increased medical benefits. Yet here there has been a tremendous outcry against medical benefits.

The Attorney General: More against medical costs than medical benefits.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I shall deal with that phase a little later, and give some figures which I think will prove that the contention advanced is entirely wrong. I shall also express an opinion as to what I consider should be done. I am not stating my ideas without being prepared to offer suggestions as to what the Government should do. I shall conclude with an amendment asking that certain steps be taken. If my suggestion is carried out, it will, I believe, tend not only to the smooth working of the law, but to greater satisfaction on the part of all who are concerned in the Act and its operation. An atmosphere is being created for the whittling away of our Act, while workers' compensation law, in its major points, has been improved in other countries. As to compensation for death or total incapacitation, the law of other countries imposes no limit. In America £1,000, or 5,000 dollars, is a common payment in respect of death or fatal injury. Under our law the limit of compensation for death or fatal injury is only £600, with £750 for total incapacitation. Some countries are nearly 50 per cent. ahead of us. Moreover, various Australian States are ahead of us. Yet it is represented that our law is such that Parliament should immediately deal with it, whittling away the benefits of the Act as representing a so-called burden which industry cannot bear. When introducing the existing measure I quoted from Mr. W. French, the chairman of the Industrial Accident Commission of California. His statements will bear repetition. In-

deed, some of the matter which I previously quoted from him is more applicable at the present time than it was when the measure was introduced. Since it is argued that we have done more than a fair thing, that we have gone beyond what industrial workers are entitled to, that we have asked industry to carry more than is fair, that we are too far advanced and should retrogress from the position we took up six years ago, my reply is to quote certain statements made by Mr. French, a man of wide experience as regards workers' compensation:—

An adequate death-benefit schedule should take into consideration these constituent parts:

First: A realisation that human life is the true wealth of a community, and that its loss must not be treated lightly.

Second: When a worker loses his life, he gives his all, and there is an imperative duty devolving upon industry to see that his dependants are cared for; included in this duty should be a determination to see that want never hovers around the door of the home from which he has been ruthlessly taken.

Third: A process of education that will enable employers especially to see that a death benefit is not a tax on them, but a compensation cost to be distributed over the community by means of insurance, and without which no compensation system begins to be adequate.

Fourth: A payment of a sufficient amount to provide burial expenses based upon reasonable needs.

Fifth: An income for each widow as long as she lives, with provision for a lump-sum payment, such income to be sufficient for living needs and not confined to a limited percentage of the husband's wage if such wage was inadequate to provide a reasonable living standard at the time of his death.

Sixth: An income for each dependant child, to the end that the home life shall be conserved, with provision that there be full opportunity for the education of such child and a fair, average chance in life, the payments to cease only after a wage-earner status has been acquired, and to continue indefinitely if sickness or accident or other good cause keeps such child dependent, and all such payments to be independent of the mother's re-marriage.

Seventh: Careful supervision of each dependant's home by a compensation agent, to the end that each family may face the future with the knowledge that the State is a friend and will assist with the problems that relate to living, to education, to health, to planning the future of the children, to finding employment, and to all the other factors that make up a well-rounded home life; the agent to be a woman of heart and brain who can secure the results that will make a success of the home that at the time of the husband's death seemed to be irreparably broken.

That may be considered an ideal, but at all events Western Australia is a long way off it. No one can maintain that our law provides anything approaching what Mr. French sets out as an adequate death benefit. The present Government cannot claim that the death benefit under the existing Act comes up to Mr. French's standard at all. Mr. French emphasises the point that employers especially should be educated to see that a death benefit is not a tax on them, but a compensation cost distributed over the community by means of insurance, without which no compensation system can be considered adequate. We embodied in our measure the principle of compulsory insurance, and the Bill as passed did actually contain that principle. Owing to a flaw in the drafting, however, the principle of compulsory insurance is not enforceable to-day. At the present time I know of hundreds of men in this country who have met with accidents while working for employers that were men of straw, with the result that the injured workers received no compensation. The employers in question were not insured, and it would have been throwing away good money to sue them, as there were no assets upon which the workers could claim. Thus the full responsibility and disadvantage of his accident fell upon the worker. The principle of insurance is, as Mr. French says, to spread the risk. The employer himself does not meet the claim of £600 or £700 that is involved in case of death or total incapacity. But everyone in industry has to contribute. All the employers contribute towards the insurance fund, which is spread, so that it does not mean that the employers themselves actually have to find the money. The other point in Mr. French's statement relates to the income earned, which must be sufficient to enable the worker to live properly, and no limit is placed on the amount the man may earn. In many of the Acts passed in the United States, that principle has been adopted. That means that no limitation upon wages has been fixed, and payments are made according to the needs of the family concerned. Our Act falls far short of that. We have not been able to legislate to an extent that nearly approaches such an end, yet we are asked to give permission to the Minister to whittle away what our Act provides for the workers.

The Minister for Works: How do you know that?

Mr. Marshall: We could tell from your looks.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I have already told the Minister that I do know. Members sitting on the Opposition side of the House do not go around with their eyes shut and their ears closed. We see what is to be seen and listen to what is to be heard. We have read what members sitting on the Government side have said at meetings and in addresses, and we have noted the resolutions carried by various bodies and at various meetings telling the Government what they are expected to do.

Mr. Marshall: We get their instructions every morning at breakfast.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: We know what has been happening, and it is not necessary for us to wait until the Bill is before us to know what it will contain. We know what the Minister has been told he was to do.

Mr. Marshall: It costs us 2d. to get the Minister's opinion.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Certain gentlemen seen in St. George's-terrace made it a feature of their remarks that Parliament should be called together immediately after the Christmas vacation in order to pass a Bill to give what they described as relief to industry. Certain organisations have held meetings, carried resolutions and despatched them to the Government, pressing for the introduction of a Bill to give them the relief they desired and to shift the burden of the responsibility on to the shoulders of crippled men and women.

Mr. Marshall: And children too. Don't forget the children as well.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: They want to shift the responsibility on to widowed women and orphaned kids.

The Minister for Works: How do you know that?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: If the Minister does not intend to leave the responsibility upon industry, where can he place the burden?

The Minister for Works: Why don't you wait for the Bill itself?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Instead of Parliament being asked to consider a Bill, prompted by outside party interests, in order to remove conditions that we have in our Act at present, we should be asked to give attention to a Bill the effect of which would be to bring our legislation more up to date, in keeping with the times, and the advance made throughout the rest of the

world. Can it be argued for one moment that our legislation embodies conditions that will enable us to deal with the position of a child, to make sure that it shall be provided for, its education arranged, its home looked after and its future planned? Nothing like that is provided for in our Act. So far from being asked to make any such provision in our Act, all that we hear is that the money made available is altogether too much, the benefits derived are too great, and industry cannot carry the burden. Parliament is not called together to consider an amending Bill that will provide proper care and attention for children whose future has been affected through the demands of industry, that will say to that child, "Although industry has taken away your breadwinner and you are deprived of the benefits of your home, the State will step in to take his place and see that you are educated, that your home-life shall be properly arranged, and your future planned." No!

Mr. Marshall: Of course not.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Instead of being asked to discuss a Bill that would have that effect, we shall be asked to deal with a measure that will enable less money to be made available and under it the responsibility, instead of being on industry, will be put on to the worker and on to his home life.

The Minister for Works: How do you know?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Where else could the responsibility be placed?

The Minister for Works: Why do you say that?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Where does the Minister propose to place that burden? If he takes the burden away from industry, there is one other place only where it can be placed. That responsibility will be diverted to the backs of those who suffer from accidents, to the poor unfortunate individuals who have given their all, merely, in all probability, to earn the basic wage. Their whole lives have been one struggle for existence, and at no time have those workers been able to look forward to the possession of any spare cash that would enable them to provide for their future.

Mr. Kenneally: And the Minister has already had a cut at the basic wage.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Without waiting until the Bill is placed before us, we know just what the object of the amending legis-

lation will be. We stand as unique in the world as a Parliament met to discuss a Bill to provide for going backwards.

The Minister for Works: How do you know that is so?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: We do know. We are not so thick in the skull as not to know what has been going on. We know from your own bosses. What about the Industrial Arbitration Act? You obeyed the dictates of your outside bosses.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Yes, Lee Steere and Monger.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: We told the Government months ago what they would have to do because of what those outsiders had said, and they have done it.

The Minister for Works: You must have been a good prophet!

Hon. A. McCALLUM: At any rate, we told you what you would have to do. Then again, the Minister for Lands told the farmers at their conference what the Government would do.

The Minister for Lands: I did not.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: You did. You know you did.

The Minister for Lands: I asked a question.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: But you implied what you meant.

The Minister for Lands: I did not; I merely asked a question.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: During the elections, the Minister told his hearers at scores of meetings that his party intended to amend the Workers' Compensation Act.

The Minister for Lands: I did not.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: At afternoon teas, at which the Press was not admitted, but to which a few old cronies were invited, he made similar announcements.

The Premier: Who is the sticky-beak that got that for you?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: We know.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Perhaps he was in the same position as some of the sticky-beaks you sent along to us.

The Minister for Works: You have your meetings behind locked doors, and do not let outsiders hear your discussions.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Yours get into our meetings the same as some of ours get to yours.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: At any rate, we know a little of what goes on in our opponents' camps. At the same time, I do not

think we know nearly as much about their doings as they know about ours.

The Minister for Works: You do not know much about the Bill you are discussing.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I know this much: the Minister would not ask leave to introduce a Bill, the effect of which would be to improve the lot of the worker.

The Minister for Works: You will get a surprise.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: It is not in the Government to do anything of the sort; they would not be permitted to do so. It is useless endeavouring to put that sort of stuff over us, and to suggest that we should wait until we see the Bill. The opinions of Mr. French that I have read may be considered to represent the ideal. Certainly our legislation falls far short of that ideal. Throughout America, there is an endeavour to make progress towards the ideal set out by Mr. French. On the contrary, we in Western Australia are asked to agree to retreat from the basis we have already laid out in our Act. One of the main features of the agitation in the Press against the existing law has had reference to the Second Schedule, in which is set out fixed payments to be made in respect of accidents, amputations, and so forth. Prior to the passing of the Schedule in that form, no definite amount was provided in our legislation that enabled any person to know exactly what he was entitled to under the law. The result was that there were always arguments whenever any claim was lodged. During the years I was general secretary at the Trades Hall, I received many cases from the unions, and it was very seldom that we were able to achieve a settlement by way of negotiation. It was always a question of bargaining, and ultimately we would have to go to the court. One distressing feature of the negotiations in those days was that the harder the insurance people knew the domestic position of the injured worker to be, the harder would be the bargain to be struck. They knew that the man could not stand out and that he had to have money; they knew how desperate his plight was. The insurance people made all these subtle investigations and inquiries regarding the domestic responsibilities of the worker and so forth, and the harder his home life was, the harder would be the bargain the company would drive. I gave some instances of what actually happened when I introduced the amending leg-



isolation some time back, and I do not intend to repeat them at the present stage. I hope it will never be suggested that we should retrace our steps so as to permit such conditions to obtain again.

Mr. Panton: Or to get anywhere near that stage.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I do not argue that the Second Schedule is nearly complete: at the time we passed it, it was a new type of legislation in its way. Certainly, it was taken from laws in operation elsewhere, but we had to modify it as a result of our negotiations with the managers of the Legislative Council, with the result that we did not get all we wanted. The operations of the legislation have disclosed weaknesses. I wish to indicate to the Premier my idea that before any such Bill should be introduced to Parliament, there should first be a thorough investigation and inquiry so as to provide us with most complete information. The principle involved is so important and the application of the Act is so wide that the operations of the law affect the whole of the community. We should have all the facts and figures available.

The Premier: You did not do that when you took legislative action.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: We conducted a very wide inquiry, but since then a great volume of water has run under the bridge. The Act had been in operation for many years without amendment and we were so far behind the rest of the world and behind every other State in Australia that its amendment became imperative. For many years we had lagged behind, and the rest of Australia was ahead of us. We tried to bring the Act up to date. Now we have an Act that is somewhat up to date and we are to be asked to agree to the introduction of a Bill that will retreat from the position we have already taken up. We should not agree to any such thing without the fullest possible investigation, enabling all available information to be placed before us. There has been too much interested action in this matter. I do not argue for one moment that the existing law is perfect, or that there have not been abuses of its provisions. In so far as there have been abuses of the Act, I shall assist the Government to tighten the law to prevent those abuses. But I will not be a party to taking away benefits from the people when I claim that the people are entitled to those benefits. I do not desire to

call upon industry to shoulder an unfair burden, but I will not agree to men and women, whose lives and limbs are risked every day they go to work, being required to shoulder the burden instead of industry itself assuming the responsibility. I want a fair and equitable distribution of the burden and responsibility involved. As I proceed with my remarks, I will give the Premier information indicative of the lines of investigation I should like to see followed. I intend to ask for the co-operation of the House, and I shall make suggestions to the Government regarding what I think should be done before such a Bill is introduced here. Regarding the Second Schedule, the first point to be considered is as to whether it is right to have a fixed amount, a definite figure for each class of accident. I know, of course, it has been argued that it is most illogical and operates very unfairly. A case I frequently see cited in the newspapers is that if a navy loses a finger he gets the same compensation as is awarded to a pianist who loses his finger although, as a result of the accident, the pianist loses his occupation, whereas the navy can return to his work.

The Minister for Works: That is right.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Does the Minister subscribe to the idea that the compensation a man is to receive for his accidents is merely to be in so far as the result of the accident affects him on the job? The disability does not stop on the job. He has to carry that disability right through life. It may be that although the loss of the finger does not affect a man in his ordinary avocation, he was a good pianist, and while he did not follow pianoforte playing as a livelihood, by his accomplishment he could give great pleasure to others and get great pleasure for himself. Moreover, his ability on the piano may have brought him in certain side income. As the result of the accident, all that is lost to him. Does the Minister imply that no compensation is to follow a man off his ordinary job; that if a man meets with an accident his compensation is to be based on his impaired efficiency at his job? There are many ways of looking at the question. It may be argued that if the driver of a motor truck loses his leg he suffers a greater disability than would a tailor who lost his leg. That may be so during the day's work, but when the tailor finishes his work for the day he then feels the full disability

of his injury, and he has to carry it all the rest of his life. He is everywhere handicapped, and in consequence even his home is handicapped also. Are we to be told he is not to have any compensation for that? Again it could be contended, with a good deal of force, that the loss of an arm would be greater to a man 60 years of age than it would be to a man only 25 years of age. There are two ways of examining this: a man 65 years of age, if he lost an arm, could not well adapt himself to other work, whereas the younger man could adapt himself to some alternative occupation and learn to earn a decent living at it. On the other hand, of course, in normal circumstances the younger man has a longer span of life ahead of him than the other man has to look forward to, and so the younger man's handicap is the greater. Whether there should be a fixed amount for every class of accident, or whether no definite amount should be stated in the law, and the fixation of the amounts should be left to some board or tribunal, is a matter well worth close examination. Then there is another aspect of it: to an illiterate man the loss of a leg is a far greater loss than it would be to a man of good education who could easily find occupation that would be denied to the uneducated man. Some Australian Acts go so far as to provide that a man who loses the right hand should get greater compensation than is paid to a man who loses the left hand. Our Act makes no distinction in that way. The point I take from the Minister's interjection is that he subscribes to the idea that compensation should be based solely upon the loss of efficiency at his work which one sustains as the result of a disabling accident, that that alone should be the determining factor. If we were to accept that view our Act would require to be very considerably improved. The position is that we should have a thorough investigation to help us determine whether we agree with the idea that there should be a fixed schedule, or whether alternatively there should be a board to fix the compensation in individual cases. Such a board might well decide that in certain circumstances a given compensation would be a fair thing, whereas in other circumstances greater compensation should be paid for the same class of accident. I readily admit that no schedule could possibly be complete; that we could never get a perfect schedule. There are so many possibilities and the rami-

fications are so very wide that it would be impossible to draft a schedule that would meet every contingency. Then if we agree that a board should do these things, it would be necessary to consider whether that board should operate quite untrammelled or should operate within limits, between a minimum and a maximum laid down in a schedule. In other parts of the world in their legislation all these things are taken into consideration. I think before this Parliament is called upon to amend the existing Act we should have information that would justify us in arriving at the decision that our own Act can be improved in the direction indicated, and that some other amendment would not be more advantageous. The contention that there should be no schedule fixing the amount of compensation, that it should be left to a board or tribunal to fix, is discounted somewhat by the difficulty that would ensue in determining the amount of insurance. For no insurance company would know exactly what risk it was taking, and so the insurance premium would be very difficult to arrive at. On the question of weekly payments, our Act prescribes only one half. The Act of New South Wales, I think, goes as far as two-thirds, and some of the other State Acts are well ahead of ours. So, too, is the legislation in many of the American States and in some of the Provinces of Canada. They are all ahead of us in that respect. In the maximum amount a great many different countries are ahead of us. We could improve our Act in that regard. To say that the moment a man meets with an accident he is to get only half wages, means that he is carrying half the responsibility himself all the while. The industry is expected to carry the other half. While he is sick and needing special attention at home, involving extra cost, he has to finance it all on half wages. He is carrying half the responsibility all the time. It appears to me our law could be improved with strict equity if we were to take into account the domestic responsibilities of the worker and give him a compensating advantage. There is, of course, the provision of so much for each child over a certain age, but the limit of £3 10s. practically makes that ineffective; for £3 10s. is a very small amount for a man who is sick and in need of special attention. There is, I think, room for complaint that in some respects the Act has been abused.

From my own experience whilst administering the Act, I know there is substantial room for complaint about what has been happening, particularly in the South-West. However, that has been going on, not amongst our own people, but amongst foreigners, who have sadly abused the Second Schedule.

Mr. Marshall: And that has been exaggerated in the Press.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I am not taking as gospel all that has appeared in the Press, but I do know of cases in which I am sure there has been abuse. It was put up to me whilst I was administering the Act. I am not at all subscribing to the idea that the abuse has been as great as the Press would have the public believe, but I know there is room for investigation to see how far this abuse has been carried. We are told—I think it appeared originally in some humorous journal, but was subsequently taken up and published in serious vein—that there is in Italy the whole suburb of a town populated by Italians who in this country chopped off their toes, collected the compensation money and went back to Italy happily to settle down for life. It is said that in every bush in the South-West there is to be found a dago's toe. The other day I read in the Press an anonymous letter, the writer of which said he knew of a case in which a man lost his toes, and that the foot from which the toes were severed was quite clean, whereas the other was in a very unsatisfactory condition. I want the Premier clearly to understand that if it can be shown these abuses have been carried to anything like the extent that is reported, we on this side will help him to tighten up the Act. We are not here to support that kind of inposition, for it is that sort of thing which jeopardises the genuine worker and makes it hard for him to justify his case. He should not be penalised because of the abuse that has taken place. We here are ready to give to the Government an undertaking that if they will bring down any fair and equitable proposal to tighten up the law and guard against abuses, our help will be readily rendered; for it will safeguard the operations of the Workers' Compensation Act, whereas abuses such as I have touched upon will endanger those operations and the very Act itself. But first we want the knowledge, the information necessary to a clear understanding of the position. We are not prepared to commit ourselves on partisan state-

ments or on information proffered by interested parties and blindly accepted. We want the facts, and we think Parliament should have them. The question is of great importance. Indeed, if we are to be guided by the prominence the Press have given to it, apparently the whole of industry in this State is dependent upon it. According to the Press, it is of so much importance that unless something be done industry will be wiped out. If that statement is right, if that propaganda is unassailable, it is not asking too much when we demand a full and thorough investigation before Parliament is called upon to deal with the problem. Again, it has been contended that the total amount payable at death is altogether too great and the responsibility too heavy. As I have said, the amount we provided was the result of a compromise arrived at at the conference with another place. It will be accepted in most cases that the economic disability of a home whose breadwinner is incapacitated will probably be greater than if the family had lost the breadwinner altogether, though not in all cases. In the case of a large family where a widow is left absolutely unprovided for—the breadwinner having been taken away—the widow has to educate and care for all her young ones, and with the mere £600 that is provided no one will envy the task that is set her. Compare the position with the ideas of the chairman of the Californian Industrial Board, which I have just read, and where he pictures a child being educated and trained and cared for by the State taking the place of the father. Instead of payment being stopped for that child on reaching the wage-earning stage, it should be extended. We are told to-day that we are carrying too great a burden. The executive of the Primary Producers' Association carried frantic resolutions urging that immediate action be taken, that Parliament should immediately deal with the matter. Did they ever think of the conditions of the widows and the orphaned children? Did they ever think of the enormous responsibilities of the mothers towards those children? No: they preferred to urge that Parliament should meet so as to whittle away the benefits that the law at the moment happens to allow. Instead of our considering the question of depriving families of the allowances that the Act provides, it would be more fitting if we were asked to consider the question of granting definite pensions

for each of the children until they reached the wage-earning stage. But no such suggestion comes from those who have prompted the introduction of the Bill that is now being submitted by the Government. They merely say, "Reduce the payment and make the position of these homes harder, throw more responsibility on the widows, and give the unfortunate children less protection than they have at the present time." The other phase of workers' compensation that has received most attention has been the amount of money set aside for medical and hospital benefits. Prior to the passing of the existing law, all that the old Act provided was the payment of a pound note, no matter how serious the accident, no matter how serious the injury to any person, and no matter how complicated a necessary operation might be, or even how long hospital or medical care was needed. All that an individual could get was the sum of £1. I know a number of instances where operations, the results of accidents, have run into 60 and even 80 guineas, and without taking into consideration the cost of the added medical attention. Yet a whole £1 note was all that the old Act provided. It was a big change to get that altered to £100; it was a substantial increase. But my idea is that it is illogical to fix any limit at all; there should be no definite limit to which we should go to give relief to a man or woman who have been practically maimed in an industry, in order that they may be made fit again. I shall give one or two instances that have come under my personal notice where the existing provision in the Act has meant definitely the saving of life. Surely it is not too much to ask that a sufficient sum of money should be made available so that human life might be saved. There are many cases where, but for the provision of the £100 in the existing Act, men would to-day be maimed or crippled and a charge on the State for the rest of their days. I can cite a case that happened in the North-West of our own State, the case of a lad who, while working on one of the big stations during the heat of the day, asked a boundary rider to give him a drink of water. The water bag was tied to the horse's saddle and when the lad approached the horse, the animal reared, knocked the lad over, kicked him and fractured his skull, rendering him unconscious. The lad was rushed to the nearest

doctor, who advised that the only hope of saving his life was to get him to the city as quickly as possible. The doctor admitted that he was not competent to perform the delicate operation that was necessary, that he did not have the required instruments and that the only possible chance of saving the lad's life was to rush him to Perth. This was done by means of an aeroplane and within 48 hours the boy was operated on and to-day he is back at his job. There is a case where, but for the existing provision in the Act, the lad would have received a single £1 note. He was without means and so were his people, and but for the law as we have it to-day, the boy would have had to remain in the North-West to die, and his family would have been deprived of the help he is giving them to-day. It so happens that he is now the breadwinner of the family. Our friends the Primary Producers' organisation give no thought to anything of that kind; they clamour for an amendment of the Act, and declare that the provisions of it are injurious and a burden on industry.

The Premier: What about that case at Fremantle you know of?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Yes, that was a phenomenal case. A heavy weight fell on a lumper's neck and broke it. The doctor who attended him declared that he could never work again. The man had a family that was growing up, and after the accident I negotiated a settlement with the Premier, who was good enough to make available a lump sum, which was invested for the benefit of the family. It proved, however, that the doctors were not right in their assumption that the man would never recover sufficiently to be able to work again, because that man is at work at the wharves again to-day, even though his neck was broken. The doctors say, however, that at any moment, in the event of a shock such as an individual coming along and slapping him on the back, causing him to turn round very suddenly, he may drop dead. So he has to be very careful.

Mr. H. W. Mann: A leading horseman in Australia broke his neck some time back and now he is riding again. He looks around while he is riding.

Hon. S. W. Munzie: Not too often. If he did so, he would not be as successful as he is.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: We see that there are instances where even medical men are

deceived. In the case of the Fremantle lumber, I took the X-ray plate to the Premier and showed him clearly that the neck was broken. Anyway, the injury healed in that form. Naturally, the man cannot do heavy work. What I wish to stress is that if the existing provision for making £100 available for medical fees were not on the statute-book, scores of people who to-day are back at their occupations and earning money, would be a charge on the State. I could quote a score of other cases. Recently I was in the electorate of the member for Nelson, and while addressing a roadside meeting I was describing the condition of some of the men who had met with accidents and had been unable to go back to their usual occupations. This was because they did not have the means to pay for operations that might have rendered them fit again. Many had told me that the doctors had said they could be made fit again, but that it would be necessary for operations to be performed. Unfortunately, in most instances lack of means prevented the required medical services being secured, and so those unfortunate people were left maimed or crippled. While I was explaining this, a voice came from the crowd and said, "I am one of them." Then a little old man, with legs bent and crooked, explained that while he was at work in the South-West a big tree fell on him and the doctor told him that he could be made fit again but only by means of an operation. He did not have the money to pay for that operation and so he was never able again to follow the occupation at which he had earned a living. I could quote many other similar cases. I know of men on the wharf who are back at work because they have been able to avail themselves of the advantages of science and the best medical attention. This was rendered possible for them because the Act provided the £100 to enable them to get this benefit. One evening on alighting at the Perth station from a South-West train I saw a stretcher lifted from the guard's van and the man on it called to me. Both his legs had been crushed. He had received attention locally, and had been advised by the doctors that there was no hope of doing anything for him except by amputating both legs. He was brought to Perth to receive the advice of specialists, and a day or two later I was informed that both legs could be saved and the man made fit and well again. The £100 was provided to meet

the expenses, and that man was able to return to work. But for that provision, the man would have been minus both legs and a charge on the State. We have to consider not merely the loss to the individual, but the economic loss to the country. In the Press propaganda it has been stated that the men are not getting the £100, but that the doctors are getting it. There was never any intention that the men should get it. The money was provided to pay for skilled treatment. Scores of men have been made fit after accidents and enabled to return to their work as a result of the provision of the £100, whereas but for it, they would have become a charge on the State. I have no doubt the Bill is designed to whittle away the £100. It is a point upon which opponents of the Act have been very insistent.

Mr. Kennedy: The Minister's instructions are quite definite there.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Because the worker has not received the £100, opponents of the Act advance it as a reason why that sum should not be provided. In some parts of the world legislation of this kind imposes no limit on the amount for medical expenses. Suppose a man met with an accident and the cost of restoring him to health was another £10, £50, or even £100, is it logical that he should be denied treatment after the first £100 was exhausted? It is only logical to provide that the amount should be unlimited, in order that the man might be restored to health and enabled to resume his occupation. I am aware that the Premier holds certain views on this matter.

The Premier: I supported your Bill.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I believe the Premier did. When we raised the amount for medical attention from £1 to £100, it was an innovation in this country. I want a proper investigation to ascertain what has happened. I wish to ensure that the worker gets the full benefit of the money expended out of the £100. My idea is that there should be some control over the expenditure. Had it been suggested when the Bill was brought down that control should be exercised over the medical profession, I should have been accused of entertaining an unwarranted distrust of the medical men. I should have been told that they were a highly honourable body of men who should be trusted to do the fair thing. Those who criticise the Act are really criticising the doctors. I believe we could count upon the fingers of both hands the doctors who have taken advantage

of the Act. Some certainly have done so, but they are few and they are pretty well known. We approached the British Medical Association, who expressed willingness to co-operate with us. We established a committee consisting of representatives of the British Medical Association and of the insurance companies to review medical charges whenever they seemed to be unreasonable or extortionate. Often the amounts were reduced. I believe that is still being done. I do not think the British Medical Association would be parties to the charging of extortionate fees. I want the matter investigated to determine whether some scheme cannot be evolved. Investigation might show my ideas to be unworkable, but I want them discussed with the men immediately interested. I should like to know whether a medical board could be established in the city, where the bulk of the accidents occur, to decide what treatment was necessary in major cases. The board would prescribe the treatment to be given to an injured workman and determine what charges were reasonable. That was one idea. The scheme could be extended to important towns in the country such as Geraldton, Northam, Kalgoorlie, Bunbury and a town on the Great Southern, where a leading medical man could supervise all the major cases in his district. Instead of a case being left to the decision of one doctor, there would be a consultation of at least two responsible medical men. We could say to them, "There is £100 for expenses; see that the treatment given to the injured man is the best." Perhaps an X-ray taken in the country would be sent to Perth and the board could direct what was to be done in the country. Perhaps certain cases in the country would have to be sent to Perth for special treatment. Not every country doctor could take charge of all classes of accidents.

The Minister for Works: How do you know we are not doing that?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I do not know what the Minister is doing, but I have already told him that I do not trust him.

Mr. Parker: Then what are you talking about?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: A subject to which I have given considerable attention and about which I know as much as most men.

The Minister for Works: You do not know much about the Bill.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: And I do not wish to know much about it. I am satisfied that

the measure cannot be of any advantage to the workers: otherwise the Minister would not be fathering it. He has been instructed what to do, and he dare not introduce a Bill that would improve the position of the workers. Maybe I shall be in agreement with him on a clause or two, but I am convinced that the defeat of the Bill would be for the benefit of the workers. Of that I am positive without having seen the Bill. That is an added reason for my suggesting that a full and impartial inquiry should be held before the Bill is introduced. It is not a matter of making available £50 or £100; it is a matter of enabling an injured worker to get the best from what is provided for him.

The Minister for Works: We might agree to accept an amendment if what you desire is not provided in the Bill.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: If the Minister accepted the amendments I would suggest, he would get into hot water elsewhere. People outside would be having a word in his ear if he did anything likely to clash with the propaganda from the public platform, at private meetings and through the Press during recent months.

Hon. P. Collier: And over the wireless.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Yes, and even over the wireless.

Mr. Marshall: Who pays for all this propaganda.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I am not running any risk in declaring that the Bill can be capable of no good to the workers. We have to consider not only the injured worker, but the State. I know at least 100 men who are unable to earn a living because of injuries sustained in accidents and because of their inability to pay for proper surgical attention, and they are now a charge on the State.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Before tea I was saying I had in mind some sort of control over the expenditure of medical allowances. I had no definite convictions, but I was satisfied that some improvement could be made to the present arrangement. The whole thing was so experimental when we started that something on the lines I have indicated should not only make for efficiency but should establish greater confidence, and I believe would lead to a considerable saving

of money. I do not commit myself to the idea, because I want to ascertain the views of people who would be called upon to operate such a scheme. I refer to medical men in particular, and should like to know what they think of it. Many men in the country meet with accidents. Splints, and certain kinds of splints, are big items of expenditure, and are difficult to get in the country. The provision of crutches for cripples also means big money. With properly organised control it appears to me that a central depot where these things could be provided and sent out to the country districts would be a great advantage to all concerned, and save considerable costs. That is a vague outline of the way my mind was running. Had we remained in office my idea was to have this matter thoroughly investigated by those who would be in the best position to make a pronouncement upon it. When the Bill was introduced, we provided that the amount the worker drew in weekly payments, representing half wages, while he was laid aside, up to the time when he could go back to work, should not be set off against the lump sum that he would receive after his loss of efficiency had been assessed. In the compromise we had to make with the Legislative Council we agreed that the weekly payments should be deducted. The case we put up was that there were two distinct losses. When a man meets with an accident and has his arm taken off, he first of all suffers from shock. He suffers from the effect the accident has upon his system, through loss of blood, loss of nerve, and loss of vitality. While such a man is recuperating, and is still sick, it is considered that the loss of his arm is actually of no consequence. He has, however, suffered as a result of the accident. When he is well enough to look for work, he suffers another kind of loss. He has to face the world minus an arm, or it may be the loss of a leg. There are, therefore, two distinct losses. We provided that while a man was sick and recuperating, and was still in the convalescent stage, he should draw half wages until he was fit for work, and that this should not be made a set-off against any lump-sum settlement; that, in fact, the half pay he received should be quite distinct from the lump-sum payment that might subsequently be made. There have been numerous cases in which the money the worker has drawn in half-

pay during the healing period has been equal to and in some cases has exceeded the amount he has been entitled to draw by way of a lump sum. Say a man was entitled to £100. If in the course of drawing his half-pay he had already drawn £100, he would get nothing, and would face the world without any compensation. There are many parts of the world where that position has been met by providing quite a separate compensation during the healing period, and in other cases there has been a limit placed upon the time allotted for healing; it may be three or six months as a maximum. In some countries, a maximum amount of money is set aside. The systems differ in different parts of the world. I believe that Parliament had in mind that there should be a distinction between the two periods, the healing period, and the time when the amount of compensation due was assessed, so that, if a man is injured and has to carry the effects of that injury for the rest of his days, he should not be called upon to face the future without something at the back of him. An investigation would show how far things have gone in this direction, and would undoubtedly show that occasionally a man draws very little; if anything, owing to his having drawn so much during the period of convalescence. The more severely a man is hurt or injured in health, and the longer he suffers through an extended healing period, the less compensation he receives. He may cut out the whole of the lump sum that would be coming to him, because it has taken him so long to recover his health that the amount of the lump sum is exceeded. There is another way in which an improvement could be effected instead of its being suggested that the burden should be lifted from industry. The question of granting a lump sum by way of compensation has been subjected to a very close and critical examination. It is still a highly controversial subject in several different Parliaments as to whether the lump sum should be granted unconditionally to the worker or not. In the old days, the sole right to apply for a lump sum depended on the employer; the worker had no right to apply for it. Under the existing law, both the worker and the employer have the right to apply. Many reports were made to the department whilst I was there. I know of one or two in-

stances in my own experience where the payment of a lump sum unconditionally has not been altogether advantageous. If a man continues to draw his compensation in sums representing half a week's pay and exceeds the full allowance, he will be no better off at the end of the period. He would simply have cut out the money in living, and then find himself stranded. If he could get a lump sum, he might be able to set himself up in business, and in that way provide for himself and his family. It has occurred that men without business experience have been imposed upon. They have engaged in business without having any training for it, and have lost their cash. In a little while they have found themselves devoid of any means. I had in mind that we could probably find a way out of this difficulty by utilising the scheme that was in force in the Repatriation Department when I was an honorary member of the Repatriation Board. I refer to the early stages of the war when the soldiers were being repatriated. Some of these were set up in business because they could not return to their old occupations. That money was controlled by trustees. If a man was set up in business, the trustees would be selected for their knowledge of that business. They would exercise general supervision over it, lend a helping hand, and afford the necessary advice. Before the business was purchased, it would be thoroughly examined by a qualified accountant and business man, and reported upon. The worker would thus be assured that if a purchase was made he would be buying something that was sound, and that he would not be imposed upon. During the course of his conduct of the business, he would have the assistance and guidance of men who had been trained, and his risk of loss would be considerably minimised. It is possible that such a scheme as this might be followed. It may be resented in some quarters, and it may be contended that it amounts to interference, but I think the idea is worthy of investigation so that we might ascertain whether something could be done along those lines. I wish to refer to the question of industrial diseases. When these were included for compensation purposes it was the first time in the history of the State that such a thing was done. Prior to that occasion, no matter how hard a man tried to guard against contracting those diseases, no compensation was paid to him when he

did so. The Act gave compensation to a man who may have met with an accident, perhaps through his own negligence or through his failing to exercise sufficient care, but no matter how careful another man might be, if he contracted some industrial disease, no compensation was available for him. We know the human wreckage that has been caused through working in our gold mining industry. We know the huge expense to which the State has been put in building an enormous sanatorium at Wooroloo. Thousands of strapping young Australians have seen an early grave as a result of contracting disease in the course of their occupations. They knew that every time they entered the mines and with every shift they started on, they were running the risk of contracting miners' complaint. We know of men who have worked in the mining industry who have become members of this Chamber, and have subsequently died as a result of the disease they had contracted in the mines. There was nothing those men had to look forward to—other than the fund they subscribed to themselves—but the sanatorium. The Miners' Phthisis Act has done a phenomenal amount of good in the way of providing for these unfortunate men. It is now urged that this is too heavy a burden for the industry to carry. Whilst we were in office we had to assist the fund to which I have referred by means of a grant that was made for assistance to the mining industry. We had in fact to pay premiums out of that money. This House well remembers the controversy between the Labour Government and the insurance companies on the subject of the risk under that schedule of the Act. Hon. members will also recollect the figures published by the insurance companies at that time. The companies told the country and told this House that the acceptance of the risk would mean a loss to them in the first year of half a million sterling. That was on the basis of the £4 10s. per cent. premium recommended by the committee. It is well known that the companies refused to give cover, and that therefore the State had to take up the business of insurance. Instead of showing a loss of half a million on the year, that business, at the time we left office, had produced a profit of about £30,000.

The Premier: But there is also the matter of miners' phthisis.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I am speaking of the risk under the Workers' Compensation



Act. The insurance companies talked about the enormous liability involved, and declined to undertake it; but after the State had handled the business, there was a profit of £30,000. In my opinion the premiums charged for workers' compensation insurance are altogether exorbitant. There should be no profit whatever out of that insurance. The State Insurance Office has had to face the difficult position of accepting all the bad risks refused by the companies. The rates quoted by the companies for that bad business forced the whole of it into the State Insurance Office, which therefore has had no chance at all. All insurance of this kind should be controlled by an organisation; and if there is any profit from the charges made, that profit should be returned to industry. At the present moment the industries of this State have to find the overhead charges of no less than 60 insurance companies. Those companies pay their agents 10 per cent. to get in business which under the Act represents compulsory insurance. That is another charge on industry. No fewer than four Australian States have State insurance offices, and when one compares the figures of those offices with the figures of the insurance companies one sees how the private concerns are imposing on industry. If it is true that the Workers' Compensation Act imposes a burden on industry, then I say there is great scope for cutting out that burden. The overhead charges of the Queensland State Insurance Office amount to 15 per cent.; in New South Wales the rate is 13 per cent.; in Victoria 9 per cent.; and in Western Australia 4½ per cent. Our office is the cheapest of all in point of running costs. From 1926, when the existing Act came into operation, up to 1930 Western Australian underwriters received £1,070,000 in workers' compensation premiums, and their overhead charges totalled £33,000, equivalent to approximately 31 per cent. That is 31 per cent. as against 4½ per cent. for our State Insurance Office, 9 per cent. in Victoria, 13 per cent. in New South Wales, and 15 per cent. in Queensland.

The Premier: You said £33,000 out of £1,070,000.

Hon. A. McALLUM: I am talking of the amount of compensation. The overhead charges reached 31 per cent.

The Minister for Works: How about letting me explain that point in moving the second reading of the Bill?

The Premier: There is only 3½ per cent. overhead.

Hon. A. McALLUM: I am talking of the revenue the insurance companies received in this respect, not counting in their general business.

The Premier: Did they receive a million from workers' compensation?

Hon. A. McALLUM: Yes.

The Premier: From revenue?

Hon. A. McALLUM: Yes.

The Premier: That is 3 per cent.

Hon. A. McALLUM: Workers' compensation is not the only business the insurance companies have done. I do not think there is any insurance company doing workers' compensation business alone.

The Premier: Did they collect a million pounds in this State alone?

Hon. A. McALLUM: Yes.

The Premier: That would throw many people out of work. Do you mean a million in a year?

Hon. A. McALLUM: No. I did not say in a year. I said from 1926 to 1930.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: That is five years.

Hon. A. McALLUM: Those are the people who criticise the charges under the Act, and particularly the doctors' charges.

The Premier: I have heard that too.

Hon. A. McALLUM: I cannot stand up to the lot, but, making a comparison, we find that including doctors, chemists, hospitals, masseurs, ambulance and supply of splints, about 25 per cent. covers those charges.

The Minister for Works: You are wrong again. They amount to 29 per cent.

Hon. A. McALLUM: I do not think I am wrong.

The Minister for Works: Let me give the figures on second reading.

Hon. A. McALLUM: No. I prefer to tell my own tale in my own way.

The Minister for Works: It is not your tale.

Hon. A. McALLUM: There is 25 per cent. for the whole of those charges, as against 31 per cent. for insurance.

The Minister for Works: The figures are 29 and 37.

Hon. A. McALLUM: There is about the same difference.

The Minister for Works: No. There is a difference of 6 per cent. as against 7 per cent. When I move the second reading of the Bill, I shall give the figures for each year.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The Minister knows how to give his figures in his own way. However, there is sufficient discrepancy between the figures to show that if the insurance companies, 60 of them, are imposing their overhead charges on the industries of the State, an enormous saving must be possible.

The Minister for Works: There is 66 per cent. in the two items which you are trying to convey to the House.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: All right. If insurance and medical expenses absorb 66 per cent., there is considerable room for investigation.

The Minister for Works: We recognise that by introducing the Bill.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I do not think that is the Government's only reason for introducing the Bill.

The Attorney General: Why not wait and see the Bill?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I am not content to wait. I know what is in the minds of hon. members opposite. I know their public utterances. I know what they have said inside the House as well as outside the House. We on this side know what they have been thinking and talking about. Why ask us to wait until we see the Bill if the measure is to contain what Ministers have been telling the House and the country?

The Minister for Works: Give us a chance to tell you what is in the Bill.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I suppose I shall hear that before long.

The Attorney General: Are you going to vote against the second reading of the Bill?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I shall move an amendment to the motion for leave to introduce the Bill.

The Attorney General: Are you going to vote against the second reading?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I am going to vote against the introduction of the measure. I am on my feet now for the purpose of moving an amendment the carrying of which will prevent the Government from bringing in the Bill at all.

The Minister for Works: And you do not know what is in the Bill!

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I do not trust the Minister and his Bill.

The Minister for Works: There will be something very wrong with me when you trust me!

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Yes. My views and those of the hon. gentleman are utterly opposed. He takes his instructions from interests with which there is no likelihood of my agreeing.

The Attorney General: Are you prepared to say that you will vote against the second reading of the Bill?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I am going to try to stop the Bill from being brought in at all. Surely that is substantial enough.

The Attorney General: Will you promise to vote against the second reading?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: If I had my way I would not let the present Ministers handle workers' compensation at all.

The Minister for Works: You would not allow us to handle anything; but the public decide that matter, not you.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Ministers promised to provide work for all.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: If the Government confined themselves to the mandate they got from the people, they would not now be dealing with workers' compensation. My idea of investigating the subject would be to inquire into what has happened in other countries as well as what has happened in various Australian States. There has been a medical man overseas making various inquiries. I want to know what that gentleman's report is.

The Attorney General: You shall have it. It is in the Bill.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Will the Attorney General give an assurance that all the recommendations of the medical man are in the Bill?

The Attorney General: No, because—

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I think the House is entitled to have the full report.

The Attorney General: You shall have it.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: We are entitled to have not only that full report, but full information from countries that he was unable to visit.

The Attorney General: Would you accept all his recommendations?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I do not know.

The Attorney General: Of course you would not.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I want to have a look at them first.

The Minister for Works: In the Bill there is a lot he did not recommend.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I want to know what he is recommending.

The Minister for Works: You shall hear that on the second reading.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I do not know whether I shall or not. I want the Minister now to hear what I think. I suggest that he should have a look at the operation of workers' compensation in Belgium, which country, according to departmental advice, has probably the best organisation of all countries for dealing with the matter. That is, so far as we could learn at that time.

The Minister for Works: You are giving the Government valuable assistance.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I have not had an opportunity of looking at the reports since I left the department, but I understand that in Belgium the whole control of workers' compensation insurance, including medical attention, vocational training, the finding of employment, and so on, is under one man. One office employs the medical men, controls the medical services rendered throughout the country and governs the cost of workers' compensation operations. The scheme is managed by commissioners who control the medical men. They have their own hospitals and control a system of vocational training for men who are injured to an extent that does not permit them to again follow their old callings. When such men are trained in some new occupation, they are provided with employment through a special labour bureau set up for that purpose. Another organisation attends to the affairs of homes where the breadwinners have paid the extreme penalty. The commissioners also assess the compensation rates. The whole of the management is vested in one central authority, controlled altogether apart from private interests. Thus, there is no inducement to seek profits or to create impositions. Under this disinterested control, the commissioners are able to see that efficiency of service is rendered. I believe a system somewhat along these lines is in operation in Vienna too, but I do not think it is so thorough there as we were told is the organisation in Belgium. If investigations here show, as I have no doubt they will, that the great imposition is that of insurance and that the great risk is in respect of the work that should be done, the expenditure involved in connection with medical attention, the question of management, of vocational training, and the provision of employment, even so,

I believe that we could set up a central controlling body that would provide proper government of the scheme and adequate supervision. It is a very fine idea, and it would be splendid if we could set up such a scheme here. I appreciate the fact that our State comprises a much larger area than that of some of the small European States that I have referred to. It is a matter for consideration and investigation to determine whether such a system as that in vogue in Belgium or elsewhere would be suitable for Western Australia. At any rate, there is room for considerable improvement in connection with the existing system. The Council of the British Medical Association have written to the Minister setting out their views, and they were good enough to send me a copy of that letter. The communication indicates clearly how essential it is that there shall be some sort of investigation or inquiry, without which it is unfair to ask Parliament to deal with such an important matter. I propose to read the association's letter to indicate their views. The letter is headed: "Workers' Compensation Act. General Medical Viewpoint. Issued under authority of the B.M.A. Council of Western Australia." The letter reads—

Workers' Compensation Acts function in all civilised countries to return the injured worker to duty as quickly and as fit as possible. Nowhere is the worker asked to contribute; the financial burden of such accidents is accepted as a normal liability of the industry concerned.

Considerations of cost, including medical, must vision the future as well as the present. Excessive economy results frequently in only partial recovery. To the community, the ultimate burden of such unfit workers is far greater than the present savings. To the worker, such policy does not accord fair play; as an industrial victim he is entitled to at least as thorough repair as the machinery he uses. Efficient medical aid is the right of the injured worker, and lessens compensation liability.

The medical profession has now almost unanimously accepted as a principle, that fees charged under the Act are based on what would be the reasonable fee to charge such an industrial patient when not entitled to compensation.

The B.M.A. Council, representing over 80 per cent. of the 300 odd medical men in this State, is willing and anxious to co-operate in all possible ways, in order to make a successful scheme, giving adequate treatment to the worker.

But the repair of industrial machinery is a charge on the industry concerned; it is not a charity expected of any section of the community. Therefore the B.M.A. trusts that Parliament will not attempt to make the re-

pair of human industrial machinery entirely a charge on the charity of the medical community, as it was in the much quoted 1912 Act.

*Consideration of Present Act with Constructive Criticism.*

The 1912-1924 Workers' Compensation Act brought compensation in this State up to date; but like all advances in legislation, it has revealed certain weaknesses in operation. To those weaknesses that concern medical matters, we beg to direct attention and suggest improvement.

1. Central supervision is lacking. Instead there is a multiplicity of officers and methods. If all Workers' Compensation Act matters were dealt with by a central office handling nothing else, increased efficiency, closer supervision, and decreased costs would quickly follow. This office might be formed by a voluntary grouping of present insurance companies, or as a State office free of political control, or by a constituted controlling board, headed by a commissioner. The unnecessary administration costs of 60 odd insurance companies with staff salaries, office rents, etc., would vanish. Workers' compensation insurance is so essential a public commodity that the guiding principle should be just administration to all, and not primarily the making of profits.

2. Agents' commissions: As workers' compensation insurance is compulsory and universal, the present scale of commissions (10 per cent.) seems extravagant. Are agents really necessary?

3. A comparison of overhead insurance and medical costs: As insurance companies have often publicly alleged excessive medical charges, a comparison of actual medical and insurance costs is illuminating.

The Queensland State office is reputed for extravagant staffing; its overhead cost is 15 per cent. New South Wales State office 13 per cent. Victorian figures are 9 per cent. Our State office shows  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., and making due allowance for help from other departments, is less than 10 per cent.

Western Australian underwriters from 1926-1930 received £1,070,000 Workers' Compensation Act revenue; their overhead charges reached the huge total of £330,000, about 31 per cent. working cost.

The Attorney General: I hope you will take my word for it that the Bill will not be altered between now and to-morrow night.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I do not know that I can. At any rate, the British Medical Association in their communication also say--

By comparison the total payments under the Act for doctors, hospitals, chemists, massage, ambulance, and splint makers, etc., approximates 25 per cent. Roughly insurance costs absorb one-third, medical costs absorb one-quarter.

The public, or its representatives in Parliament, can well be left to judge for which

expense the community receives most service, and where the pruning knife is most urgently required.

Schedule 2 in its present form offers an inducement to certain workers to profit unfairly by its liberal and cast-iron provisions. Probably the best amendment would modify payment on the basis of anatomical loss, and assess compensation at least to some degree on the actual loss of earning power.

*Permanent Medical Board.*

A specially qualified medical board should be appointed with authority to advise the Central Office on purely medical matters referred to it by the Manager or Commissioner. It may be of three men, or one with power to co-opt the doctor most suited to the case.

*Suggested Duties of Medical Board.*

1. Assessment of permanent incapacity, including present Schedule 2. In such the Medical Board's decision should be final. Both employer and employee would receive justice. Much costly litigation would be saved. Judges and magistrates would not, as at present, be asked to arbitrate on highly technical matters of which they have no special knowledge.

2. Expert advice on alleged medical abuse, e.g., charges, treatment, etc.: The B.M.A. has realised with regret that a few medical men (actually a very small percentage) have not made fair charges under the Act. To meet the position the B.M.A. suggested a committee in 1926. In 1927 this committee was formed, consisting of three doctors and three insurance managers. To this committee any doubtful account can be referred by any company. The committee has not hesitated to reduce accounts where it thought this necessary, and has been prepared to back its opinions in court if called on by the company concerned. It has done most useful work. Its decisions, adverse or otherwise, are accepted by the branch members. But both the B.M.A. and this committee are voluntary organisations and can only enforce a moral discipline on its own members and none at all on non-members: they have no legal status. But a medical board would have statutory backing to enforce its opinion.

3. To review cases where present accident has aggravated pre-existing disease or where accident is complicated by existing disease. Such cases offer very difficult medical and legal problems. If the medical problem were first cleared up the legal side would be simplified.

4. To review all cases of suspected malingering, of persistent neurasthenia, persistent back injuries, and such like.

5. All other purely medical matters on which the head office desires advice.

*Hospital Charges.*

(a) City: A fully equipped intermediate hospital would be a boon, possibly some body may commence it if guaranteed support. In its absence an arrangement such as exists in Melbourne might be instituted, each private

hospital setting aside one to three beds for such intermediate cases.

(b) Country: Fund patients in country Government hospitals pay 6s. per day. Ordinary patients are charged 7s. 6d. per day. The same patient if entered as a Workers' Compensation Act case is charged 10s. 6d. per day. This calls for adjustment when costs are being overhauled.

The Minister for Works: Every member of Parliament will have a copy of this on Monday.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I am giving it to them now. The communication proceeds—

#### *Excess Expense in Special Cases.*

Whatever the prescribed limit, certain badly injured patients needing prolonged hospital attention will exceed the amount. They may be few, but for such unfortunates a wise and kindly provision would give the central office authority, after due investigation, to exceed the limit.

#### *Standards for Loss of Special Senses.*

These are not laid down at present. A definition establishing clear working standards for loss of sight and hearing, would enable doctors to give more accurate and helpful assessments, and would lessen the chance of contentious litigation. Where eye injuries are liable, a sight testing examination of every employee would be most helpful.

#### *Return to work "partially fit."*

The present Act makes little allowance for "partially fit" men. A worker does not change overnight from "wholly unfit" to "completely fit." The period may occupy some time. After a long illness it is cruel to expect hard physical labour from anyone whose muscles are temporarily weakened by disease. Therefore at present the Act is generally to give the man the benefit of the doubt, and increased costs follow to the insurer.

Can provision be made for this difficult period of partial incapacity, perhaps by part-time working, or light duty at lower wages? If so, costs would drop. Both parties would receive a fairer deal, and the worker would be protected from the moral depression which often goes with idleness.

#### *Massage in the country*

Massage in certain injuries makes recovery quicker and more complete. Generally, trained masseurs are available only in the metropolis; this is unlikely to alter. Chosen nurses could be given an intensive partial course of training for a few months in Perth, and then stationed at the larger country Government hospitals. They could do most of the massage, and so save much permanent incapacity, travelling, and absence of worker from his own home. This method has for years been a conspicuous success in one country centre. The nurse would receive increased salary, and carry on with her usual work when not engaged on massage.

#### *Splint equivalent.*

Modern treatment of fractures demands accurately constructed iron and other splints. At present when needed singly and quickly, they are expensive and difficult to obtain. A central depot, containing full stocks of varying sizes of standard splints, could be cheaply equipped. Such a depot would supply the city requirements immediately, and on request could put splints, etc., on the first outgoing train to any country centre. In this way 95 per cent. of all accidents in the State should have first-class apparatus within 30 hours of it being called for. Alternately smaller country depots could be established.

#### *Lump sum payments.*

Most doctors have seen lump sum payments miss the protective purpose for which they were granted. The money may be quickly wasted, with poverty following. While not presuming to advise, we would suggest that it may be possible to protect the worker against the unusual riches burning a hole in his pocket.

#### *Accidents claimed to be compensation cases.*

In all accidents the doctor renders aid called on, in the cause of humanity, not knowing if he will be paid. Many such cases claim to be compensation liability. The doctor with his knowledge of the facts, may decide they are not. Thus he often makes his patient hostile and receives no thanks or other acknowledgement either from the man or the insurance company he has saved. A payment of a first fee in such cases where Head Office considers it justified would remove this minor medical grievance.

#### *Organisation of medical aid.*

Injury means medical treatment. The organisation of medical aid is therefore of primary importance, first to the worker who wants to regain ability to work, secondly to the employer or insurer who wants to decrease his liabilities, and thirdly for society in general to lighten the burden implied by invalids.

But until the machinery clauses of the amended Act are known, it is impossible to consider medical organisation. The B.M.A., however, assures the Minister of its keen desire to co-operate in a friendly constructive manner, and will be pleased to discuss matters with him at any time he desires.

H. J. GRAY,  
President.

LESLIE E. Le SOUEF,  
Hon. Secretary.

The Minister for Works: That means me, does it?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I think so. Have you any doubt about it?

The Minister for Works: I just wanted to know.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I understand this was addressed to you.

The Minister for Works: It came to me through a deputation. As I have already intimated, every member of Parliament will be supplied with a copy of it.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I think this document I have read must go to substantiate the case I have made out. It certainly emphasises that investigation is needed if we are to get an efficient measure. The doctors point to the difficulty, and say they are seeking information and remedy. They declare that it needs discussion and investigation, that they cannot offer definite opinions until they have exchanged ideas with other people. In their judgment further investigation is essential. So I move an amendment to the motion, as follows:—

That all words after "That" be struck out with a view to inserting the following:—"the Government appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into and report upon the operations of the Workers' Compensation Act, 1912-24, and from evidence obtainable within the State of the provisions and operations of similar Acts in other States and countries, and to advise upon amendments to the existing law, such Commission to consist of representatives of the employers' and employees' unions, with a medical man as chairman."

That is a very fair proposition. We ask for a wide inquiry, not only into the operations of our own Act, but also into the operations of similar Acts in other States and countries. We do not propose to send the Commission travelling world-wide, for there is abundant information contained in the libraries within the State from which to judge the operations and provisions of similar Acts in other parts of the world and to make recommendations to this Parliament as to amendments to our existing law. We propose that the Commission should consist of representatives of the employers' and employees' unions, those most immediately concerned, and that the chairman be a medical man with a great deal of experience of the working of this Act. The case is very strongly in favour of such an investigation. It has this much behind it, too, that there is no gainsaying the fact that when the Minister's Bill comes down, if the Minister gets his way and goes on with it as he suggests, we shall have the same experience as we had with all Government Bills last session;

that is to say, the Minister will sit back, and no matter what ideas are put forward from this side, they will not be met by argument or by the presentation of any case; no attempt will be made to controvert those ideas, but members on the other side will just sit silent and vote out whatever suggestion we put forward. In other words, the Government will treat it on strictly party lines, for evidently it has been decided in caucus meeting upstairs before the Bill comes down here, and all that members on the Government side will do will be simply to vote down whatever amendments are put forward from this side. That sort of thing cannot result in a workable measure. No other Act, except the Arbitration Act, serves to set up so much goodwill between the employer and the employee, or to engender smooth working on the job and create good feeling in industry; as I say, with the exception of the Arbitration Act, there is on the statute book no other Act so important to industry as the Workers' Compensation Act. If we could have in operation a Workers' Compensation Act fully approved by both sides of the House and based on a thorough examination, it would create a better spirit of good feeling and greater trust and confidence than could be expected of an Act framed by one side only and treated as a party measure, like all the rest of our recent legislation.

Hon. P. Collier: I take it that members participating in the debate will speak to the amendment, and will not discuss the motion.

Mr. SPEAKER: The amendment is now the sole subject matter of the debate.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. J. Lindsay (Mt. Marshall) [8.25]: The amendment is that a Royal Commission should be appointed. Unfortunately I have not a copy of the amendment. However, it does not matter, for I understand the gist of it. I am opposed to the amendment.

Mr. Kenneally: Why not wait until you see exactly what is in it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It provides that the Government shall appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the workings of the Act. In the first place I have yet to learn that in the history of the Parliament of Western Australia such an amendment has ever previously been moved.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: That is nothing extraordinary.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I suppose it is nothing against the amendment, but at least the member for South Fremantle was allowed to make his statement without interruption, so surely I, who propose to speak for not more than a few minutes, may be allowed to make my statement uninterrupted. I fail to see that any good can come from the amendment. The hon. member who moved it went clean round the compass of workers' compensation, yet he gave very few reasons why a Royal Commission should be appointed. I am not going to mention the Bill because, as every hon. member knows, the Bill is sealed until given to the House. It is already printed, and if I am allowed to introduce it, it will be distributed to members to-morrow. I am very pleased to think I have at least one convert. For the first time in my experience of Parliament, the member for South Fremantle and I are very close in our viewpoint. The hon. member remarked that when Minister for Works he was making inquiries into the working of the Workers' Compensation Act. I also have had inquiries made and it is principally as the result of those inquiries that the Bill is to be brought down. The hon. member mentioned that a well-known doctor had been asked to make inquiries. That doctor has rendered very valuable services. Moreover, we too have had an exhaustive investigation. It is seven months since we began to give special consideration to this Bill. A Cabinet Minister was assigned to the task, and we appointed an outside body to assist him. One of those gentlemen was Dr. Juett.

Hon. P. Collier: Who was the other?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Mr. Bennett, the State Statistician, was another. Then there was Mr. Reid, of the State Insurance Office, and the Assistant Under Secretary for Labour. The result of their investigation, plus discussions in Cabinet, has been the Bill I propose to introduce. I do not think any other Bill has ever been so thoroughly discussed by members of the Cabinet, and by a very able outside committee. I am sure that even Opposition members will agree that the Bill is in the interests, not only of the workers, but of industry in Western Australia. I, as the Minister responsible, should not be placed in the posi-

tion of having important legislation baulked. Our desire is to give Parliament an opportunity to discuss that legislation and decide whether it is right or wrong. I think the House would be making a great mistake if it agreed to the appointment of a Royal Commission. It would mean that months would elapse before this legislation could be introduced. The member for South Fremantle stated that the Act contained certain defects, and knowing of them, he appointed a gentleman to investigate. He knows that the Act contains a lot of defects, and I believe he would join with the Government in endeavouring to rectify them. I doubt whether any member of the Opposition would oppose the second reading of the Bill. If, after the passing of the second reading, members considered a Royal Commission necessary, that would be the time to move for it, not now. It is remarkable that the member for South Fremantle, before he has seen the Bill, should express opposition to it. Surely it is only fair that members should read and digest the Bill before embarking upon a discussion of this kind. I ask members to oppose the amendment for the appointment of a Royal Commission. If, after the second reading has been passed, a Royal Commission is requested, I shall consider the proposal.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [S.32]: I quite appreciate the unprecedented course adopted by the member for South Fremantle in asking at this stage for an inquiry into the matter, but it is necessary to realise that we are living in times of peculiar industrial conditions. This is not an opportune time to introduce legislation calculated to create disputes and disagreements amongst various classes of the community. The member for South Fremantle, I imagine, has correctly interpreted the contents of the Bill from the propaganda that has been carried on for a considerable time in favour of a drastic review of workers' compensation legislation.

Mr. Kenneally: And the statements made by members of the Government.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes, statements made over and over again by members of the Government and members of the House generally. It may be argued that we should wait until the Bill is introduced, and then decide whether an inquiry is warranted. but

that is exactly what we wish to avoid. When the Government introduce a Bill, it is very difficult to convince them that the measure is not all that it should be. Then there is the additional difficulty of getting supporters of the Government to approve of an inquiry into a Bill that has already been agreed to by the Government. The question of amending the Act has been canvassed to such an extent by interested parties that everyone knows it has been discussed at meetings of the Government party. Therefore we are justified in assuming that definite decisions have been reached and that those decisions will be reflected in the Bill. If that is so, we say that only one point of view has received consideration in the preparation of the Bill, and that the workers' point of view has not been obtained. The workers' point of view is not known to the Government. Further, as the member for South Fremantle pointed out, the views of another section of the community should be obtained. I refer to the medical profession, who have written to the Government and have forwarded a copy of the letter to the member for South Fremantle indicating their views. Those views relate to the existing Act, but we do not know their views on the amendments proposed by the Government.

The Premier: Apparently you do not want to know them.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: We do, but we want to get them direct from those people, and not through the Minister with the interpretation that he might place upon them. In other words, we want to know exactly what the medical profession think.

The Premier: Why did not you consult them when your own Bill was before the House?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Because that measure broke new ground: that Bill was submitted with all the evidence obtainable at the time. The Act has been in operation for several years, and the parties referred to have had experience of it. The workers, the employers, and the medical profession are the three interested parties from whom we should obtain the best possible information before attempting to amend the Act. It would be quite wrong for the Government to introduce contentious legislation of this kind without first obtaining and submitting in a clear non-party fashion an expression of opinion from the interests directly concerned. Then the Chamber could

consider the question of amending the Act. I believe the Act is capable of improvement, but I am not prepared to say that a measure so highly contentious and affecting the welfare of women and children so greatly should be introduced without a proper investigation first being made. If the Bill be introduced and fought on the usual party lines, we should do injustice to somebody, and we shall never make a satisfactory amendment to the Act. Only by obtaining the essential information to guide us shall we be able to amend the statute satisfactorily, and I know of no other way of doing that efficiently than in the way suggested, namely, by the appointment of a Royal Commission. Such a body would have full authority to obtain information from all the parties concerned, and, when the commission reported to Parliament, we should be able to approach the task of amending the Act in a truly non-party spirit, and with a thorough knowledge of the facts such as is necessary to enable us to do justice to all and injustice to nobody. At a time when so many workers are unemployed and suffering considerable distress, the best way to approach the subject is by the means suggested by the member for South Fremantle.

HON. S. W. MUNSIE (Hannans) [8.41]: I support the amendment, and my chief reason for doing so is to be found in a statement recently published by the Minister for Works. In reply to a question the Minister named the gentlemen who had made inquiries regarding amending the Act and upon whom the Government are evidently prepared to rely. They are seeking leave to introduce a Bill on the evidence obtained by five gentlemen. I am not questioning the sincerity or honesty of purpose of any one of the five, but during the next few days over 100 representatives of the workers of the State will be sitting in conference in Perth, and not one of them knows anything of the amendments included in the Bill. They can only surmise the nature of the amendments from the statements published in the Press from time to time. Some three months ago the Minister made a statement to the "West Australian," and backed it up by quoting three persons who had met with accidents compensable under the Act. He said he made the statement expressly to show that the £100 for medical expenses was not justified. What could I or any other individual



conclude from a statement of that kind? The Minister for Works is now determined to reduce the £100 allowed for medical expenses. No other conclusion than that can be arrived at. The figures he gave to the Press indicate that the workers are not receiving the benefit of the £100. They show that in two out of the three cases the doctors got more than the workers received. In one case the doctor had more than the worker and the hospital combined. In another case the doctor had more than the worker had received in compensation; and in the third case the doctor and the hospital together received more than the worker. These are the three illustrations quoted by the Minister. In his statement he definitely advanced these as the reasons why the Workers' Compensation Act should be amended. I will again play the part of a prophet. I have made one or two prophecies from this side of the House before, indicating what would be done by the Government, and I have not yet been wrong.

The Premier: You will be wrong this time.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I predict that the Bill will reduce the £100 allowed for medical expenses. I have carefully read Mr. Padbury's letter that appeared in the "West Australian" on the subject of workers' compensation.

Mr. Marshall: He would be in favour of increasing the amount.

Hon. M. F. Troy: He did not write the letter.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: He signed it.

Hon. M. F. Troy: He did not even sign it.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: He definitely stated that £100 would be too much to allow for medical expenses and that it was an immense burden upon industry. He also said that the worker was not getting the money, but that the doctors were getting it. I have yet to learn whether any member of Parliament when agreeing to the £100 allowance had any idea that the worker would get a penny of it. The money was allowed for the payment of medical and hospital expenses.

The Premier: The worker gets some benefit.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The compensation provided for under the Act is quite apart from medical expenses. The money was allotted in order to save the worker's pocket. It was never intended that it should go to

him. The Minister himself does not understand the Act, or what the compensation is for, because he showed in his statement that the worker was not getting the money but that it was going to the doctors and the hospital.

The Premier: But surely the worker gets some benefit from it?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Several cases were quoted by the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCullum) showing that the medical allowance had done some good. I admit that in some instances the position has been abused, for I had evidence of that when I was a Minister of the Crown. For every case in which it has been abused, however, there are a hundred cases in which it has been of benefit to the injured worker. After my six years' experience as Minister for Public Health perhaps no one in the House has greater knowledge of the subject than I have. I give every credit to members of the medical profession for the enormous amount of work they do for nothing. No section of the community as a class does more for indigent people than members of that profession.

Mr. Marshall: And they deserve every credit for it.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Yes, I am always prepared to give them that credit. An Act of Parliament has been passed allowing £100 for medical expenses. It would be only natural if such an Act were not in existence that a man who had met with an accident would want to return to work before he should do so, because he would be unable to afford either medical or hospital expenses, but as the money is available the worker is entitled to the full benefit of it. If it was only for the statement of the Minister I would support the amendment now before the House.

The Premier: You have not put up a single reason for so doing.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Had the Government been prepared to co-operate with the section of the community affected by this Bill, as other Nationalist Governments in Australia have preached about doing but have not done, and had they had the courage to approach representatives of the workers, and obtained some representative of them to advise them on the subject, this amendment would not have been moved. Unless the workers have a say in this amending Bill I am not prepared to accept it.

The Attorney General: Will you not have a say?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Not until the Bill is brought down.

The Attorney General: At what other time could it be discussed?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The Minister for Works has informed us that a committee of five was appointed to go into the amendments necessary to the Workers' Compensation Act, and upon the report of those gentlemen the Government have brought down the Bill. The Government neither approached nor asked any representative of the workers what he thought, and did not invite any representative to act upon that committee.

The Minister for Works: I said it was a committee of four.

Mr. Kenneally: They did not want the workers' representative.

The Attorney General: Is not this the proper place in which to discuss Bills?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Yes.

The Attorney General: Let us discuss this one, instead of members opposite preventing us from discussing it.

Mr. Marshall: You could give those concerned a say in the matter.

The Attorney General: Have a look at the Bill. You do not want to see it.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I have been very anxious to see it, and have made various inquiries to find out what it contains. Up to the present it is a closed book to me.

The Attorney General: You never asked to see it.

The Minister for Works: Bills are not seen until they are brought down in one House or the other.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: When a certain Bill was introduced last session several members knew at least four of the amendments embodied in it, before it was printed.

The Attorney General: Did you ask any member of the Government to show you a copy?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I was not impudent enough to do that.

The Attorney General: Interested enough?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: No, impudent enough. I was not going to take the risk of being knocked back, as I would certainly have been.

Mr. Kenneally: The Minister said he appointed a committee.

The Attorney General: To do the preliminary work?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I made inquiries to find out what it contained.

The Attorney General: From whom?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: From various people.

The Attorney General: Will you name one?

Mr. Marshall: You are not in the law courts now to conduct cross-examinations.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The Minister wants to know whom I approached to ascertain what the amendments were. I am not going to give him that information.

The Premier: Naturally you would approach a Minister.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Not at all, naturally.

The Attorney General: Why not?

Mr. Marshall: The Minister himself does not know the Bill.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Another Minister intends to bring down an amending Bill to an existing Act, and has invited members of the Opposition to discuss it with him in conference before introducing it. The Minister for Works, however, is bringing down a Bill just as important, after submitting it to a committee of four. He is prepared to act upon the advice of that committee and ignore those for whom the Workers' Compensation Act was passed. He would not have anything to do with the workers.

The Minister for Works: I did not appoint one employer upon that committee.

Mr. Kenneally: What a pity!

The Attorney General: Surely the place in which to discuss the Bill is in the House. Parliament exists for that purpose.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I know that.

The Attorney General: Why not wait until you see the Bill before shooting off your fireworks?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I am not shooting off fireworks. The "West Australian" has advised us to be good boys and to say not a word in opposition to the proposals of the Government. Even at the risk of offending that newspaper, I am going to have something to say in opposition to this Bill, if the workers are not given some say in respect of the amendments contained in it.

The Minister for Works: You say you represent the workers here.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Yes, and I am proud of it.

The Minister for Works: Then you will have your say.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: If we consent to the introduction of this Bill and the second reading is carried, not one member on the Government side of the House would support any amendment that we might bring down in the interests of the workers. That is why I want to stop the Bill at this stage.

The Attorney General: Are you going to vote against the second reading of the Bill?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I do not know. I will, however, say that if it makes provision to reduce the £100 medical expenses I will vote against it, and I am very positive that it does not make such a provision.

The Attorney General: And you say you are going to vote against the second reading.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Yes, if it contains that provision.

The Attorney General: I am going to hold you to that.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The Attorney General may rest assured that if it reduces the amount allowed for medical expenses he will get opposition from me both on the second reading and the third reading.

The Attorney General: Then you are going to vote against the second reading?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Yes, if it reduces the £100 allowance.

The Attorney General: It does.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Then I will certainly vote against the second reading.

The Attorney General: That is a promise.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Yes, it is a promise, and I will fulfil it.

The Minister for Works: You will do so against your own convictions.

The Attorney General: Will you call for a division?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I will not be like the Press of this State which all the time is arguing in favour of co-operation, saying that this is the time when party politics should not be discussed, when the Opposition should not use their force as an Opposition, but should co-operate with the Government, and on the other hand every day of the week is absolutely vilifying the Government now in control of Commonwealth affairs.

The Attorney General: Let us keep inside the bounds of Western Australia.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! We are not discussing what the newspapers say.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: It is a pity that people read the newspapers. If we could suppress them and their talk about depression, within six months Australia would be out of her difficulties.

Mr. Kenneally: And the Government would not be introducing this Bill.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: No. The statement of the Minister is sufficient reason for my voting for the amendment. If an inquiry is held I want representatives of the workers to have a say in the matter before I am prepared to consent to this Bill being introduced. I know that the Government do not intend to improve the conditions, but to whittle away those which are now enjoyed by the workers under the Act.

The Attorney General: How do you know that?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Because I do know it.

**MR. KENNEALLY** (East Perth) [9.1]: The modern trend of industrial legislation, particularly in connection with such a measure as this, is to amplify the consideration given to the units in industry beyond that which has been granted in previous times. But we find that the Government, true to the direction they received from the people who elected them, wish to alter a piece of machinery which more than any other piece of the legislative machinery of this country has made for peace in industry. Where are the protestations of the Government as regards peace in industry in connection with this measure?

The Minister for Works: You do not know that this Bill will make for anything but peace.

Mr. KENNEALLY: With the knowledge I have of the people who are handling the proposed amending legislation, I say that unless they are false to their political colours the measure will not make for peace in industry.

The Attorney General: Are you going to vote against the second reading of the Bill?

Mr. KENNEALLY: I am endeavouring to defeat the first reading, because I shall vote in the direction of securing fuller information from members.

The Attorney General: Will you vote against the second reading?

Mr. KENNEALLY: I shall vote against the first reading because I want to obtain fuller information.

The Attorney General: That is another matter altogether.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If it was essential to appoint a committee to investigate the question of workers' compensation, it is just as essential now to appoint some commission, as proposed by the amendment, to ensure that all possible information shall be given. We are told that an honourable doctor was commissioned by the previous Government to secure information from various parts of the world as to workers' compensation. The Government have told us that the information obtained by the doctor is embraced in the Bill to be introduced. But when the question is put to the Government whether all the recommendations of the doctor are contained in the Bill, the reply is, "Oh no!"

The Attorney General: There are some left out which you would not like. You will know what the recommendations are when you see the Bill.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I am entitled to know which of them I would not like.

The Minister for Works: I will give that information in moving the second reading.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I also am entitled to know which of the amendments in the Bill have been recommended by the gentleman commissioned to obtain information.

The Minister for Works: If you will allow me to introduce the Bill, I will give you that information.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I am also entitled to complain, from the workers' point of view, that the Minister did not appoint a representative of the workers on the committee of four, so that information from the workers' side might be available to the Minister when he drew his proposed amendments. If it was necessary to appoint a committee, it was necessary and right that all sections of the community should be represented on it.

The Attorney General: What is Parliament for?

Mr. KENNEALLY: Had there been no committee appointed, I could understand the Attorney General's interjection.

The Attorney General: Are not the Government entitled to get a committee's advice in order to submit measures to Parliament?

Mr. KENNEALLY: Yes, they are. If the Government, as representatives of the whole community, desire to be just and fair, they will seek information from all sections of

the community instead of only from a chosen section.

The Minister for Works: We sought information from Government officials administering the Act, with the exception of one whom your late Minister himself appointed.

The Attorney General: Let us get on with the Bill.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Government have accepted information and advice from representatives of all classes other than the workers.

The Minister for Works: Oh no! What do you mean by "workers"?

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Government do not wish to accept the advice of representatives of the workers; otherwise they would accept this amendment, which provides for the constitution of a tribunal that can ascertain the viewpoint of the workers as well. The Minister asked to whom I referred as workers. When I speak of workers, I do not refer to the Minister.

The Minister for Works: I take nothing as personal from you.

The Attorney General: Let us get on, and let us have a look at the Bill.

Mr. Richardson: Yes. What is in the Bill?

Mr. KENNEALLY: What makes me so anxious to see that an opportunity is given for a public analysis of the position with regard to workers' compensation before any alteration is attempted, is the knowledge of what took place in this respect when legislation was not as it is to-day with regard to workers' compensation. I speak as one who has had considerable experience in endeavouring to secure from industrial employers some consideration over and above what the law previously provided, in order to ease the position for those who had fallen down as the result of having suffered injury during their work. The fight we put up to improve the workers' position from that aspect is not one we can quietly lay aside simply because the Government of the day are listening to their masters and introducing measures of this kind.

The Attorney General: What an outrageous statement that is to make when you have not even seen the Bill! You ought to be ashamed to make it.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If I were in the place of the Attorney General, I would be ashamed to father such a measure simply

because it is dictated by the Press of the State.

The Attorney General: You ought to be ashamed to make such a statement, and I challenge you to vote against the second reading of the Bill when you have seen it.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I do not ask for a withdrawal by the Attorney General, even if he does get a little excited.

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the Attorney General to refrain from interjecting.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The measure is most important from my point of view, because I have been associated with many members on this side of the House in agitating for improvements which we considered essential. Especially in my association with a big department of State, the Railway Department, has it been my duty to endeavour to secure for those who have lost an arm or a leg, or been otherwise injured in railway accidents, additional assistance beyond what the legislation then existing provided in order that those people, while lying on their backs nursing their injuries, would not be prevented for a further period from returning to work because of the worry occasioned them by the big load of debt mounting up as the result of medical expenses. It was often extremely difficult to get any assistance in that respect. As the result of continued agitation we were able, in the amending Bill, to alter the £1 then provided to £100. We have been told through the Press that the £100 provision has been abused since it was inaugurated; but for every one occasion on which the provision has been abused, I can point to many, many occasions on which it has meant all the difference between life and death to the people concerned. Now we are asked to submit to the introduction of legislation which, in spite of the interjections of members opposite when the direct question was put to them as to that £100 provision, must propose interference with it, since the hon. members in question remain as dumb as the proverbial oyster.

The Minister for Works: That has been admitted.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Hon. members opposite say this is a measure specially designed in the interests of the workers.

The Minister for Works: So it is.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If the oyster-like silence of the Minister as regards a particular question is to be taken as a criterion,

the £100 medical expenses made available for the worker—

The Minister for Works: I shall not be silent when my time comes to speak in introducing the Bill.

Mr. Richardson: Why not wait for the Bill?

Mr. KENNEALLY: I am at a loss to know why the Government object to the obtaining of additional information.

The Premier: Why did not you get it when your Bill was here?

Mr. KENNEALLY: We did get all the information available. As has been mentioned to the hon. gentleman previously, we were introducing new methods. Those methods have been embodied in legislation which has been given a trial. As the result of their having been given a trial, considerable agitation has taken place in the Press and amongst employers of this country for the repeal of certain sections. Are we not justified in saying, "We have experimented; we have had this legislation in operation for a number of years: there are the results of its operation to be analysed: let us have an inquiry before the legislation is altered again"? As a result of such inquiry all members of this Chamber will have the information that is at present available to only a select number. Therefore I am at a loss to understand why the Government offer any opposition whatever to the appointment of a commission as suggested by the amendment. As a result of the appointment of the commission we shall be sure of making, in the amending Bill, the greatest improvement possible from the point of view of industry. I want to have available the full report of the doctor who was deputed by the previous Government to secure information: and there is only one method by which that end can be attained. As a matter of fact, I understand from the interjections of the Minister for Works that no definite report has been submitted by the medical man. Even if his complete report were submitted, we know full well that all the information gleaned by him would not be available in it, since he would hardly include in it everything he had gathered on a world-wide tour. If the man has taken the trouble to collect information, what is the reason actuating the Government in preventing that full information from being made available to both sides of the House?

The Attorney General: The speeches of the Opposition.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Attorney General knows that there is one means by which that information can be made available, and that is by voting for the amendment asking for the appointment of a commission.

The Minister for Works: I do not think you will get the information that way.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Perhaps we will not. If the Government's attitude in connection with this measure so far is to be taken as a criterion, we will not get the information.

The Attorney General: Let us see the Bill, for heaven's sake!

The Minister for Works: The attitude of the Government on this Bill is the same as has been the attitude of all Governments on all Bills. The only difference is in your attitude.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Has the attitude of every Government on every Bill been to appoint a committee of four, without a representative of the workers, to suggest alterations? Is that the Minister's contention?

The Minister for Works: It is not.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Then the Minister's statement falls flat. On his own admission, the Government's attitude in connection with this Bill is not the same as the attitude of all other Governments in connection with all other Bills.

The Minister for Works: And your attitude is not the same either.

Mr. KENNEALLY: It is the altered attitude of the Government that makes it necessary for the attitude the Opposition have taken up, and for the move in the direction of having a proper inquiry. If the Government had acted along right lines from the outset, it would not now be necessary for us to take any such action.

The Attorney General: You want to supersede Parliament with a Royal Commission!

Mr. KENNEALLY: I want to prevent the Government from persisting in their action in depriving the workers of an opportunity to be represented on the board set up.

The Attorney General: You think they should prepare the Bill.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I want to limit the anti-Labour tendency of the present Government to an extent that will provide a modicum of justice to the workers by enabling them to have representation on the board that procures information dealing with operations in connection with workers' compensation cases.

The Minister for Works: Make them a board of Government experts.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If we were to have that representation, we might get from the Minister some information to indicate why he excluded all representatives of the workers from the board he set up.

The Minister for Works: You would not understand the explanation.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If the Minister claims that the Government's move is in the interests of the workers, will he give the House some indication as to the source from which he procured the workers' point of view?

The Minister for Works: I am one myself.

Mr. Marshall: It would not take much to keep the Minister going for a day.

Mr. KENNEALLY: It is just as well to have the Minister's assurance from himself on the point, because unless he had made that claim on his own behalf, we would not have known of it.

The Minister for Works: People I have lived amongst will tell you that I have worked; that is more than you can say.

Mr. KENNEALLY: On this occasion, the work performed by the Minister has apparently been in opposition to one section of the community only. It is because his work has been in opposition to that particular section that the suggestion has been advanced for the appointment of a Royal Commission so that representatives of that section, against whom the Minister's actions have operated or are to operate, shall be given an opportunity to place their views before the public.

The Minister for Works: I thought you were referring to work by the sweat of the brow.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Minister would not know anything about that type of work.

Mr. Marshall: The Minister has not stained too many mop-cloths in his time.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Workers' Compensation Act is capable of improvement.

The Minister for Works: That is what we seek to achieve.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I suggest, particularly in view of the times through which we are passing, concerning which members on both sides of the House make references continually, that, as we can be in agreement that the Act is capable of improvement, we should see some evidence of the get-together spirit of which we hear so much at present.

The Minister for Works: It is apparent now.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If some evidence of that spirit were manifest, we might reach agreement regarding amendments that would be suitable in the interest of the community as a whole. One essential in attaining that objective is that the Government shall refrain from introducing such a proposition without consulting the workers, who are so vitally interested. A better spirit would be created if the section of the community most vitally concerned were given an opportunity to participate in some such conference. If that were done, we might be able to introduce a Bill that would receive the support of members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Parker: Shall we not have that conference at the second reading stage?

Mr. KENNEALLY: I make that suggestion to the Minister.

The Minister for Works: The Bill will be before a conference of the House as a whole.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I hope the Minister will not be given any such opportunity.

The Minister for Works: Then you do not want the Bill?

Mr. KENNEALLY: I represent a large number of those who suffered under the operations of earlier legislation, but benefited to some extent as a result of the amended measure. As such, I am prepared, if the Government desire to be possessed of all the information they should require before introducing such legislation, to assist them if they will agree to the appointment of the Royal Commission. I speak on behalf of many who have suffered and who are particularly anxious to see that, until something better takes its place, the existing legislation shall be protected. On their behalf, I shall be pleased to place information before the Royal Commission that may be appointed so that we may join in improving the existing Act. For my part, I do not think it is the desire of any large section of the community to see the Workers' Compensation Act altered in any material respect from its present form.

The Minister for Works: I will not promise you that in this Bill there will be a great number of alterations.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Of course there will be, and I know it is impossible for the Minister to promise, once the Bill emerges from

the melting pot, that the Act will be of as much use to the workers as it is in its present form.

The Minister for Works: I can promise you that.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Of course, I can accept the promise of the Minister in this House, but I shall—

The Minister for Works: Give us a chance to show the Bill to you.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I want to see the Bill before I can accept the Minister's statement completely.

The Minister for Works: We want to show the Bill to you. Why not sit down?

Mr. KENNEALLY: If the Minister did not give evidence of his anxiety to prepare the measure, he gave an indication of what his attitude, as well as that of the Government, was likely to be, in statements made from time to time. In utterances by the Minister and his colleagues, not only recently, but ever since the previous legislation was passed by Parliament, as well as in the statements made by the Minister for Lands since the present session commenced, and in those of members sitting on the Government side of the House, we have seen, through the Press reports, indications of their intention regarding workers' compensation legislation. That being so, are we not justified in anticipating that the legislation to be introduced will not be of the same benefit to the workers as is the existing Act?

The Minister for Works: You will be horribly disappointed when you get the Bill.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I hope so, but in the meantime I will vote for the amendment. In these times, people stress the fact that no endeavour should be made to create discord in the community. In those circumstances is it not wrong for the Government to appoint a board to deal with workers' compensation matters and exclude the workers from representation on that body? As the Government have not provided the workers with that representation, the least they should do should be to accept the amendment proposed by the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum), and appoint a Royal Commission so that anyone desirous of placing information before the Commission shall be given an opportunity to do so, before the Bill is proceeded with.

**MR. MILLINGTON** (Mr. Hawthorn) [9.25]: I oppose the motion for leave to introduce the Bill. I am not anxious to see the Bill and hope I shall never see it.

**Mr. Richardson**: At any rate you are honest.

**Mr. MILLINGTON**: What perturbs me is the comprehensive title to the Bill, which is "for an Act to consolidate and amend the law with respect to compensation to workers for injuries suffered in the course of their employment, and for other relative purposes."

**The Minister for Works**: It is a comprehensive Bill.

**Mr. MILLINGTON**: There are certain things we do not want to see. The mere introduction of such a motion gives rise to suspicion. I regard the Bill as one we should not see in any form. The best fate for it would be to place it in quarantine.

**Mr. Hegney**: It should be strangled.

**Mr. MILLINGTON**: I think quarantining would be preferable. The very title of the Bill justifies us in saying that it does not represent business that the Government are entitled to bring forward at this stage. Why has this special session been called?

**The Minister for Lands**: Because the Leader of the Opposition asked for it?

**Mr. MILLINGTON**: Has there been a demand on the part of the people that the country should be put to the expense of a special session of Parliament—and it does represent an expense—in order to consider urgent business, including the amendment of the Workers' Compensation Act? I presume the special session was called together for more urgent purposes than that.

**Mr. Parker**: Then let us get on with the business.

**Mr. MILLINGTON**: It is urgent that the Government should possess a better idea regarding relative values. Is it the policy of the Government to alter the parent Act?

**The Minister for Lands**: You do not know what business is to be placed before the House.

**Mr. MILLINGTON**: If that is the policy of the Government, surely the Bill could be dealt with during an ordinary session of Parliament and there is no justification for treating the matter as one of urgency at the present juncture.

**Mr. Parker**: Do you not think the Act requires amendment?

**Mr. MILLINGTON**: I would remind the Government that the Minister for Works

has had to take action on behalf of the Government as a whole that must have gone against his grain. I do not suggest he is a man who does not know what a day's work means; I know that he does. I know he did not like the job, for instance, of introducing a Bill last year that ultimately deprived the workers of 8s. per week, and at the same time repudiated an Arbitration Court award, which the workers were entitled to assume would operate for 12 months. I do not think the Minister liked that work. The fact remains, however, that he, as a member of the Government, was called upon to do that obnoxious work. If I am asked why I view the present Bill with suspicion, I shall reply that I am reminded that the Government were instrumental in introducing legislation that rapidly decreased the basic wage. The Government have done their utmost to increase the hours of labour, to lower the conditions of work in outback districts, to penalise the workers through the imposition of a tax ostensibly for hospital purposes, but actually an impost on wages. That tax applies to men working on sustenance. Now the Government hurriedly bring forward a Bill to amend the Workers' Compensation Act. In the circumstances, are we not justified in assuming that they will carry out their policy of placing the additional burden on the worker, adding to the sacrifices he has had to make already? It is they who have had to shoulder the burden in this time of crisis. Instead of dealing with the real problems confronting the State, we are asked to agree to the introduction of the Bill under discussion, and therefore we are justified in objecting to its introduction from the outset. If it is necessary to deal with such a Bill, let us deal with it in an ordinary session of Parliament. There is a valid objection to dealing with it at the present juncture. As for wanting to see the Bill, I say I do not want to see it at all.

**Mr. Parker**: But do you object to our seeing it? We want to see it.

**Mr. MILLINGTON**: I am a little perturbed at the thought that the hon. member will not have an opportunity to see it. As for the innocent intent of the Bill, how does the House know what will take place if the Bill be introduced and passed through this House? It might then be in a form that would satisfy members opposite and the Government, but it would then have to go to another place. Does anyone here sug-



gest, after the criticism of the Workers' Compensation Act in another place, the Bill will return from that place in a shape that will be an improvement on the present Act? Once members of another place fasten their teeth into it, there will be no doubt about the amendments they will make. They have made it abundantly clear that at the first opportunity they will drastically amend the Workers' Compensation Act, and that not in the interests of the workers, but in the diametrically opposite direction. So the very introduction of the Bill will mean that at a time when we are asked to get together with a view to solving the common difficulty we shall all be thrown into sharp dissension. I think no exception can be taken to the moderate criticism from this side of the House. We are probably the most moderate Opposition in the world, and because of that we find that the very things that will give rise to dissension at a time like this, when we are supposed to meet and devise ways and means out of our present difficulties, the first act of the Government is to throw into this Chamber the apple of discord.

The Minister for Works: How do you know? You have not seen the Bill yet.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I am sorry the Minister was not here when I complimented him on the manner in which he has dealt with contentious legislation in the past. But unfortunately he has been officially saddled with the job of introducing legislation designed to whittle away the rights of the workers.

The Minister for Works: Give me an instance.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: The Arbitration Act Amendment Bill, which took away 8s. per week from the workers.

Mr. MILLINGTON: It is well that the Minister should be brought back to earth occasionally. He introduced a Bill for the purpose of rapidly reducing the basic wage in this State, which had been declared for 12 months. That was the first act of repudiation on the part of the Government. Because of that I am suspicious about this present Bill, which we are led to believe is going to liberalise the Workers' Compensation Act. The Minister for Works is the appointed agent of the Government to introduce obnoxious legislation. I presume he is going to be consistent in the present instance. Surely the Government have not called a special session of Parliament merely

to introduce industrial legislation for the purpose of improving an Act from the workers' point of view. So I do not want to see the present Bill, and I am going to do my best to prevent its introduction. I believe when the Government have had time to reconsider this they will realise that this session was called together for the purpose of getting the co-operation of the Opposition to deal with the real problems with which we are faced, and not to introduce measures which undoubtedly will cause dissension. That is a point the Government could well consider. They have all day tomorrow in which to consider it.

The Minister for Lands: And all night to-night.

Mr. MILLINGTON: All Governments in Australia are asking for co-operation. There is even the suggestion to call a conference of Premiers and Leaders of Opposition in order to devise some common solvent of our problems. At the very moment when this matter is being considered in this House, the most contentious legislation that could be devised, the tinkering with industrial enactments, will inevitably ruffle the feelings of all on this side of the House.

The Minister for Works: You are speaking of something you know nothing about.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I am always justified in assuming that the hon. member will be consistent. He does not propose to introduce an amendment of the Workers' Compensation Act in the interests of the workers, for the purpose of increasing their benefits. Yet I am asked to believe that the hon. member proposes to amend the Workers' Compensation Act exclusively in the interests of the workers.

The Minister for Works: In the interests of everybody in the State.

Mr. MILLINGTON: It depends upon whose interests you represent. I believe the Minister really thinks that the decrease in wages for which he was responsible was in the interests of the State.

The Minister for Works: I do indeed.

Mr. MILLINGTON: He thinks that in the interests of the State the wages of the workers should be reduced by 8s. per week.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! This is very dangerous ground.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Very dangerous ground for the Minister. I am well aware that he would not have attempted to introduce this Bill were he not in the grip

of those he represents. They are confident that this State will never recover until the Workers' Compensation Act is knocked out.

The Minister for Works: Who said that?

Mr. MILLINGTON: A leader of your party. I will mention his name, if you like.

The Minister for Lands: Who is he?

Mr. MILLINGTON: Mr. Padbury, one of your leaders. He believes the Workers' Compensation Act should be scrapped, and he also says distinctly that the Arbitration Act should be abolished. And although the Minister for Works does not go that far, he certainly does believe that both those Acts should be tinkered with and monkey-keyed with.

Mr. Parker: Who is doing the monkeying now?

Mr. MILLINGTON: If the Minister is going to liberalise the Workers' Compensation Act as he liberalised the Arbitration Act, we are quite justified in supporting the amendment moved by the member for South Fremantle. We should have an independent inquiry into this matter in order to determine in the first place if an amendment is desirable and, if so, to secure the necessary information, not only in respect of the working of the Act in this State, but also of the working of similar Acts in other States.

The Minister for Works: That information has been collected already.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Generally, when a job is to be done all information necessary to the carrying out of that job is collected. But in my opinion the information collected and available would not be the information that could be supplied by those sympathetic with the workers. Therefore, we want to make sure that all information is available, not merely information from one side. I have watched the publicity in the Press, and I may say that almost invariably the daily Press has been antagonistic to the Workers' Compensation Act, and there has been a continuous demand that it should be amended with a view to whittling down the measure of justice the Act metes out to the workers. I suggest to the Government that if they are looking for ways and means of reviving industry, just as we see that the enormous extent of unemployment is the result of the present crisis, and just as we realise the position in which the unemployed are

placed, I point out that those entitled to workers' compensation are not only unemployed but also are crippled. The Government undertook to put forward constructive schemes for dealing with unemployment, and the first of their schemes deals with the poor unemployed who are also crippled in industry. Surely this side of the House is entitled to insist that the Government shall bring down some more concrete rehabilitation proposal than the whittling away of compensation to injured workers.

The Minister for Works: How do you know that the Bill whittles away?

Mr. MILLINGTON: It will take a better scheme than this to evoke the approval of the people. The country is not going to be satisfied to have a special session called to deal with this question, for the proposed amendments are demanded only by a small and interested section of the community, whereas the problem we should be dealing with interests the whole of the people. The sooner the Government get down to the real business of this session, the better. I should say the real business is the question of providing employment for the unemployed, and related questions. The amendment of the Workers' Compensation Act, if it be part of the Government policy, should be dealt with in an ordinary session. I defy the Minister to show that this matter is urgent enough to be dealt with in a special session, where the time is limited. It appears as if an endeavour is being made to shelve the real issue to consider which this session has been called as the result of an insistent demand on the part of the public. I am not inquisitive as to the contents of the Bill awaiting introduction, but I am dealing with the question of whether in this special session the Government are justified in introducing a contentious measure which cannot possibly be described as being of an urgent nature. That is why we are protesting. I am confident that members on this side of the House are anxious to co-operate with the Government in devising ways and means of overcoming the real difficulty with which we in common with the rest of Australia and the rest of the world are faced. We have shown commendable moderation in our attitude to the Government, knowing the difficulties confronting them and the problems that have

to be solved. Therefore, the Government would have been well advised not to place this motion on the Notice Paper, not to have sought to amend industrial legislation which will always be contentious. Is it suggested that even if the Bill were to pass this House and go to another place it would be returned in a form acceptable to members of this House? If the Government desire to create strife, their very best plan is to introduce amendments to industrial legislation. Since the time is limited, I hope the Government will take the earliest opportunity to introduce matters for which the meeting of Parliament was called. There was undoubtedly an insistent public demand that we should meet, and discussion should be confined to the subjects that have justified the calling of Parliament together. But for the financial crisis and the unemployment problem, would a special meeting have been summoned? Why should the Government take advantage of this special meeting to introduce such a Bill? If the Government can show one piece of industrial legislation they have introduced that has been in the interests of the workers, or one statute that they have amended in the interests of the workers, it will allay my suspicion, but I have searched the record of the Government and have failed to find evidence of any industrial legislation having been passed or amended by them for the benefit of the workers. Just as they mutilated the Arbitration Act, deliberately, hurriedly and determinedly, so I believe if they got the opportunity they would deal with this measure. It might leave this place an innocent-looking measure, but it would be returned from another place just in the form they desired it. It would be a sorry Workers' Compensation Bill that would meet with the approval of another place. The Act would then be quite in conformity with the desires of vested interests who have demanded amendments. To treat the Act in that way would make impossible the mutual co-operation that has been advocated for the good of the State. The appointment of a Royal Commission would give the Government time to deal with the important matters that should be considered—the matters that the public have a right to demand should be dealt with during this session.

**MR. RAPHAEL** (Victoria Park) [9.48]: I, too, am of opinion that the Workers' Compensation Act needs amending, but the hands seeking to amend it will mutilate it to such an extent that it will be of no advantage to the workers. I have studied the Act, and I consider that the Labour Party were not sufficiently liberal in providing some of the compensation on the present basis. The good name of the doctors has been dragged into the mud, and it has even been suggested that members of the profession, supposed to be the most honourable profession in the world, should be inmates of the Fremantle prison. Any doctor who attends a patient under the Workers' Compensation Act cannot emerge unscathed. In the minds of the public there is an impression that the doctors are robbing the patients and bleeding the Government. That is due to the statements appearing in the capitalistic Press. The Government should give the lie to such statements and should, by refraining from interfering with the Act, support the doctors in the good work they are doing. In my first speech in the House, I referred to the conditions that the ex-Leader of the Country Party had advocated for Australia. It may be thought that I am departing from the subject matter of the debate, but the evidence I could produce would be appropriate for a Royal Commission. We were told that the conditions amongst the coolie labour in India and Africa were wonderful and what a good thing it would be if they were introduced into Australia. The Government denied any intention of introducing such conditions, but one member of the committee who have recommended alterations to the Act has reduced the workers of this State lower in many instances than the niggers of Africa and India. I refer to Mr. Bennett, the State Statistician. A worker must leave his wife and children in Perth and take work in the country at £2 4s. a week, and on that keep two homes going.

The Minister for Works: Who is doing that?

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** The Minister is. Mr. Bennett is one of the committee chosen by the Government—I say “chosen” advisedly—to compile information to show to what level workers' compensation can be reduced. If the Government believe that we shall permit such a man to tear the Act to pieces, they are mistaken. Machinery

is highly valued by the capitalistic class because it costs good money to replace damaged plant. That and the state of the unemployed market explain why the Government do not wish to see human beings who have been injured in industry patched up. They are easily replaced, but machinery is not. Many men injured in industry have been incapacitated for the rest of their lives because of their inability to pay for the medical treatment they so sorely needed. I have been closely in touch with various doctors, and I know that men who have been injured have been kept on their backs as long as six or nine months. They cannot be treated for nothing; £100 is little enough for the specialists and other doctors who have to attend them, and the amount should not be reduced. One reason why the Government have designs on the Act, I believe, is that many foreigners have abused its provisions. If that is so, the Government should have proceeded against them on criminal charges.

The Minister for Works: The Government are not running the Act; the insurance companies are.

Mr. RAPHAEL: What about the State Insurance Office?

The Minister for Works: It does only a very small portion of the business.

Mr. RAPHAEL: A very big portion.

The Minister for Works: I say a very small portion.

Mr. RAPHAEL: The Minister is wrong, as usual.

The Minister for Works: I have before me the notes of my speech, and that is one of the points.

Mr. RAPHAEL: The speech will not be listened to.

The Minister for Lands: Do not you wish to hear what is in the Bill?

Mr. RAPHAEL: No; I hope it will be blocked before it reaches the first reading. Hundreds of Australian boys are unemployed and walking the streets of Perth. They receive no assistance from the Government. Yet, as soon as a deputation asks for sustenance for foreigners, it is granted.

The Minister for Lands: That is a new one. Where did you get it?

Mr. RAPHAEL: From the Press.

The Minister for Lands: From the "Worker"?

Mr. RAPHAEL: From the capitalistic Press. On the committee we have Mr. Bennett, who has reduced the workers to £2 4s.

per week, acting in conjunction with other gentlemen. We have the Government attempting to impose upon the workers the cost of insuring themselves against accident in industry. By the time the Government have finished with these men, their wages will be about 35s. a week. I believe that is the amount which the Government have received instructions to fix by legislation. Never in its history has the State been in such a stressful condition. When I read that Parliament was to be specially summoned, I, in my poor misguided way, imagined that the Government had some intention of trying to alleviate the distressing conditions that exist, but it appears that the living conditions of the people are of secondary importance to the pockets of the capitalists. Credit would have accrued to the Government had they endeavoured to provide some cover for those poor defenceless devils who cannot provide for themselves. It is an abomination that the Government should introduce legislation to reduce the conditions of the workers still lower and neglect so many people who cannot look after themselves. I shall support the amendment. If the Government are afraid that new light will be thrown on the subject by an inquiry—

The Minister for Lands: You are afraid of light being thrown on the subject.

Mr. RAPHAEL: Why do the Government object to a Royal Commission?

Mr. Parker: We have all the light we want.

Mr. RAPHAEL: The whip has been cracked, and the Government have been told they must introduce legislation to hound the workers down still lower. I hope there will be found on the Government side one or two members who have some humanity and will support the amendment.

**MR. MARSHALL** (Murchison) [10.01: I support the amendment. It is unique in the history of the Parliament of this State, as I know it, to find a Government appointing a committee to inquire into the operations of an Act, and excluding from such committee representatives of a section of the community so vitally interested in the business on hand. Is it any wonder we resent the introduction of this Bill? Members opposite have treated the Opposition in a humorous strain merely because we are endeavouring to prevent the introduction of legislation, which it has ill-become the Gov-

ernment to bring down. We represent a large section of the electors. The State is passing through one of the most critical periods it has ever experienced. The newspapers advise us all to be unanimous and to co-operate with one another, with a view to getting the State out of the position in which it finds itself. And yet the Government bring down a Bill of this nature. The question at issue has frequently been referred to by the "West Australian," the daily paper of this State. Indeed, if I were to speak correctly, I would say that the Press first gave the direction to members, and members have spoken in accordance with the advice given to them. Two points have been raised. The first is that members of the medical profession have been abusing their powers under the Act, and the second is that some of our citizens have deliberately injured themselves with a view to securing compensation. When the Government appointed a committee to investigate these matters they should have seen to it that both sides of the case were inquired into, and that both interests were represented upon the committee. The accusation that citizens have deliberately injured themselves, and the other accusation that medical practitioners have been dishonest enough deliberately to protract the ailments of their patients in order to continue receiving remuneration for their services under the Workers' Compensation Act, should have been inquired into, and the information obtained should have been presented to the House.

The Minister for Works: The Government have had no chance to present any information yet.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Minister has continually harped upon that point. I challenge him to show where the Government, when composed of members on this side of the House, ever refused to make public or to present to Parliament the deliberations arrived at by any committee such as this that they elected to appoint. The action of the present Government in this regard is unique. Reference has been made to foreigners. Most of the allegations have referred to the new arrivals amongst these. I submit that the reports on this subject have been very much exaggerated. I was in the South-West on one occasion and was informed by an insurance agent after a meeting one evening that the foreign element had been over-eager in their desire to injure

themselves, that they had successfully done so in 18 cases, and that 15 who had received compensation running into many thousands of pounds had left the country. Beyond that single allegation I heard no other evidence along those lines although I was in the South-West for nine days. I do not say that the information supplied to me was false, but I do say that a statement such as that should have been inquired into by the committee and the result of the inquiry made available to members of the House prior to the introduction of the Bill. I think very few charges of dishonesty can be laid against any member of the British Medical Association. There may have been cases where the period of recovery was somewhat delayed. The patient may not have been allowed to go back to work until the doctor was fully satisfied that he was well enough to do so. We know the effect of the Act of 1912, which allowed only £1 for medical expenses. Injured people used to deceive their doctors because they could not afford to pay out any more money for treatment, and under medical direction were allowed to return to work. In consequence of that state of affairs, many men suffered grievously. Generally speaking doctors, knowing that an individual is protected so far as medical expenses are concerned, doubtless convince themselves that he is really fit to go back to work before they permit him to do so. It seems that even members of Parliament, without much information at their disposal, accuse members of the medical profession of being dishonest: or if the accusation is not made directly, it is made by inference. Therefore investigation should be made on those two points before legislation is introduced. They are the only two points raised by hon. members opposite against the operation of the Act. The suggestions of the committee who influenced the Minister fathering the Bill should be submitted to us at the same time as the measure, especially as we have been called together for the purpose of studying something far more important than even the Workers' Compensation Act. The operation of the existing Act has been a great improvement on that of the previous measure. I marvel at the impudence—if I may use that word inoffensively—of hon. members opposite in advancing an argument which is threadbare from age. It is an argument that has been used for centuries. It was advanced 40 or 50 years ago, when workers' compensation

was first mooted. The argument is that workers' compensation would ruin industry.

The Minister for Works: You have not given us an opportunity to advance any argument.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Minister will have an opportunity, though I cannot suggest at what period of the night or the day he will have it. The same old fairy-tale is put forward—the Act will ruin industry. When free education was proposed a century ago, the same tale was put forward. The advocates of retrogression to-day are so devoid of substantial arguments that they are reduced to the arguments, and even of the very words, used by our great, great grandfathers. During the past 12 months the workers have been practically at slave rates, have been coerced into working for a bare pittance. As a result, has industry brightened up? Not at all. Unfortunately a section of the community can use the Press to influence the minds of thousands who are immediately concerned. As the members of the Government resent the statement that they are the mouthpieces of profiteers and are directed by the Press, I shall be a little less severely critical and shall say that it is no doubt a coincidence that at the very opening of the session the Government introduced two measures which had been advocated by the daily Press from the day Ministers were elected until a little time before the legislation in question was introduced. Upon the resumption of this session—yesterday, to wit—notice of the introduction of this Bill was given. It is singular that the Press should have been attacking the Workers' Compensation Act until they were satisfied that they had instilled into the public mind the idea that the Act was such a burden upon industry as to call for amendment. Hence the Bill. I will not say the Press dictate to the Government. I will not accuse Ministers of being the mouthpieces of those who look for profits only. But I will say that it is quite a coincidence that the Government should have introduced as soon as they possibly could the three pieces of legislation in question, three measures which the Press had practically directed the Government to introduce.

The Minister for Works: It shows that sometimes the Press is right.

Mr. MARSHALL: I once heard a most capable speaker and a very deep thinker

refer to what is known as the public Press, saying that those who would be wise would read the Press, that those who did not read the Press were foolish, but that having read the Press and inwardly digested its advocacy, one should do the very opposite of what was advocated, and then one would be right. So the Minister who says the Press is right—

The Minister for Works: Sometimes.

Mr. MARSHALL: That Minister finds himself in conflict with a much deeper thinker and a much more eloquent speaker than himself.

The Minister for Works: I think you are alluding to yourself.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Minister resents the Opposition's attitude this evening in taking the first opportunity offered them to attack the measure he proposes to introduce. He asks us to wait until the Bill has been introduced. He says, "Why do you not give me a chance? You are too suspicious of the measure." I will not say that all Opposition members are suspicious, but I am very suspicious indeed of it. I consider I am justified in being suspicious of the Bill.

Mr. Angelo: One Bill to another.

Mr. MARSHALL: But not one fool to another. I have every justification for suspecting the Bill. I ask hon. members opposite whether I am not justified in suspecting this measure when I have regard to the two previous industrial measures introduced by the present Government. Reviewing the operations of the Government and their attack upon the industrial standard of a large section of the community in two previous measures, can we on this side of the Chamber reasonably be expected to accept the introduction of this Bill without feeling a high degree of suspicion in regard to it? When I recall the statements made on the platform by the Minister for Works, statements which won for him the "wrong" to have the right of being Minister for Works—

Hon. M. F. Troy: Work for all.

Mr. MARSHALL: When I look at the result of the Government's efforts to provide work for all, am I not justified in being suspicious of this Bill?

The Minister for Works: Oh, don't bring that up!

Mr. MARSHALL: I did not mean it in the same way as the Minister for Works accepted it. So far as the policy of work

for all is concerned, the Government have succeeded well, since every individual now has a job trying to find work.

The Minister for Works: Every individual?

Mr. MARSEALL: But there has not been any sympathy, or any tendency towards sympathy, on the part of the Government for a large section of the community. If the operation of the Workers' Compensation Act has been unsuccessful, or if that operation represents a burden on some section of the community, still the amendment moved by the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum) is not of such a nature as to do much injury. Surely an investigation regarding the past operations of the Act and the anomalies that have been created, would provide authentic information for the House. I challenge the Minister to submit to us any exact number of breaches of honesty or fair play on the part of either those receiving the benefits of the Act or of the doctors.

The Minister for Works: Give me a chance to introduce the Bill, and I will provide that information.

Mr. MARSHALL: I know the Minister desires to introduce the Bill to amend an Act that has been in existence since long before he happened to find himself, by a mere accident, in his present position. He has received his instructions from people outside, and through the Press, which is owned and controlled by those who derive huge profits from industry. Due to the exploitation of advertisements and big business, huge profits are made, and yet there has been no reduction in the cost of the newspaper to the individual in these days of depression. There is no reduction in the price of the "West Australian"; we still have to pay 2d. to learn how the State should be run, as indicated in articles written by a person who is paid a fairly large salary to write along the lines he is directed to follow. And the people foolishly digest those articles, and accept them as being the opinions of a great thoughtful man! Why, one man who writes those articles for the "West Australian" formerly wrote articles for "The Worker," and still the people swallow newspaper articles as indicating what is necessary for the progress of the State. In supporting the amendment moved by the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum), I desire to give the Minister one or two instances to indicate the applica-

tion of the Act in the past. It will be criminal if he seeks to alter the Act in one direction suggested by the Press and by members sitting on the Government side of the House.

The Minister for Works: Why threaten until you see what is in the Bill?

Mr. MARSHALL: I am not threatening at all. One of my electors is living at present near to Parliament House. He was badly smashed up in a mine at Meekatharra, where he spent four months in hospital. That represents one of the dangers to men in the mining industry, because there is not always sufficient medical attention available to cope with accidents. No one doctor can perform a major operation. There must be two, one to administer the anaesthetic and the other to perform the operation. The attention given in hospital to the man I refer to absorbed the major proportion of the £100 allowed under the Workers' Compensation Act as it stands at present. City doctors have highly commended the work carried out by the doctor at Meekatharra, but the latter in the end found that he could do nothing further without grafting a piece of bone into the fractured limb. That involved the patient's coming to Perth to undergo the necessary operation in a hospital. The £100 available to the patient under the Act has already been absorbed, and should ever that man again take his place in the industry, he will find himself saddled with the responsibility for the payment of perhaps £150.

The Minister for Works: He will not be responsible under the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. MARSHALL: The man I refer to is 60 years of age, and what good will £5 a week be to him with such a load of debt confronting him? At the present time, the mining industry is crying for skilled labour. Efficiency is essential in the gold mining industry to-day and unfortunately there is a plentiful supply of unskilled labour that cannot be absorbed. Thanks to the former Labour Government, men can follow mining operations with a diminished possibility of contracting disease. Men affected are taken away from the mines and compensated, thus eliminating much of the possibility of infecting others with whom they have worked. If the Minister seeks to amend the Act in the direction suggested by the member for Katanning (Mr. Piesse) earlier in the session, he will find that men will not be willing

to embark in the mining industry. The position is bad enough to-day when, should a miner lose his position in one town, it is necessary for him to travel 100 miles or more to seek work at another field. Any interference with the compensation provisions of the Act will be a deterrent to men seeking work in the mining industry. The amendment moved by the member for South Fremantle is a right and proper one. I am not prepared to accept the statements of individuals who say that beneficiaries under the Workers' Compensation Act have abused that Act. It may have happened in individual cases, but I think only few in number. I am not prepared to accept the statement that medical practitioners are dishonest, or not without a strict investigation at which both sides can be represented and a reliable report set down by which we might be guided in our opinions. The Workers' Compensation Act is capable of amendment, for there are in it certain anomalies. But those anomalies are not of such character as to warrant the Government hurriedly introducing an amending Bill and being keenly desirous of getting it on the statute-book at this particular juncture. I am suspicious of their motive, and not without justification, and so I will support the amendment.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** (Hon. T. A. Davy—West Perth) [10.31]: I agree that at the present time there are more urgent matters to be discussed than the question whether or not the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill should be introduced. For instance, it appears to me the most urgent thing—and I think my view is shared by the Leader of the Opposition—to be discussed to-night was the Premier's financial statement submitted to the House last night, and which he, at the request of the Opposition, agreed should be made the subject of debate this evening. I agree also that co-operation between both parties in the House is of the highest importance. I entirely agree with the motion which was carried by the Loan Council a fortnight ago, that Leaders of Opposition in every Parliament in the Commonwealth should be invited to join in the conference of Premiers. I might inform those members who do not know it, that that idea was put forward originally by a member of the Labour Cabinet of Victoria, and most strongly supported by the Labour Premier of South Aus-

tralia. But I do not believe that members of the Opposition here really imagine that they have given much of an exhibition of co-operation to-night or can be very proud of the debate that has taken place so far.

Mr. Kenneally: No, we should assist you to down the workers every time.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is a vicious interjection.

Mr. Kenneally: But true.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: A vicious interjection which is well worthy of the member for East Perth. Here all that the Government have asked the House to do at the moment is to give leave to present to this House a Bill.

Mr. Kenneally: To sacrifice the workers' interests.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Again I say that is a vicious statement, well worthy of its utterer. As a matter of fact I am game to say that when the Bill is finally presented to the House—which appears to be a considerable time ahead, for I regret to say I see symptoms of a deliberate blocking of that moment arriving—it will be found to be of a highly controversial nature, but the controversy will not be between the Opposition and members on this side. I agree that the Bill, when it sees the light of day, will cause a storm of criticism of this Government, but I say there will not be a single member of the Opposition who will honestly vote against the second reading. If any hon. member will choose to make a private little arrangement with me outside, then if my prediction is incorrect, I will suffer any penalty that he will agree to suffer if the other event turns out. I am prepared to find some fault with the methods with which measures are presented to this House, to the method with which this particular measure is presented to the House. It is not, and it never has been, in strict accord with the Standing Orders. To my mind, if one reads the Standing Orders literally a fair copy draft of the Bill ought to be presented to the House before there is any possibility of debating its contents, before the first reading is through. But we have departed from that procedure as laid down in our Standing Orders, and ever since I have been in the House, now seven years, no member is permitted to see a Bill until it is presented to the House on its second reading. I do not think that is right. If I am able, at some



future date, to alter that procedure, I will use my influence to do so. However, that is the procedure which has invariably been adopted, and the procedure which has been adopted in this case. Now it is said that before this measure is presented to the House a Royal Commission should sit on it. If that is a sound argument, it is the most damning condemnation of Parliamentary Government that one could imagine. Surely this House is designed to be the place of inquiry and of debate as to whether a particular measure shall become law. But we are told to-night that something wrong has been done because the Government which undertook to prepare a measure did not form a committee representing all possible interests to decide what that measure should contain. What earthly purpose could such a committee perform? Would such a committee be of more value than the House? Do not the whole of the Opposition profess to represent the workers in this House? Surely members of the Opposition do not want us to believe, and the public to believe, and the conference which is sitting at the present time to believe, that they are incapable of presenting the workers' point of view. Admittedly there are occasions when expert knowledge is put forward, when expert information should be available to the House. In my experience of seven years, when a case is presented to the House in which expert knowledge is needed to guide us, it is the practice to appoint a select committee of the House to obtain that expert evidence. And I have no doubt whatever that if, when the House has considered this measure which it is intended to present to the House, members of the Opposition make out a case for obtaining that expert evidence before a select committee, the Government will most readily accede to their request. But can we imagine anything more completely and utterly farcical than to spend hours of the time of the House in debating a Bill which has never been seen by any of the members of the Opposition who are making this attack upon it, which has never been seen except by members of the Government and some persons who have helped them to prepare it, and which is of an utterly different nature from that which one would imagine the member for South Fremantle thinks it is, judging from his remarks upon it? As a matter of fact some of the most powerful criticism he has advanced

against this shadow Bill is criticism which has already been met in the very amendment which is going to be presented. I appeal to members of the Opposition to allow the Bill to be introduced and to reserve their criticism for something that does exist, instead of directing it at something they merely imagine exists.

Mr. Wansbrough: Do not you think we could discuss something of more importance to the people than this Bill?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I think we could discuss something of vastly more importance than the question of leave to introduce the Bill. If the Bill were before the House, members would be justified in challenging any provision to which they objected.

Mr. Kenneally: The £100 proposition.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not propose to tell the hon. member what is in the Bill. It is for the Minister for Works to do that at the proper time. But I repeat that not a single member of the Opposition, when he sees the Bill, will be able honestly and sincerely to vote against the second reading. I am sure the second reading will be carried on the voices and without a word of protest. All the criticism that will be directed against members on this side of the House will come not from the Opposition or from the people whom they claim to represent. I have said there are more important matters to discuss, but I claim—and members will readily agree with me—that there is a most important need to amend the Act. I believe that everybody who takes any interest in the working of the measure acknowledges that it contains important defects, that the machinery should be altered, and that for the benefits the workers receive, the cost is too great. What the Government have addressed their attention to is to reducing the cost without minimising the benefits. We should be allowed to get on with the job, and members opposite should reserve their big artillery until they see what they are to fire it against. If they did this, they might find they could save their ammunition for a more worthy task.

Hon. M. F. TROY (Mt. Magnet): I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

**HON. M. F. TROY** (Mt. Magnet) [10.44]: I was most anxious to meet the wishes of the Attorney General when he said there were more important matters which could be debated. I believe there are. We are most desirous of discussing the speech made by the Premier yesterday. That is the most important matter before the House at present. I do not propose to speak long on this subject. If any suspicion is entertained regarding the intentions of the Bill, the Government have themselves to blame. There has been much propaganda in the Press, by supporters of the Government, aimed at securing an amendment of the Act. It has been urged that the advantages conferred on the workers by the Act are too many. Members of the Government have promised that the Act would be amended in order to deprive the workers of some of the advantages. Their party spokesmen in the country have been most insistent that the Government should take action. Mr. Lee Steere reproached the Government for their inactivity, and asked that the primary producers be relieved of this burden. Mr. Padbury has spoken about it on more than one occasion, and Ministers have told their constituents that, in order to relieve the primary producers, some of the burdens of the Act should be removed. The Minister for Lands made a very definite statement, or if not a statement an implication, to the primary producers at a meeting held in the Young Australia League hall. It was that the Government proposed to amend the Act in order to relieve the primary producers.

The Minister for Lands: I did not say anything of the sort.

**Hon. M. F. TROY**: I accept the explanation, because it is about the tenth explanation he has made of his own public statements. He is given to making statements one day and correcting them the next.

The Minister for Lands. When they are statements such as you are making now—not correct.

**Hon. M. F. TROY**: To-day he makes a statement and to-morrow he makes an explanation.

The Minister for Lands: If others do as you are doing now, I have a right to make an explanation.

**Hon. M. F. TROY**: We are naturally suspicious of the measure because we know what the Government party stand for. We

have reason for suspicion when we recall how the party opposite secured office. They secured office by adopting the most unscrupulous tactics. They made wholesale promises which they have since utterly repudiated. A party who gain office in that manner are not deserving of much consideration from this side of the House. It may well be said that the community are suspicious of them also. Right through the country the people are suspicious when legislation of this sort is foreshadowed by the Government. If the Government went to the country to-morrow and from the house-tops proclaimed that they were going to amend the Act to make it more favourable to the workers, not 1 per cent. of the people would believe it. The people have been had in the past and will not be had again. The Attorney General was very hurt because the forms of Parliament were being used to prevent discussion of the Bill. It is within the rights of members on this side of the House to place any obstruction in the way of legislation of which they disapprove. This discussion could not have taken place had not the Standing Orders provided for it. There is nothing wrong with the amendment moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and it is quite within the rights of the House to discuss it. From the assurances given by the Attorney General, the Bill may be perfectly innocuous, but I cannot understand why the Government want to introduce it. There has been no demand from the country for the Bill. Rather was a definite promise given by the Premier and the member for Perth (Mr. H. W. Mann) that the Government would not interfere with any existing industrial legislation.

The Premier. It was not.

**Hon. M. F. TROY**: It was a definite promise.

The Premier: You know it was not.

**Hon. M. F. TROY**: That the Government would not interfere with any industrial legislation.

The Premier: It is a manufactured promise.

**Hon. M. F. TROY**: The policy speech of the Premier is fresh in our minds. He assured the people that all the privileges they enjoyed under existing industrial legislation would be retained by them. Now he says this is not correct. We know he made voluminous promises, and that he has repudiated them since. We ought to be suspicious. The Bill may be all that is said for

it, but we have a right to be suspicious because the Government have not treated this country and the House fairly in the past.

The Premier: More fairly than you did.

Hon. M. F. TROY: We know, by their amendment to the Industrial Arbitration Act early in the session, that the Government broke their word to the people. The Premier and the member for Perth (Mr. H. W. Mann) definitely said that this legislation would not be interfered with. They broke their word, and we know the result to the community. We are not prepared to trust the Government in any way. It is our business to take every course this House allows to prevent the Government from carrying out a policy which we believe to be injurious to the best interests of the people. We are told this Bill was submitted to a committee of inquiry, consisting of Government servants, acting probably upon Government instructions. We know that Mr. Andrew, the Assistant Under Secretary for Labour in the office of the Minister for Works, would not have a free hand. He was asked to look into the measure from the standpoint of the Government. We know that other officers would not have had a free hand. They were asked to look into the measure with a view to carrying out the Government policy. We are not going to accept the opinion of that committee as being entirely unbiased. We know it is based entirely upon what the policy of the Government is. Why do not the Government attempt to relieve the community instead of always attacking the workers? Why do they always attack the bottom dog? At meetings of the Loan Council the Premier and his colleagues, the Nationalist Premiers, advocated a policy which meant cutting down old-age and invalid pensions. We know that while they pretend they are aiming at a policy for the good of Australia they want to reduce these pensions. Why do they attack the bottom dog? The Minister for Lands knows the imposition the primary producers have to bear. Upon the purchase of £100 worth of machinery the primary producer is compelled to pay £14 or £15 to an agent he has never seen.

The Minister for Lands: And 2½ per cent. sales tax.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Why do not the Government attempt to overcome that? Right throughout the country we find that these agents are members of the Country Party. These impositions—which are not legiti-

mate—might well be attacked in the interests of the people. If the Government have any complaint concerning the opposition to this Bill, I would point out it is due to the fact that we do not trust them, and have no reason to do so. Their record is such as to warrant our distrusting them. We are dealing with a Government which got into office by unscrupulous means, and by making thousands of promises which have not been fulfilled. We are dealing with a Government which has repudiated all its promises. In view of our experience in connection with the Industrial Arbitration Act we do not propose to take them at their word in any matter so far as any intending legislation is concerned. For these reasons I support the amendment.

HON. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [10.55]: It seems to me somewhat strange that the very first act of the Government after calling Parliament together should be to bring a broadside against the workers generally. I have had a long experience in the struggles behind the movement to obtain the very privileges that inferentially at least are attacked to-night, the privileges of the working man. For centuries past the workers have given their lives, literally speaking, for the creation of the wealth of the world, to die like driven cattle neglected and unloved. We are called suddenly together for what? Inferentially we are told, through the Press and by every politician on the opposite side, that we are required to run on our feet, so to speak, after being knocked over by the terrible financial crisis that has come, not only to Western Australia, but the Commonwealth, the British Empire, and even the world itself. Apparently, in pursuit of that policy, as an exhibition of the spirit of trying to redeem the fortunes of nations, we find not a utilisation of the wealth within the nations, but a crippling, a humbling and the destruction of the toiling classes. That apparently is the progress we are making. That is what is proposed under this Bill, to pile more burdens upon the already broken-hearted. It is an attempt to crush humanity, to break the spirit that creates wealth and happiness, to add to the fetters upon the people, and pile greater risks and penalties upon the toiling population. From my heart I detest that policy that is ever striving to make of humanity—the working population—an exhibition of continuous and

suffering slavery. I thought Parliament had been called together for the purpose of removing the blinds and letting in the sunlight, taking the shadows from our hearts. Here, at the opening scene of the fag-end of a session that has done nothing for the workers so far—

Mr. Kenneally: But has done everything against their interests.

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly. Everything that could be done to break the hearts of the toilers, to make their outlook darker, to depress their spirits until they become mutinous, has been done by the politicians of this Government and of Governments allied with them. We are told, with a species of eloquence, that we ought to wait until we know what the measure proposes. Why wait till we are shot, when the gun is pointed at us? Let us stop at its initiation an effort that we know aims at nothing but the burdening more heavily and disastrously the lot of the toiling man. We must not wait until the fetters have been forged. We would stop outside our door a ferocious beast that sought to destroy and devour us; we would not let him in to give him his chances. This is precisely one of those measures that we must resist at the very beginning. We must not let this wild brute enter our domiciles knowingly, give him knowingly free power to destroy us, give him a welcome. It is a privilege of Parliament, it is one of the glorious protections of our Constitution, that we are able to stop at the initiation of an evil that threatens the happiness either of the people as a whole or of any large section of them. And this measure aims at the destruction, or shall I perhaps be more justified in saying the limitation, of the rights of those who have created all the wealth of the world. Let us not flatter ourselves. Banking institutions, commercial institutions, the great money-hoarding and distributing factors of the community are only the reservoir into which human sweat has flowed for centuries, filling their coffers with, shall I say, blood turned into gold. What are all the great financial institutions that dominate the toiler the wide world over but the result of the toil, the self-denial, the suffering, the servitude, even the absolute slavery of that despised class called the workers? What is there in the way of wealth in the world that the workers have not created? And now at this time of distress, when people are sleep-

ing out in the cold exposed to the pitiless inclemency of the elements, at this very time there is a proposal to deprive those workers who have already attained certain privileges and benefits, of some at least of those privileges and benefits. Is this the way to restore confidence? Can the world do anything without workers? What would become of the globe itself if all the workers were to cease their work from now onward? Is there a palace, a temple, a glorious monument of human effort and greatness on the face of this globe of ours that the workers have not created? Shall we find the millionaire digging in the mine or cutting in the quarry? It is the worker who toils under the broiling sun of the Tropics and in the freezing cold of the Arctic. It is the worker who fishes and digs up from the seas and the earth the wealth of humanity. And the moment there is a great crisis, when the lack of wisdom of the governing politicians of the world has plunged the world into financial disaster, who is to be made the victim? Not the statesman, not the multi-millionaire, not the financial institutions of the country, but the man who has no treasure in this world except the wife that loves him and the little one dependent on him for their comfort who climb on his knees. He is to be the victim. In all the financial disasters that have come upon this Commonwealth of ours the working man has been the beast of burden, carrying the whole weight of national disaster upon his shrinking shoulders. That is what we are reduced to. When hon. members opposite talk about this new Bill as something of a blessing to the workers, its god-fathers and godmothers belie its origin. We cannot believe that it brings blessings to the workers. For how long have we been struggling to get some consideration for the man who risks limb and life and the happiness of his home circle, and afforded him some little protection from those for whom he has helped to create fortunes and from the whip of wealth that lashes the bare back of the worker, bended with toil. Who is he? I tell you, Mr. Speaker, it astounds me to think that such a proposal can emanate from an enlightened Government, comprising men of culture and training in scholarship, men who have read something of the history of mankind and have noted the devious pathways, the stony roads and tortuous paths that humanity has trod from the days of admitted and conscious slavery

up to this 20th century, a time when we imagine we are free. Free for what? Free to give our lives, our happiness, our health, all that goes to constitute self-conscious and dignified manhood into the looms and into the terrible cauldrons of toil. It is the worker who has taken our merchandise through the storms of boisterous seas and linked cities and capitals and nations together. It is the toiler who has gone into the depths of the wild, who has contended with nature, hewn down the forests and planted the waving, golden, nutritious harvest for the benefit of mankind. It is the toiler who in every instance must suffer when adversity comes. The sacrifices to be made now are to be made by those who are driven out of shelter and have to hide themselves from the unsympathetic storms of winter behind walls or trees or some places that can never, by any stretch of the imagination, be called homes. They are walking about now in this country of wealth, a land that is teeming with its products. Men are walking about, half starving. They are wandering hopelessly along the roads craving for work, when there is abundant work that requires to be done. In the midst of all the terrible anguish, this heart-breaking experience, we have this sad spectacle that breaks the hearts not only of women but of men, and strikes the very smiles from the faces of the children. It is in these times and at this juncture that what we are seeking to do is to protect the class that obtains its wealth from the sweat of the toiler, of the labouring man. That is the class that must be protected and be guarded by law. That class must be saved every shilling. What matters it if the man who has toiled has torn from his body the limbs with which he toiled? What matters it that the man has to leave his wife and family and go down into the bowels of the earth, and, in the suffocating experience gained in the depths of the mine, toils for years until he becomes a helpless, hopeless, decrepit creature, ruined in every sense of the word, that someone else may enjoy the wealth he has toiled to produce? For the toiler no sympathy; for him, no care. Government looks upon him as upon its beasts of burden, upon its machines. Government has no care for the human form that has helped to make at least one home happy. The toiler may perish so long as those who own the mines or have charge

of any dangerous occupation may succeed. They may flourish, these friends of the bankers, these friends of the rich and the socially elevated. So long as they succeed, what matters it that flesh and blood may still possess the noble quality of self sacrifice? What matters it that the toiler may have little of cheer, of uplift or enlightenment? What matters it that he may have but a few short hours at home but long weary days and often terrible nights down in the bowels of the earth in order that he may earn the crust that will keep his wife, his child and himself alive? Have we no heart? Have we no pity? Cannot we turn the light in the right direction? Cannot we appreciate the fact that the real creator of the wealth of all the world is the humble toiler? Then, when really hard times come upon us and someone has to be sacrificed, the sacrifices have to be made by those who have sacrificed much already and have to sacrifice still more. Here the burden of this Act is to be placed upon the toiler. It is done with a flippancy and carelessness that is perfectly astounding. It is done by men of refinement, of education, of some intellectual training, and, I hope, of some social appreciation. It is such men that can bring forward a Bill of this description. That is the reason why to-night it is proposed to deal with the Bill as moved by the hon. member. Why should we allow a Bill of which we know the origin and the purpose and the danger, to make still harder the lot of the wealth creators of this State? Why should we pander to those who are able to pay and not feel it, even in these disastrous times? Why pander to the monied classes? If the nation knows its value, if the nation has learnt the true lessons of history, if the nation has learnt that from savagery and brutality we have broken by degrees through to civilisation; if it has learnt those lessons, this Government must see that they are striking the wrong note, that they are shooting at their best friends, that they are destroying, not the wealth of the country, but the wealth creators of the country, that they are breaking human hearts; and that the sadness, the gloom, the despair, the universal despondency must cripple the muscles and nerves and energy of the whole community till the community's health wastes as the Government would waste the workers, and civilisation itself rolls backwards.

**MR. HEGNEY** (Middle Swan) [11.23]: After listening to the eloquent and lucid address of my elderly friend, I feel it will not need many words of mine to support the amendment moved by the member for South Fremantle. The main argument urged against the amendment is that we do not know what is in the Bill. But, as the member for Kanowna has just said, we do know something of the grandmothers and grandfathers of such Bills, and particularly of the source from which they emanate. We have only to cast back our minds before the present Act was put on the statute-book to know the provisions of the then Workers' Compensation Act and how inadequate they were in safeguarding the lives and interests of the workers in various industries throughout the State. We also know how difficult it then was, even when the workers were entitled to benefits under the Act, for them to get the payments and provisions prescribed in the Act. A Nationalist Government had been in power for many years, but they never sought to amend the Act to secure the liberal provisions contained in the present Act. The chief cry against the existing Act is in respect of the abuses alleged to take place amongst foreigners in the South-West. Both the insurance companies and the private employers wail that those foreigners exploit the provisions of the Act, and that they deliberately injure themselves in order to get money so that they can return to their country of origin. That is the fault of the employers, for they give preference of employment to those foreigners as against Australians. That being so, they ought to put up with the consequences of their policy, or, alternatively, employ Australians. It is well known that the Australian worker does not do the things that many of the foreigners do. I have no word to say against the foreigner as a man, but he is brought into this country and the employers, particularly those in the timber industry, give preference of employment to him as against the Australian. Then when the foreigners violate the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act and deliberately injure themselves in order to secure the benefits under the Act, the cry is that industry is burdened because of that. As for the medical benefits available under the Act, the experience of the working of the Act is that, with few exceptions, workers that

are severely injured have got some liberal provision by which they can be nursed back to their former health and resume their places in industry. So I am pleased to say a few words following the member for Kanowna who, although he is getting on in life, is still capable of putting up a very eloquent effort on behalf of the workers. The Minister said we ought to have waited until the Bill was introduced, when if it was not satisfactory to us he would consider the appointment of a Royal Commission.

The Minister for Works: I did not say that at all. That statement is not correct.

**MR. HEGNEY:** I understood the Minister to say we ought to have waited until the second reading stage was reached, when members on this side might find they could accept the Bill, failing which possibly he would consider the appointment of a Royal Commission.

The Minister for Works: A select committee was what I said.

**MR. HEGNEY:** Ever since the present Government came into power it has been noised abroad that the Workers' Compensation Act would be whittled down. Almost daily have we had it from the Employers' Federation and representatives of the primary producers that the Workers' Compensation Act was a burden on industry. The workers of this country are fully entitled to the provisions of the existing Act under which, following on an accident, they can be rehabilitated and resume their places in industry. The request for a Royal Commission is reasonable. I support the amendment and hope it will be carried.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	20
Noes	..	..	..	..	25
					—
Majority against					5
					—

#### AYES.

Mr. Collier	Mr. Panton
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Troy
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Kennally	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Withers
Mr. McCallum	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Millington	
Mr. Munsie	

(Teller.)

## NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Str James Mitchell
Mr. Barnard	Mr. Parker
Mr. Brown	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Davy	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Doney	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Keenan	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Latham	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. Thorn
Mr. H. W. Mann	Mr. Wells
Mr. J. I. Mann	Mr. North
Mr. McLarty	

(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Question (leave to introduce) put and passed.

*First Reading.*

Bill introduced and read a first time.

*As to Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. J. Lindsay—Mt. Marshall) [11.35]: I move—

That the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting of the House.

**MR. SLEEMAN** (Fremantle) [11.36]: I do not think we should allow this motion to be put without moving an amendment. There is no need for such haste as fixing the second reading for the next sitting of the House. I move an amendment—

That all the words after "for" be struck out and the words "this day six months" inserted in lieu.

Why the haste? Have the Government received a mandate from the country for this legislation?

The Premier: You will not get to your motion if you are not careful.

**Mr. SLEEMAN.** I am prepared to let that stand over until the starving thousands of people have been considered. During the elections the Government received no mandate to bring down this Bill, but once firmly entrenched in office, they take this action. The Minister for Lands attended a meeting of farmers, and when things began to be made pretty warm for him by the wheat growers he asked, "Do you want the Arbitration Act amended?" and the reply was "Yes." Then he asked, "Do you want the Workers' Compensation Act amended?" And the reply again was "Yes." So he goes along and gets the Government to introduce this Bill.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** I do not intend to allow any discussion on the merits of the Bill.

The hon. member must confine his remarks to the amendment.

**Mr. SLEEMAN:** I suppose I may move the amendment?

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Yes, but you cannot discuss the merits of the Bill. You have been doing that for the last four hours.

**Mr. SLEEMAN:** I can give reasons why the Bill should not be considered until this month. One is that the Government have received no mandate.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** I do not consider that is a reason.

**Mr. SLEEMAN:** Another reason is that there is far more serious business confronting the country than this measure. I think I should be allowed to say that the fact that thousands of men are starving is a more important matter for Parliament to consider than an amendment to the Workers' Compensation Act.

The Premier: Is it not permissible to improve an Act?

**Mr. SLEEMAN:** Yes, but the people are quite content that this Act should continue until the more important business is dealt with. Does not the Premier agree that the people who are starving and for whom he promised to find work are more entitled to consideration? Have not the Government had time to give them consideration? Could not they allow this Bill to stand over until the more important business is dealt with?

**Mr. SPEAKER:** The House has been considering that matter for the last four hours. You are entitled to move your amendment but not to discuss the merits or demerits of the Bill and I ask you to refrain from discussing reasons.

**Mr. SLEEMAN:** I bow to your ruling, but consider that the importance of the matter warrants keeping members here for another fourteen hours.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** The House has decided that the Bill be read a first time and I shall not allow you to continue discussion which has been going on for the last four hours. You must either abide by my ruling or protest against it.

**Mr. SLEEMAN:** I understand that the House has decided that the Bill be read a first time. I am trying to convince the House that the business of the country should not be held up while we wait for this Bill to be printed, and brought down for the second reading.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Does the hon. member dispute my ruling?

Mr. SLEEMAN: I am bowing to your ruling, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Then the hon. member must refrain from finding fault with the ruling of the Chair. I have ruled that he is not in order.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I am trying to keep to the point, and hope I shall not offend. Six months hence is time enough in which to have this Bill printed, and 12 months hence would be time enough in which to have it read a second time. I hope the House will not agree to the waste of time involved in waiting for this Bill to be printed, while important measures remain to be dealt with.

Amendment put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 11.42 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Thursday, 14th May, 1931.*

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

### QUESTIONS (2)—POTATOES.

#### *Second-hand Bags.*

Mr. WANSBROUGH asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is he aware that second-hand potato bags, ex Victoria, are being supplied by merchants to potato-growers in the Southern and South-Western portions of this State for refilling with this season's crop? 2, If so, will early consideration be given with a view to preventing such practice, thus eliminating the introduction of eel-worm and other pests that are prevalent in Victoria, and preventing the areas mentioned from becoming affected?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes.

#### *Imports from Victoria.*

Mr. WANSBROUGH asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, In view of the public appeal and propaganda exhibited throughout the State during the past two years ("Buy local products and find someone a job"), is it a fact that during the months of June, July, and August last the merchants of the metropolitan area imported into this State ex Victoria 1,200 tons of potatoes? 2, Is it also a fact that in the Southern and South-Western portions of this State 2,000 tons of prime potatoes were being fed to stock, owing to there being no local market for them during that period? 3, If so, will consideration be given to stabilisation of such products, thus preventing a repetition and protecting the industry?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, Yes, but since the 1st January, 1931, only five tons of ware and three tons of seed have been imported from Victoria. A further eight tons of special Bismark seed was obtained from Tasmania during this period. 2, A large quantity was fed to stock. This, I understand, was due to our growers demanding a higher price than merchants could land them in this State from Victoria. 3, As our grading regulations are now in force merchants are not importing, and growers are arranging to market their potatoes so as to prevent the necessity for importation.

### QUESTIONS (2)—UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF.

#### *Commonwealth Assistance.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Treasurer: What assistance have the Commonwealth Government given to this State during the past twelve months by way of grants and otherwise to help to relieve the distress caused by unemployment?

The TREASURER replied: £65,000.

#### *Expenditure of Grant.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Will he inform the House how the £32,000 received from the Commonwealth Government last Christmas for the