

hours should be reduced. Those statements, in the opinion of the police authorities, or whoever was responsible for the prosecution, amounted to creating discontent and disaffection amongst His Majesty's subjects, whereas a statement regarding guns and shooting did not. How blind are they in the direction which they do not wish to see, and what keen perception they have where they do want to take action. The point I am making is that there is not one member of this House against whom a police magistrate would not hold that a *prima facie* case had not been made out for statements uttered during the Referendum campaign. There is, therefore, no weight in the argument of the Attorney General that the prosecution in question was justified by reason of the fact that the police magistrate considered a *prima facie* case had been made out. It was impossible to make statements which would not create disaffection. Is there any man in Australia who has made statements that have created so much discontent and disaffection amongst His Majesty's subjects as the present Prime Minister has done? Why, he has had Australia on the verge of civil war. He could not arrive at that stage without first creating discontent and disaffection; and so, in a lesser degree, right down through all his followers and satellites. I admit that I myself made innumerable statements likely to create discontent and disaffection; so did everybody who took an active part in the campaign. But why were these humble individuals singled out for prosecution, while everybody else was permitted to go free? Then, too, Sir Walter James is called in to advise the Government as to whether a case lies; and if he decides that the case ought to be taken, he is to be given charge of the prosecution.

The Attorney General: That was not so; he was not called in to advise as to whether a case laid. It was after the case was launched that he was called in. I am sure of that fact. All that I said was that I felt sure that a man in his position, if not satisfied that there was a *prima facie* case, would so advise the Crown.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The whole thing is so much padding in the case. I have the substantial fact that the one tribunal which finally dealt with the matter decided by their verdict that there was no case.

The Attorney General: Decided that the accused were not guilty.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Well, decided that there was not sufficient case to justify a conviction. Perhaps that is the correct version.

Mr. Smith: They might have given the prisoners the benefit of the doubt.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not think there was much doubt about it. However, it is of no use my labouring the question. I am convinced that it was a political prosecution, undertaken for no other purpose. The evidence would not justify it on any other grounds whatever. And the great bulk of the people of Australia are convinced that not only this, but innumerable other prosecutions of a similar character, were undertaken for that purpose. In my opinion, when they got an opportunity, they will express that view in unmistakable fashion.

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

Ayes	13
Noes	25

Majority against .. 12

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Munslie
Mr. Collier	Mr. Rocke
Mr. Green	Mr. Troy
Mr. Holman	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Jones	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Lambert	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Broun	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Brown	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Draper	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. Durack	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. George	Mr. Smith
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Maley	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Money	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Mullany	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

House adjourned at 10.58 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 7th February, 1918.

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

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

"HANSARD"—REPORT OF JOINT PRINTING COMMITTEE.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM brought up the report of the Joint Printing Committee in connection with the suggested abolition of "Hansard," which report was read by the Clerk.

BILL—LOCAL OPTION CONTINUANCE.

Read a third time and passed.

BILL—BROOME LOCAL COURT ADMIRALTY JURISDICTION.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.36] in moving the second reading said: This is a very small Bill and the object of it will, I think, be quite clear to hon. members. At the present time Admiralty jurisdiction is conferred on the Supreme Court under the Colonial Courts of Admiralty Act of 1880, Nos. 53 and 54 Victoria, Chapter 27. Cases have arisen in the past where a considerable amount of delay and expense has been caused both to the State and to individuals through having to refer claims for seamen's wages, and similar small claims, to the Supreme Court for consideration. The object of the Bill as set out in Clause 2, is to confer a limited jurisdiction in Admiralty on the local court of Broome, in respect of seamen's wages and masters' wages, and disbursements on account of the ship. The limitations are (a) that the ship shall not exceed 150 tons burden, and (b) that the claims shall not exceed £100. Under the Colonial Courts of Admiralty Act, if this Bill is passed, it will require to be reserved for the signification of His Majesty's pleasure. I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [4.38]: I am very glad to find that this Bill is being introduced. Cases have occurred in Broome particularly, and in other ports I understand, where seamen who are engaged under contract from Koepang and other places have lost the opportunity of getting their wages from employers who refuse to pay them, because they have had to come to the Supreme Court of Perth before being able to recover them. If their claim is then successful, their legal expenses and travelling expenses are so great as to actually swallow up the amount claimed. This, I think hon. members will agree, is a state of affairs which is to be deplored. It is to the true interests of the pearling community that a Bill of this kind should go through, for this reason: hon. members will be surprised, perhaps, to hear that even in what is known as the East, Koepang and other islands besides Timor, with their teeming millions of population, labour of any class is getting harder and harder to obtain year by year. Indeed the development of the industries of those countries is absorbing all the available labour. The Governments of these countries, whether Portuguese or Dutch, are making the conditions more and more stringent. They wish to be sure that the people who leave their shores under agreement to the pearlers or other people shall receive fair and honest treatment. And if it goes forth that it is impossible for these people from Koepang and other places to sue and recover their wages from defaulting employers, it will be the last straw, and the Dutch or Portuguese Governments undoubtedly will refuse to allow their subjects to further engage as seamen in connection with the pearling industry. It is high time that a Bill of this kind was placed

on our Statute-book, so as to allow these men who earn their money after very hard work, and who in some instances are the only men who are qualified for the positions they fill, to have the opportunity of getting their just wages without being forced to lose time and money in their efforts to recover what belongs to them. I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill and congratulate the Government on having introduced it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—PUBLIC EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.50] in moving the second reading said: The single object of this Bill is to make compulsory the education of blind, deaf and mute children. The special attention, and the special methods required for the treatment of these unfortunate children, are not provided in our State schools and consequently the compulsory clauses of our Education Act do not apply to these children. In this respect the State of Western Australia is behind most other countries and behind other portions of the Commonwealth. Compulsory education for blind, deaf and mute children has been in existence in Scotland since 1890 and in England and Wales since 1893. It is also in force in Tasmania, Victoria, New Zealand and South Australia, and a Bill with this object in view has been drafted in New South Wales; while the only States in the Commonwealth which have not taken steps to make the education of blind, deaf and mute children compulsory are Queensland and Western Australia. So far as our inquiries have gone the number of blind, deaf and mute children not receiving education in this State is happily not very large, but we are of opinion that the sooner steps are taken to alter this condition of affairs the better it will be, because those parents who do keep their blind, deaf and mute children away from educational advantages are certainly doing it out of a mistaken sense of kindness. Some of them are reluctant to part with these children. They think doubtless the children require special attention, and they do not care about sending them away from home even for the time required to enable them to receive education. But if those parents had the opportunity of seeing the children who have the advantage of going through schools specially constituted for their teaching, they would be struck with astonishment at the contrast between the children afflicted in this way who have had opportunities of education, and the children who have not. Those children who have not had educational advantages are at once a burden upon the State and a burden upon themselves, whilst those who have been educated lead, comparatively speaking, bright and happy

lives, and become useful and are able to provide for their own maintenance. It is usually the case with children afflicted in this way that they are otherwise quite normal so far as their ordinary intellect is concerned, and are capable of being taught; in fact in some cases we have seen that nature has made compensations and that those children afflicted by blindness, or who may be deaf and dumb, have particularly active interests. Those children require careful and patient training, and if they are given this training they will be able in most cases to contribute towards—if not entirely—earning their own living. Fortunately we have institutions in our midst at which the training can be afforded. The Victoria Institute for the Blind at Maylands has been in existence for upwards of 20 years, and a great many students have passed through it. Those students have learned not merely to read and take an interest in the affairs of life, but many have learned music and have also learned trades and have qualified themselves for earning their own livelihoods. The school at Maylands takes in children who live in the neighbourhood, as day students. Those who live further away are taken in as weekly boarders, while some from remote parts of the State are taken in as boarders who go home merely at vacation time. Payment is made by the parents who can afford to pay, but the institution has never refused to take and educate a blind child if the parent has not been able to afford to pay. The public support this institution generously and the Government contribute towards its support, and blind children are not refused accommodation and training, even though the parents may not be able to pay. The institution is prepared to extend its accommodation so as to provide training, and if necessary living accommodation for all the blind children who may be forthcoming, and it is prepared to do that quite irrespective of whether the parents are able to pay or not. The Bill follows closely the provisions of existing legislation in South Australia, Victoria, and New Zealand. The compulsory period is from 6 to 16 years of age. In England and Scotland the compulsory ages are from 5 to 16 for the blind and from 7 to 16 for the deaf and mute. In Tasmania and New Zealand the ages are from 7 to 16 in both classes, and in South Australia from 6 to 16, and it is the South Australian proposal we intend to follow. It is recognised that in making the education of these children compulsory the State must be prepared, if necessary, to face some financial responsibility. Schools for these children cannot be provided in every district, and consequently their education may often involve sending them away from home, and some measure of payment for their maintenance in the institution in which they are being taught will be necessary. Subclause 2 of Clause 2 provides that if parents are unable to pay either to provide the education themselves or to pay for the education of their children in the institution, in such cases they will be required to notify the Minister of their inability to do so, and the Minister will then direct the sending of the children to a specified institution. The Minister will also enter into an agreement with the parents by which the latter will pay a cer-

tain sum towards the education and maintenance of the children at such institutions, and if an agreement cannot be arrived at mutually between the Minister and the parents, any court of summary jurisdiction may make an order against the parent for such sums as it deems fit, the sum not to exceed 10s. a week. Whilst it is recognised that it may be necessary for the State to find a small sum of money, I do not think there can be any doubt that it will be money well spent, because if the expenditure of a few pounds a year during the period from 6 to 16 years enables a child to become self supporting, that will be a burden lifted from the shoulders of the general community. In practically all cases parents will be able to contribute, if not the entire cost, at least some portion of the cost. If a child is sent to an institution as a permanent boarder the parents will be relieved of the cost of the maintenance of that child, and even the poorest parents if they are called upon to pay the greater portion of the cost of the maintenance of the child will not be worse off. The remaining clauses of the Bill are purely machinery clauses to permit of the carrying out of the objects in view. I move—

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

On motion by Hon. J. Duffell debate adjourned.

BILL—APPRENTICES.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.58] in moving the second reading said: A Bill similar, in fact identical with the one now before the House excepting an alteration in the concluding clauses to which I will draw the attention of hon. members—was submitted by to this House in March of last year. I then explained that similar legislation had already been passed by the Parliaments of New South Wales and South Australia. As I then pointed out a large number of apprentices in the various trades had enlisted for active service, and in the majority of cases, and I trust I am correct in saying in practically all cases, the employers have undertaken to keep their positions open for them. There are certain features of the Apprentices Act which they cannot comply with unless a Bill of this description is passed. The first object of the Bill is to protect the interests of the apprentices whilst they are away, so that when they return they may resume their apprenticeship without suffering any undue hardship or penalty. Clause 2 of the Bill provides for the suspension of the apprenticeship during the period of military service, and for six months thereafter unless revived under this Act, while Subclause 2 provides that any limitation as to age of apprentices or to the term of any apprenticeship, or any other provision which would prevent the revival of the apprenticeship, shall not apply to apprentices who have been on active service. The second provision of the Bill is intended to enable employers to engage additional apprentices up to the full complement which they are entitled to employ, in addition to those apprentices whose period has been suspended because

of their absence on active service. The position now is that if an employer whose apprentices have gone away, makes application to the Arbitration Court with a request to be permitted to put on additional apprentices, he is told that he already has the full number of apprentices on his books, and that he cannot employ more unless he terminates the apprenticeships of those who have gone away on service. This is undoubtedly a most undesirable state of affairs, both from the point of view of the employer and of the industry in which he is engaged. It is also very unsatisfactory in that it prevents youths from securing the advantages of apprenticeship. There was one feature of the Bill as introduced in March last to which strong exception was taken, I think by Mr. Dodd. It was to the effect that in calculating the number of apprentices which any employer might be entitled to engage, the number of tradesmen who had gone away to the war should be added to the number remaining in the establishment. That provision was taken from the New South Wales Act, and I confess that some reasonable objection might be taken to it from a trades union point of view, and consequently it has been removed from the present Bill. In most industries the number of apprentices is fixed by the Arbitration Court in accordance with the number of adult employees. All that the Bill does is to permit apprentices to be taken on to make up that total irrespective of those who have gone on active service. The South Australian Act did not make any reference to this question of putting on additional apprentices to make up the full complement irrespective of those who had enlisted, the reason for that omission being that in South Australia, with the exception only of the building trade, the Arbitration Court has not limited the number of apprentices in any industry. I may point out that both in New South Wales and South Australia these Bills were introduced by Labour Governments, and in no case was any exception taken to their passage. They were not introduced by National Governments. During the debate which took place in this House last year, I think it was Mr. Sanderson who asked that some statement should be made as to the number of apprentices registered at the Court of Arbitration and the number of apprentices of whom notice had been given to the clerk that they had enlisted in the military forces, and I have endeavoured to secure details under those headings, but I am afraid they are not altogether satisfactory. I obtained a return from the Court of Arbitration which shows the number of apprentices is 573. Of that number 148 are in the tailoring trade, almost all of whom are women who are not affected by the proposal. The number of apprentices of whom notice has been given to the court as having gone on active service is 79, but I think from the figures supplied to me from other sources that the number is far beyond that. In the timber industry there were 17 apprentices employed, of whom 15 have gone to the war. In the engineering industry there were 32 employed, and 17 have gone to the war. But in that particular trade it is

shown that only five of the 17 who had gone to the war, had notified the Court of Arbitration to that effect, so that the return is not as comprehensive as we might desire. In the furniture trade there were 39 apprentices and eight have gone to the war, and in many cases it appears that half or more than half of the apprentices—in one case 15 out of 17—have gone on active service. Unless some legislation is introduced the door is practically closed to anyone learning these trades. When these men come back they will be put on until their apprenticeship is completed, and it will be found that some employers have more apprentices than they are entitled to. But that is a small thing compared with the serious consequences that must result otherwise. Whilst the Bill to which I have already referred was under consideration in this House, arrangements were made for a committee to discuss the conditions of apprenticeship and to make recommendations. That committee consisted of the following gentlemen:—the Director of Education, the Director of Technical Education, Mr. Senior Inspector Clubb (representing the Education Department), Messrs. F. S. Andrews and W. Leslie (representing the Chamber of Commerce), Messrs. J. F. Brown and C. J. Locke (representing the Chamber of Manufacturers), and Messrs. Barker, Cameron, Hendley, and McCallum (representing the Metropolitan Council of the Australian Labour Federation). After this committee was appointed, and acting to some extent on the suggestion of Mr. Dodd, I did not proceed further with the Bill. It was allowed to drop so that the committee could complete its work, and so that the matter could be further considered by Parliament afterwards. The committee completed its labours towards the end of last year, and I regret to say it has not been found possible to come to a definite understanding on the more important points. After two meetings of the committee had been held it was decided that three sub-committees should be formed to deal with the three principal groups of trades in which apprentices are employed, namely, the engineering and metal working trades, the building trades (including plumbing), and the furniture trades. These three sub-committees have met on several occasions and have discussed the conditions of the respective groups of trades. In the engineering trades it was found that the full number of apprentices allowed was being employed in most of the metal-working branches. The railway workshops are allowed only one apprentice for four workmen, while the private employers are allowed one apprentice to two workmen. It was stated that this matter was shortly coming before the Arbitration Court. There are other features in this report which probably we will find of interest in different directions, but which have no bearing on the present Bill, therefore I am giving the particulars. It was not found possible to arrive at any agreement with regard to a recommendation for an increase in the number of apprentices. The sub-committee agreed, however, (a) that compulsory technical education was essential for apprentices, (b) that a com-

mittee should be appointed to advise on the courses for apprentices in all branches of the engineering trades and to appoint examiners. It was suggested that the committee should consist of three representatives of the masters, three representatives of the workers, and three representatives of the Education Department. The committee should have power to call in representatives of particular branches, if desired, to advise on matters concerning their special interests. (c) That examinations should be held quarterly. An apprentice should have the choice of being examined at either the next examination preceding the termination of his year, or the next examination after that date. (d) There should be a board of examiners for each branch of the trade, consisting of a representative of the masters, a representative of the workers, and an officer of the Technical School. (e) The examination should, if possible, be held at the Technical School. In the furniture trades it was found that some of the firms concerned were not taking their full number of apprentices. It was decided to send a circular in the name of the sub-committee urging all firms to take as many apprentices as the award permitted. The representatives of the unions, however, subsequently withdrew from this position. The employers' representatives are still carrying out the proposed course of action on their own account. The sub-committee agreed upon the necessity for compulsory technical education for apprentices, and for a scheme of control by a committee with a regular examination system as outlined in the last section. The building trades presented the most difficult problem. The contractor's business is not sufficiently continuous and settled to make them willing to bind themselves to employ apprentices for five years. The consequence is that in many branches there are no boys trained at all and there is no prospect of any supply of skilled workers within the State. The employers wished for the re-introduction of the "improver system," or for the recognition of short-term apprenticeships. The workers' representatives, however, are unable to agree to support this suggestion. All agreed that the present system was a failure, and that the introduction of the apprenticeship system in these trades had resulted in a total absence of boys being properly trained. The workers' representatives were unable to make any suggestion for immediately improving the situation, but suggested that the Government should undertake more construction work and so provide for apprentices. As the members of the sub-committee were unable to come to an agreement the matter must be left for the Arbitration Court to be dealt with. While the committee was unable to arrive at any agreement with regard to proposals for increasing the number of apprentices. It has reason to believe that, partly as a result of its discussions, improved opportunities are likely to be provided in several of the main groups of trades. The joint committee recommends that a Bill be brought in as soon as possible giving the Government power to make technical education compulsory for all apprentices in skilled trades. It recommends the appointment of an advisory committee for each principal groups

of trades. This applies to all groups of trades, and not only to the three large groups mentioned above. The advisory committee would deal with the course of study and practical work to be provided at the technical schools, and should have power to nominate the masters and workers' representatives on the examining board for the various branches of the trades. The examinations should be held, if possible, at the Technical School at regular intervals. Although I understand a certain amount of opposition will be shown to the Bill, I trust that members will look at it from the point of view of the general good of the community. It seems to me that it would be nothing but disastrous if we did not allow a number of young fellows the opportunity of learning trades. Apprentices have gone to the war with the expectation of their employers keeping their places open for them, and these young fellow may be away two, three, or four years, and if the employers are not allowed to put on apprentices while they are away a great deal of injury will be done to the trade. We shall be closing the door in the face of the rising generation. Looking at it from that point of view, I hope the House will pass the second reading of the Bill. I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

On motion by Hon. J. Cunningham debate adjourned.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [5.2]: I moved the adjournment of the debate on this Bill yesterday, as it seemed to me that there was a possibility of the measure going through without any discussion whatsoever. In view of the great amount of money involved in connection with the Industries Assistance Board, and also in view of various other matters which have cropped up in connection with that institution, and more especially the references made to it in the interim report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, I fully expected that at any rate something would have been said in the way of either blessing or cursing this institution. When the Bill was before another place the Minister in charge of it invited criticism regarding the board; but it was stated in that House that the better course would be to postpone such criticism until the Estimates were before members. Whatever reason there may be for postponing criticism in another place until the Estimates have been brought down, it is a great mistake for members of this Chamber to postpone any criticism in which they care to indulge, until such time as the Estimates are before us; because the experience of past years is that the Estimates receive very little in the nature of criticism in this Chamber. As a rule they have come down at a very late period of the session, when everybody is tired; and after they have been discussed in another place, they are put upon the Table of this House and we are told

that we have to pass the whole lot in one sitting. For that reason I think that any member of this House who has anything to say upon the matters involved in this measure would be making a great mistake if he waited until the Estimates reached this Chamber. Regarding the assistance which has been rendered to the agricultural industry in the past, I think agricultural members will say that all members representing districts which are not agricultural—members representing the cities, such as Perth and Fremantle, and members representing the pastoral industry, and also the members representing the gold-fields—who represent sections of the community that are not directly, although they are all indirectly, concerned in the agricultural industry, have adopted an attitude which has been invariably one of readiness to assist in every way towards helping the agricultural industry and giving it the most lavish and most generous support. The only feeling which has existed among those members of late is a feeling that that assistance, or a large portion of it, has been absolutely wasted. There is a feeling of want of confidence in the general administration which has gone on as regards both the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank, as well as in the matter of some of the agricultural railways which have been built. In these connections there is amongst members a feeling that a great deal of the money which they so readily and generously granted for the development of the agricultural industry has been mis-spent. If anything can be said to satisfy hon. members that the Industries Assistance Board have been put upon a better basis, I am sure it will do good. I am quite satisfied that the administration of the board has improved, and very considerably improved, of late; and it badly needed improvement. But I am not too sure that there is not plenty of scope for further improvement. Some of the comments which have been published regarding the Industries Assistance Board tend strongly to show that it is desirable at any rate to have as much information as we can regarding what is being done in relation to the board. We all remember the circumstances under which the Board was created. It started in 1915, and the general understanding then was that the operations of the board would be of a merely temporary character. None of us thought that the board would involve the huge expenditure which its operations have in fact involved. I observe that in the report submitted to the House regarding the operations of the board to the 31st March, 1916—a report dealing with the operations of the board up to 18 months ago—there is a quotation from what was stated by the Minister in another place in introducing legislation to establish the board. I quote from this report the exact statement of the Minister—

In December, 1914, the necessary Bill was submitted to Parliament and explained by the Minister for Lands. The Minister pointed out that it was the desire of the Government to put matters on a practical and business basis.

I would ask members to bear that remark in mind—the Minister wanted to put matters

upon a practical and business basis—in view of just a few sentences that I will quote from the interim report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture as to what was the result of endeavouring to place matters upon “a practical and business basis.” Further, I would draw hon. members’ attention to the fact that this report which was laid on the Table of the House is, as I say, 18 months old, and is a rather lengthy report in which the details are gone into fully. From this report one would be led to suppose that everything in the Industries Assistance Board was going on satisfactorily. A rather strange commentary upon this report is afforded by the observations of the Royal Commission on Agriculture as to what was really going on at the time. I am glad to know that the personnel of the board has entirely changed since then, and it is evident that a considerable improvement has been effected of late; but at the same time it is worth while drawing attention to the matter in order to show what value can be placed upon some of the reports which are laid on the Table of this House. The Agricultural Commission’s report, which to me at any rate is a most interesting document, deals in a very drastic way indeed with, at all events, the yearly operations of the Industries Assistance Board. It refers to “this unfortunate institution.” This was the institution which we were informed was to put things on a practical business basis. The Agricultural Commission’s report states—

This unfortunate institution, designed to administer, with a raw and untrained staff, the affairs of thousands of farmers from a central office in Perth, undoubtedly saved the wheat belt, but in doing so was guilty of every sin in the agricultural and administrative calendar.

The Agricultural Commission also referred to “the hapless management.” The report says—

The hapless management deserves all sympathy, but its want of initiative and organising power, as shown in the evidence, must have been as costly to the State as it undoubtedly was to the selectors.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Is that the report of the entire Commission?

Member: It is a majority report.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I cannot find that the minority report of the Chairman modifies this in any way. However, the report continues, expressing grave doubt as to whether it was advisable to start the Industries Assistance Board at all. If I remember rightly, at the time the board were started, everybody was in favour of the step. I do not remember that there was any opposition to it offered by any party. Consequently, we are all equally culpable in connection with the matter. It is rather interesting to find the following paragraph in the interim report—

The question arises as to whether the Industries Assistance Board was ever really necessary. The aim of the State was to enable the settlers to remain on the land, and it is pertinent at this stage to reflect that if an ordinary subsidy per

acre of crop grown had been available through established business channels, all the good accounts would have been carried on at no cost to the State, leaving only the doubtful accounts. If this course had been followed, firstly, and undoubtedly, the cost to the settler would have been no greater under the expert local management of financiers, merchants, and traders. Probably much less. We should certainly have seen less of instances such as the supply of seed wheat and fertiliser too late to be worth using; and even if the State had been forced to protect the weak accounts, the area of State assistance would perhaps have been limited to the capacity of the State to administer. One main conclusion is irresistible, and that is that the Industries Assistance Board was unable to exhibit either economy or effectiveness.

The Royal Commission then proceeded to mention the extent of the financial obligations of the State in connection with the board—

We find that advances to the 30th June last, to the extent of £2,232,163, have been made by this institution to 3,356 settlers for general farming operations.

The Commission go on to say that an improvement has been effected—

We are pleased to note from the evidence that the generally accepted idea that farmers under the management of the Industries Assistance Board are not making good is at variance with facts. Quite a large proportion of these men are working hard and adopting more thrifty methods.

The Royal Commission generally indicate that there is a very marked improvement; but there is a certain matter to which they call special attention. They claim that they were not able to discover the cost of running the Industries Assistance Board. It is a very remarkable thing that the Royal Commission should not be able to ascertain the cost of administration of a Board dealing with such an immense amount of money. They state—

We were unable to ascertain the cost of running the Industries Assistance Board, but this must be considerable, and, as the cost is borne by the general taxpayer, we do not consider that the State has any justification in carrying on any accounts which can be taken over by the Agricultural Bank or financial institutions. The State's activities should be directed solely to nursing the weak and helpless accounts into solvency and stability.

I would like to know whether or not the Government intend that that recommendation shall be adopted. The Royal Commission further state—

It is our duty to draw attention to the fact that there are a fair number of accounts which are now being carried on by the Industries Assistance Board, which are now financially strong. All these accounts should be closed, as we feel sure that it is not contemplated by the Government that they should be carried on any further

than the point at which the farmer is able to manage for himself.

I think it would be interesting to know whether or not the Government propose that the recommendation in that respect should be carried into effect. It seems a very wise one, and if followed it would make us hope that at some time or another we might see finality in regard to the board. Last evening the Colonial Secretary placed on the Table a statement regarding the Industries Assistance Board which was furnished by the Minister (Hon. R. T. Robinson). That statement certainly helps us to get a little more information concerning the operations of the board. Still there are many matters in respect of which further information should be given at a time like this. For instance, there is no indication as to what is exactly the cost of the administration of the board. It may be very low, or it may be very high, but at any rate the information which the Agricultural Commission was so extremely desirous of getting should be secured as early as possible, so that the public may know the cost. Furthermore, it would be interesting to know what is the estimated amount of the loss in connection with the Industries Assistance Board. We all know that there will be a loss. It was known at the time the board was appointed that there would be some loss, but I do not think anyone then anticipated that it would be a stupendous loss. It was thought some time ago that the loss might amount to £400,000, but I have been told on very excellent authority that it will be only £200,000. So, whilst we can get a certain amount of satisfaction from the fact that the loss will not be as stupendous as most of us thought it would be, still it is rather a serious matter, in a time of financial trouble such as the present, to be told in respect of an institution like this that the loss will amount to only £200,000. In connection with what was laid on the Table last night there is a very interesting statement regarding the classification of the positions of assisted settlers as at 31st March, 1917, seven months ago. The statement is prepared in a way somewhat different from that in which ordinary business statements are treated. As a rule, accounts are classified as good or bad and doubtful debts. In the case of this classification there are four divisions in which the accounts are placed. We have good accounts, fair accounts, doubtful accounts and bad accounts. To my mind it is extremely difficult to distinguish between what are fair accounts and what are doubtful accounts. Accounts that, while not actually bad, cannot come under the heading of good accounts, might reasonably come under the heading of doubtful accounts. If accounts be not good they must contain element of doubt. Good accounts represent 25 per cent. of the total advances made; that is, one-fourth of the advances made to settlers represent good accounts. There is under the heading of fair accounts 30 per cent. represented, and under the heading of doubtful accounts 33 per cent., and under the heading of bad accounts six per cent. If we class the bad accounts and the doubtful accounts together—I think the doubtful must be very doubtful

when they cannot be included with the fair accounts—we get 44 per cent. of the total advances made. A position like this calls for the consideration of hon. members, when we are asked to continue the operations of the Industries Assistance Act. Of course, there is no likelihood of any opposition being offered to the Bill. It ought to be passed; there is no alternative to passing it; but at the same time some of the facts and figures and particulars regarding this board ought to be presented to the House. We had some presented in the form of this statement tabled last night, but the statement, as I have already pointed out, did not contain some particulars which we would have liked to get. Furthermore, when the Bill was passed, we were told that not only would the agricultural industry be assisted, but also the industries of mining and of pearling. I know of one case in mining that received assistance under the Industries Assistance Board. The money was paid back in full at the end of some months, and it certainly rendered very considerable help to one particular mine working to-day and employing a great many men, and which might not have been working but for the assistance rendered under the Act. I think we might have been given some particulars regarding what has been done in connection with mining and pearling. I do not know the extent to which assistance has been rendered, and my remarks have been made for the purpose of getting information. Further, as we are face to face with a very serious problem in connection with the rabbit invasion in this State, I would like to be sure that the estimates regarding the position of the Industries Assistance Board as to the losses entailed in connection with its operations have taken into account the fact that no doubt the country will suffer very severely as the result of the coming of the rabbits. I would like to hear from some members who know more about the practical working of this board how its operations are going on in their particular provinces.

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

MOTION—PASTORAL LEASEHOLDS AND LAND ACT AMENDMENT ACT, 1917.

Debate resumed from Tuesday, 5th February, on the motion by Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom:—"That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that the Government should extend the time of application for coming under the amended Land Act to pastoral leaseholders who hold more than 1,000,000 acres in any one division, until twelve months after peace is declared, so that the owners, many of whom are in England working in connection with the war, may have an opportunity of visiting this State and personally superintending the division or disposal of their surplus properties on the terms that double rent be paid for the extended period."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.40]: I have nothing to say in regard to the motion except that,

having given the matter consideration, the Government see no objection to it. But I think Mr. Drew was right in saying that if the desire of Sir Edward Wittenoom is to be carried out, it will have to be done by Act of Parliament. The Government are now considering the drafting of a short Bill to meet these circumstances, and it will be submitted to Parliament presently, when members will have full opportunity of discussing it.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.41]: In view of the fact that the business likely to be available during next week will not occupy the attention of hon. members for more than a day, and understanding, as I do, that it will better suit the convenience of hon. members if we do not meet next week, I move—

"That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, 19th February."

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.42 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 7th February, 1918.

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

"HANSARD"—REPORT OF JOINT PRINTING COMMITTEE.

Mr. SPEAKER brought up the report of the Joint Printing Committee in connection with the suggested abolition of "Hansard."

The Clerk read the report as follows:—

1. In view of the suggestion that the publication of "Hansard" should be discontinued on the score of expense, your Committee have thought it right to hold an inquiry into the question whether any substantial economies can be effected, and with that object have called for suggestions from the Chief "Hansard" Reporter and members of his staff, and from the Government Printer. 2. As a result of the inquiry the Committee do not recommend the adoption of any substitute for the present system, because each of them would mean expenditure for a result of no practical value. Particulars of the schemes referred to are detailed in the appendix attached. The Committee have not dealt with publication by contract,