

become a very good goldmine. It is the old question of, just what can the prospector do?

The Government feels that Mr. Chandler is not entitled to any special financial recognition because of the fact that he discovered these deposits. He had the opportunity during the last 17 years to have them developed if ways and means could have been found to do it. He had made available to him, at every stage, the utmost information in the possession of the Mines Department. After the expenditure of a good deal of money, and the devotion of much time to the task of analysis and research, means to treat the deposits were found. If the value of that time and work, from 1925 to 1934, undertaken by the Mines Department could be calculated it would run into thousands of pounds.

Mr. McDonald: That is what the Martins got the benefit of.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: No. The interest of the Martin brothers and Norwood has been measured according to the part they played in assisting to evolve a successful process to treat the ore.

Hon. N. Keenan: That is one point. You say that Martin brothers, or Norwood discovered a method of treatment.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: No. I say they played a very valuable part in assisting to evolve finally a successful method of extracting potash from the alunite.

Hon. N. Keenan: They were part discoverers of that treatment.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Yes.

Hon. N. Keenan: That is not my information.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I do not care what is the information of the hon. member. I am telling him the facts.

Hon. N. Keenan: It was discovered by the staff at the University.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Yes, based upon what had been discovered up to that time by the Martin brothers and Norwood as a result of their research and work.

Mr. Boyle: And the provision of a pilot plant there as well.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Yes, made available by

the Government! In any event, we would be unwise to confuse one issue with another. This motion ought to stand on its own merits in just the same way as the position of Martin brothers and Norwood had to stand on its merits, and be judged accordingly. On behalf of the Government, for the reasons I have mentioned, I oppose the motion.

On motion by Hon. N. Keenan, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.20 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

*Thursday, 3rd December, 1912.*

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

### RESOLUTION—STATE FORESTS.

#### *To Revoke Dedication.*

Message from the Assembly requesting concurrence in the following resolution now considered:—

That the proposal for the partial revocation of State forests Nos. 27, 29, 30, 36 and 49, laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly by command of His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor on the 1st December, 1942, be carried out.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER [2.18]:** I move—

That the resolution be agreed to.

This follows the usual procedure towards the end of each session to deal with the partial revocation of land in State forests. From time to time circumstances arise by which it is deemed desirable that certain State forest land shall be excised therefrom. Sometimes these areas are required by ad-

joining settlers or for school or other purposes, but release is only approved after a full investigation has been made by the Conservator of Forests. Under Section 21 of the Forests Act, 1918-31, a dedication of Crown lands as a State forest may only be revoked in whole or in part in the following manner—

(a) The Governor shall cause to be laid on the Table of each House of Parliament a proposal for such revocation.

(b) After such proposal has been laid before Parliament the Governor, on a resolution being passed by both Houses that such proposal be carried out, shall, by Order in Council, revoke such dedication.

(c) On any such revocation the land shall become Crown land within the meaning of the Land Act.

The areas which it is now proposed to excise from State forests range from 30 acres to 2,700 acres and are situated near Argyle, Wilga, Hester, Pemberton and Kirup. Particulars concerning the individual areas proposed to be excised from State forests are as follow:—

Area No. 1.—Three small areas adjoining the main road near Argyle. About 260 acres in all, cut out of marketable timber and no longer required in State forest.

Area No. 2.—Two miles south-east of Wilga. About 174 acres cut over for sawmilling and required by an adjoining settler to increase his holding.

Area No. 3.—Three miles east of Hester. Approximately 30 acres comprising a flat and poor forests. Applied for by the adjoining settler as an addition to his holding.

Area No. 4.—Nine miles north-west of Pemberton. Approximately 2,700 acres required to effect an exchange with a national park reserve.

Area No. 5.—About two miles south-east of Kirup. 105 acres intersected by main road. No longer required for State forest.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

### **BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.**

Received from the Assembly and, on motion by Hon. H. V. Piesse, read a first time.

### **BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT.**

#### *Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** [2.26] in moving the second reading said: By this Bill it is proposed to protect from disqualification members of the State Parliament and those standing for a seat in Parliament

who are serving in the Fighting Forces or engaged in war work paid for by the Crown. In this connection the Commonwealth Government has already promulgated regulations under the National Security Act. It is doubtful, however, whether the regulations are in order from a State constitutional point of view. Accordingly, it is thought wise to put the matter beyond all doubt by introducing legislation for approval by Parliament.

Members of this Parliament, as we are aware, have enlisted in the Fighting Services; some are engaged in work connected with the war effort. It is only fair, reasonable and proper that their rights should be protected. This has been recognised in all the Australian States, and the Commonwealth has endeavoured, as I have already mentioned, to cover the position by the gazetting of regulations. The Bill provides that notwithstanding the disqualification and punitive provisions of various sections of the Constitution Act, a member of Parliament shall not forfeit his seat, nor shall his election be invalidated, that a person shall not be disqualified from being elected to Parliament, and that a member shall not be liable to a penalty, if he joins the Defence Forces of the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom, or any other part of the British Empire. The Bill also gives the required protection to those who receive pensions arising out of their service in the Forces, or accept positions from the Commonwealth or State, which may be created under the National Security Act and regulations, or which the Minister of State for Defence certifies to be connected with the defence of the Commonwealth or the efficient prosecution of the war.

In short, therefore, the Bill removes the disqualifications and liabilities which the Constitution Act throws on members of Parliament in normal times of peace. Strangely enough, the provisions of the Constitution Act enable a member of Parliament to hold a commission in the Navy or Army and to receive full, half or retired pay therefor without incurring any disqualification or liability as a member. He cannot, however, receive a private's or a non-commissioned officer's pay; nor can he do any war work for the Crown if such work comes within the definition of an "office of profit." A member of Parliament is therefore debarred from munition making, or from doing any other

war work at all if the work concerned carries some payment by the Commonwealth. Certain members are affected in this State by the disqualification which arises out of the prohibition against members accepting non-commissioned or private rank. I understand, too, that some members would incur disqualification for accepting an office of profit through performing work of vital importance to the war effort.

Another matter that is worthy of consideration in dealing with this Bill is that under Section 6 of the Constitution Act a member is not disqualified if he holds commissioned rank in the King's Navy or Army. As the Air Force is separate and distinct from either the Navy or the Army, it could be strongly argued that even an officer of the Air Force is not at present exempted from disqualification or penalty similarly to an officer in the Navy or the Army. That covers the considerations which have actuated the Government in bringing this Bill forward. The justification for its introduction is obvious, and I have no doubt that members will give the Bill their full support. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. J. CORNELL** (South): It is extraordinary that at this stage of the history of Western Australia, two wars having been fought in the last 42 years, it should be found necessary to amend our Constitution in order to allow a member of Parliament to serve in the Armed Forces of Britain as from a warrant officer downwards. The Chief Secretary has given absolutely no reason for proposing that amendment. The hon. gentleman has cited no case where the matter has ever been questioned. According to the Bill, I committed two major offences in breaking the Constitution during the first world war. In that conflict I was paid as a tunneller and I was re-elected to Parliament while I was a member of the Armed Forces in France. Apparently it is now found necessary to amend the Constitution in that respect. Under the Commonwealth Constitution a member of Parliament is not in any doubt with regard to his position, for it speaks of an "officer or member of the Forces." Our Constitution Act provides, by Section 38—

If any member of the Legislative Council or Legislative Assembly, after his election . . . accepts any pension during pleasure or for term of years other than an allowance under

Section 71 of the Constitution Act, 1889, or any office of profit from the Crown other than that of an officer of Her Majesty's sea or land forces on full, half, or retired pay, his seat shall thereupon become vacant . . .

I do not know that it will do any harm to enact the Bill; but certainly it might have been drafted differently, drafted to include any member of the Armed Forces. Moreover, the Bill refers only to the present war. As for the other provision of the Bill, anyone engaged in war work who, in the opinion of the Minister for Defence, is doing war work shall be protected. That is very wide indeed. In other words, it is left to the Minister for Defence to say who is breaking the Constitution and who is not breaking it. That matter should not be left to the determination of any one individual. I strongly object to that portion of the Bill, because it may lead to favouritism and other things. It is utterly undesirable that we should vest in any one man the power to say whether or not a member of Parliament is breaking the Constitution.

We have definitely provided for soldiers, sailors and airmen because they are at stations and on their enlistment there is no question as to what they are. It does not devolve on the Minister for Defence or the Minister for the Army or the Minister for the Navy to say who is an airman or a soldier or a sailor. That is expressly laid down. But a war worker has to be designated as such by the Minister for Defence. The measure should be tightened up somehow. Almost since the inception of Parliament it has been the accepted practice in Britain to exempt men in the Armed Forces so far as Parliamentary considerations are concerned, but I have yet to learn that the British Parliament has in any way amended its Constitution to provide that the Minister for Defence shall say who is breaking the Constitution.

The Bill should be referred back to the framers and they should be asked plainly to do a little better than has been achieved in its provisions. Seeing that 42 years have passed before it has been found necessary to make such amendments, there cannot be any great urgency. So far as members of the Armed Forces are concerned, there is only one way in which a private, for the sake of argument, who is a member of Parliament, can be questioned and that is the way in which Mr. Clydesdale's office of profit was questioned, namely, by a common in-

former. I do not know who else can test the position, and woe betide the fellow who acted as a common informer in endeavouring to unseat a member of Parliament serving with the Armed Forces!

**HON. G. W. MILES** (North): I want to say only a few words and confirm what Mr. Cornell said about the 1914-18 war. I have a vivid recollection of 1918 when the Deputy Premier was a member of the Chamber, together with the President of the Senate, the late Honorary Minister, Mr. Hickey, and Mr. Drew. At that time Mr. Cornell was away at the Front and those Labour members were out to oppose him. I then said it would be a standing disgrace if Mr. Cornell, whom I did not know at that time, was not returned unopposed as he was the only one amongst us who was man enough to go to the Front and fight. Yet we had members of this so-called Democratic Government opposing a man who was doing his duty and endeavouring to help save Australia for them and their children.

The Chief Secretary: Will you connect that up with the Bill?

**Hon. G. W. MILES**: Yes. As Mr. Cornell said, the Chief Secretary's party is finding it necessary to protect these men after doing its damndest to defeat other men who in the previous war were doing all they could to defend this country.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (in reply): I have not very much to say in reply to what has already been said by the two members who have spoken to the Bill except to point out that the measure has been introduced in order to protect the interests of those who are assisting the war effort—

**Hon. G. W. Miles**: I am glad that is being done.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: —and who are members of Parliament.

**Hon. J. Cornell**: It would not stop them from getting opposition at an election.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I wondered what Mr. Miles's remarks have to do with the Bill.

**Hon. G. W. Miles**: They have a lot to do with it. I am thinking of the policy of your party.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In reply to Mr. Cornell, I would point out that there are some members of Parliament who have special qualifications and have been called

upon by the Commonwealth Government during this war to fill particular positions. I am advised that those positions can be claimed to be in the nature of "offices of profit under the Crown." If that is so, it is open for anybody to challenge the constitutionality of the position of such individuals. Mr. Cornell said that so far as he knew the only way in which it could be challenged was by a common informer and woe betide the man who tried to play such a role in a case of this kind. May I remind the hon. member that there are such individuals and that the experience of members of this Parliament in quite recent years has been such as to indicate that it can involve very expensive proceedings costing a member hundreds of pounds because he is prepared to do his bit in the interests of his country.

So it is necessary, if our legal advisers say that there is a doubt, that we shall take all the precautions possible. That is the reason for the introduction of this Bill. A similar measure is being introduced in every Parliament of Australia and I understand that the Commonwealth Parliament is also taking the necessary steps to protect those persons who have been requested by the Government to undertake some particular form of war work for which they may be particularly suited. I cannot see anything wrong with that. It is only right that where a member of Parliament is able to render assistance to our war effort, he should not be debarred from doing so simply because he is a member of Parliament.

**Hon. J. Cornell**: There is a vast difference between a man doing work for an emolument and a man called up for war work.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know that the emoluments paid have anything to do with the position. If a member of Parliament is called upon by the Commonwealth Government to carry out certain work on its behalf the emolument, whether large or small, does not matter. It has been noted with surprise by some members on occasions gone by that it is not necessary even to receive emoluments to occupy an office of profit, and thus become disqualified to sit as a member of Parliament. So the question of the emolument does not matter at all. I hope the House will agree to the Bill in its entirety.

The PRESIDENT: Under the Standing Orders there must be a division on the Bill.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	23
Noes	..	..	..	..	—

Majority for	..	..	23
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# AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. C. R. Cornish	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. L. Craig
Hon. V. Hamersley	(Teller.)

The PRESIDENT: There being an absolute majority of the Ayes, I declare the second reading carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

## *In Committee.*

Hon. V. Hamersley in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—No disability, disqualification or penalty in certain cases:

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (b) of Subclause (1) be struck out.

This empowers any member of Parliament to do war work other than in the Armed Forces. There is a vast difference between a man being asked to undertake work outside the Armed Forces in connection with the prosecution of the war, and a man doing other work in the Armed Forces. In the Forces the highest pay given to non-commissioned officers, in the case of warrant officers, is 15s. or 16s a day. A member of another place volunteered for the A.I.F. at 6s. a day. I do not think the emolument attracted him. A member may be asked to undertake a job worth £1,000 a year, plus the £600 representing his Parliamentary allowance. That would be a consideration. Such a man could not do justice to both positions. A member of another place was recently appointed chairman of the Harvester Wages Board in Western Australia. His work would be consid-

ered essential to the war effort, but at present he would be debarred from receiving any financial consideration. I do not know why more members of Parliament have not been utilised for war work in an honorary capacity. I am opposed to the principle of the Minister for Defence certifying that John Brown is doing work in connection with the defence of the Commonwealth and the efficient prosecution of the war, which is a dangerous principle.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Would not the passing of this Bill place the State in a different position from the Commonwealth? A member of the State Parliament may be permitted to take a salaried appointment that a member of the Commonwealth Parliament could not take. Are we not going beyond the Commonwealth Constitution, which exempts from disqualification all members of the Armed Forces? Does the Minister think that the Federal Constitution goes as far as this Bill proposes in exempting people who are not members of the Armed Forces?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: A measure similar to this is being passed by all the States. It is desired to protect members of all parties in these circumstances. The Commonwealth Constitution does differ from that of the State. The Commonwealth, however, has issued a regulation under the National Security Act validating what has been done and the regulation has been challenged. It is suggested there is doubt whether it will do what is necessary. It is essential we should pass a Bill to make the position clear. On numerous occasions during the war the Commonwealth Government has called upon members of Parliament in practically all the States to do particular jobs, not to fill a regular position, but to do special work for which they were particularly qualified. In those instances there is doubt whether under the Constitution they have not endangered their positions as members of Parliament. It is only equitable that, if the Commonwealth Government desires that members of Parliament should utilise their special qualifications, knowledge or experience, those members should receive the protection that this and similar measures will afford them. I cannot see any grave danger such as Mr. Cornell has suggested. If a member of Parliament accepts a position and does not receive any emolument, he

is liable under the Constitution to sacrifice his seat.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: If he is acting in an honorary capacity?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is all tommy-rot.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Dr. Hislop was doubtful of his position through acting in an honorary capacity in the war effort. This Bill is introduced to meet such a contingency. It is the desire of all Governments to protect members who have been called upon to do something in furtherance of the war effort.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I oppose the amendment. The Chief Secretary has presented the case clearly. If a member of Parliament is called upon to assist in the war effort, he should be protected regardless of whether he receives £1,000 a year, £50 or nothing. If Mr. Essington Lewis was a member of Parliament, it would be absurd that he should run the risk of losing his seat.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The position of a member who has enlisted in the Armed Forces is not in doubt, but I think the Minister is stretching the long bow in saying that a member who does war work in an honorary capacity is accepting an office of profit under the Crown.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: What is the profit?

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am afraid that extreme cases have been cited to justify the provision.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What is the nigger in the woodpile?

Hon. J. CORNELL: There is nothing to prevent a member from accepting an office at £10,000 a year, and I am satisfied that quite a few members will get it under the present Government.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I oppose the amendment. There is no reason why members should not be protected. I am afraid Mr. Cornell has something on his mind that he has not explained to the Committee.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Title:

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Chief Secretary has mentioned the position of Dr. Hislop, but I point out that he has the rank of major, and therefore would not be affected.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I referred to Dr. Hislop in another capacity.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

## **BILL—INCOME AND ENTERTAINMENTS TAX (WAR TIME SUSPENSION).**

*In Committee.*

Hon. H. Seddon in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Suspension of goldmining profits tax:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The reference to 1941 should read 1942. I move an amendment—

That in line 6 of Subclause (1) the word "forty-one" be struck out and the word "forty-two" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 6—Suspension of certain provisions of Hospital Fund (Contributions) Act:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: A similar alteration is necessary in this clause. I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of paragraph (a) of Subclause (1) the word "forty-one" be struck out and the word "forty-two" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

## **MOTION—RAILWAY FREIGHTS AND FARES.**

*As to Suggested Increase.*

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by Hon. C. B. Williams:—

That in the opinion of this House the all-round increase of 12½ per cent. in railway fares and freights—as suggested by Mr. Raynor, Deputy Secretary of the Railway Department—would be an unfair tax on mining, agricultural and pastoral producers; and further, that no increase in railway charges should be imposed without submission to Parliament.

That this resolution be sent to the Legislative Assembly with a request for concurrence to which Hon. A. Thomson had moved the following amendment:—

That in line 8 the words "without submission to Parliament" be struck out.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [3.15]: After having taken into consideration the views expressed by a majority of

the members who favour the motion as it was moved, I ask the permission of the House to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

**HON. L. B. BOLTON** (Metropolitan): I have but little to say on the motion, except to express approval of it. Although I am a city member, I support the motion on the ground that the proposed increase will really be a tax on the people of the goldfields and the farming districts. Unfortunately, the farmer who will be called upon to meet this additional impost is not able to pass it on. I therefore think he is entitled to say that he would be unfairly treated if the increase were made. If the Government requires the additional income, the increase should be spread over the whole community and not be imposed upon the unfortunate people who make greater use of the railway system. What puzzles me is that while the Government doles out increases with one hand, it takes them back with the other. I refer to the recent increase of 4s. 6d. in the basic wage that was made by the Government. A very large proportion of that increase goes to the city worker, and yet this proposed increase in railway freights and fares will fall heavily upon the residents of the goldfields and the farmer. I repeat I am right in saying that the basic wage increase will cost the State from £230,000 to £250,000 per annum. That is a huge sum. I disagree with the remarks of my colleague, Dr. Hislop, who said he considered the Government was justified in imposing this increase in order to secure the money.

What strikes me with regard to the recent increase in the basic wage is that the Government is quite willing to take, but not prepared to give. It may not be generally known to members, but the Government tender forms contain a provision to the effect that any rise or fall in wages shall not be taken into account. In other words, no allowance would be made for the increased wages costs owing to the rise in the basic wage. That provision has always seemed to me to be most unfair. I know of an instance at the present time where the additional wages bill will amount to well over £400. If the Government is willing to dole out basic wage increases, it should be fair and allow the extra cost to be added to its contracts. I hope the motion will be

given effect to, and will not be treated similarly to a motion which was recently passed by this Chamber to disallow regulations providing for an increase in railway freights.

**HON. H. V. PIESSE** (South-East): I listened with great satisfaction to the speech of my colleague, Mr. Thomson, on this motion yesterday. It is pleasing to note that a supporter of the Government has seen fit to submit the motion. Country representatives have received letters from road boards and other bodies, including the Chamber of Commerce at Kataning, requesting that we strenuously oppose this suggested increase, as it would seriously affect residents on the goldfields and people in the country districts. We have not been definitely told that the Government intend to make this 12½ per cent. increase in railway fares and freights.

Hon. A. Thomson: But where there is smoke there is also fire.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: That is so. Last year this House disallowed a regulation to increase railway charges, but that decision was over-ruled by the Government. I believe there is a section in the Government Railways Act permitting the department to make these increases. I point out to members that if this intended increase is made, the people on the goldfields and in the country will be called upon to pay an extra £458,922 in railway freights and fares. That is important from their standpoint. Primary producers are not at present making big profits. I question whether there is a farmer, a vegetable-grower or a potato-grower making big profits. Personally, I have sufficient confidence in the Government to think that it will not make this increase. I think the statement was merely made by a representative of the Railway Department to the Commonwealth Grants Commission. The Government has the welfare of the country so much at heart that I doubt whether it would make this additional impost.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Then why should we worry?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: We must show that we object to any increase in railway freights and fares, because such an increase would have a detrimental effect on the goldfields residents and country people.

**HON. H. SEDDON** (North-East): I have forestalled the Chief Secretary because I desire to make a few remarks on the motion, which I support in the interests of the goldfields residents and the farming community. The question I would like to ask the House is: Where are we getting to? From year to year we criticise the finances of the State, the State Government and the State departments. Each year we draw attention to the fact that expenditure is continually rising, notwithstanding increases in revenue. Much of the increased expenditure is due to variations in the basic wage, which up to the present have been entirely in the hands of the Arbitration Court.

**Hon. G. W. Miles**: Not at present.

**Hon. H. SEDDON**: Until a few months ago. Recently, the gentleman responsible for the finances of the State took it upon himself to grant an increase in the basic wage, so that on this occasion there can be no escaping responsibility. It is for him to justify his action to the people. I entirely agree with what Dr. Hislop said yesterday. He pointed out that we now have inflation to a degree that is reflecting upon and absolutely prohibiting the continuance of our primary industries. The one-half of the population residing in the metropolitan area is being kept by the other half working in the country. If the charges to the country people are to be raised, then the result will be the cutting of the throats of the people in the metropolitan area.

**Hon. A. Thomson**: In my opinion, the increase would mean a charge of £2 per head of the people in the country districts.

**Hon. H. SEDDON**: Very well. Country industries have suffered for a long time through this policy of passing on.

**Hon. H. V. PIESSE**: But the country people cannot pass it on.

**Hon. H. SEDDON**: No. The mining industry at present is merely carrying on, and yet it is proposed to increase its burden by this extra imposition. That is one side of the question. Let us consider the other side. The Railway Department is expected to carry on its service and make a profit sufficient to meet interest charges. As a matter of fact, it has not done so for years. Here I may mention incidentally that one of the greatest burdens the Railway Department has to carry is the

tremendous unproductive mileage, in the wheat belt.

**Hon. A. Thomson**: That is so.

**Hon. H. SEDDON**: The construction of those many miles of railway has cast a burden on the department from which it has not recovered.

**Hon. A. Thomson**: That includes the goldfields as well.

**Hon. H. SEDDON**: No. If the hon. member will make a segregation of the railway finances, he will find that the goldfields railways have been carrying the State for years.

**Hon. H. V. Piesse**: Including the Leonora line?

**Hon. H. SEDDON**: Yes. From that point of view, we stand on our own feet. The proposed increase, if made, would be detrimental to the goldfields. I desire to point out the position in which the Commissioner of Railways is placed. Members will find some interesting information in his report, from which I intend to read one or two passages during the course of my remarks this afternoon. How can members expect the Commissioner to run railways satisfactorily when his working expenses are increased and yet we will not allow him to cut them down in certain directions? The plant at Midland Junction is about 30 years behind the times. It is not possible to run the railways efficiently, and the service is, in these circumstances, operating under a heavy burden.

**Hon. A. Thomson**: The whole of the people should bear the burden.

**Hon. H. SEDDON**: I quite agree. We should find some means whereby the burden would be distributed throughout the whole of the community rather than ask the producers in the country districts to carry it. Having imposed upon the Commissioner all these handicaps and having placed him in the position where he has to agree to conditions which seriously interfere with his efficient working, we now say, "Having imposed all these extra charges upon you, we will not allow you to increase your freights, but nevertheless we expect you to show results." From that angle something can be said on behalf of the Commissioner. On the other hand, I am not putting up any excuses for inefficiency. There has been a serious deterioration in efficiency in the railways during the last few years. It is interesting to note that certain tables from



which comparisons can be made have been omitted from the Railway Department's report this year. The table dealing with engine mileages is very illuminating, but does not find a place in the latest report.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Is that not to be expected? You cannot run distances without incurring costs.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The railway system is like a water supply; the more fully it is occupied the cheaper it should work per unit.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: But you require the capacity to keep the engines in order.

Hon. H. SEDDON: If the organisation is working at full capacity the unit cost should be lower than when working at half capacity. I suppose the railways have never been asked to carry a greater volume of traffic than at the present time, but the fact remains that these figures, although they have improved, do not show the improvement one would expect. There are some instances of inefficiency, and pretty glaring ones too. I will illustrate the case of an engine stationed at Northam. This engine was put on a train, with a full load, and sent to Kalgoorlie. At Kalgoorlie it was run into the loco. workshop and dismantled. The wheels were taken off and sent to Midland Junction to be turned. They were then sent back to Kalgoorlie, and refitted to the engine, which was put back on the track. If these wheels were in bad order at Kalgoorlie they must have been in that condition before leaving Northam. That is the kind of thing going on in the railways. The railwaymen themselves know that these things occur, and that they contribute to inefficiency, which is largely responsible for the criticism levelled today against the railways.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Much of the inefficiency is due to lack of funds.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That is so, but not in this instance. It was due to bad management. Somebody slipped badly in that case, and it was not an isolated instance. I wish now to refer to the report of the Commissioner of Railways because, in view of this motion, it is worthy of notice. Referring on page 5 to the results obtained in regard to capital indebtedness the report states—

The position cannot, however, be regarded as entirely satisfactory as employees who would normally have been engaged on maintenance work have been diverted to defence work, while the staff has been depleted by enlistments, so that to an extent maintenance work has been

deferred and will form a liability for the future. Furthermore, costs of wages, materials, and fuel have increased considerably, while pay-roll tax, war damage insurance, superannuation contributions, etc., have placed an added and continuous burden on the finances. All avenues for economy have been explored to the full, but there is a limit beyond which it is neither practicable nor expedient to go, and the question of an increase in freight and fares must receive early consideration if the department is to continue on a sound financial basis.

That explains the alarm which prompted Mr. Williams to move his motion. Some interesting information is contained in that paragraph. If members will refer to the table in the report they will see that the staff has been increased from 7,887 in 1941 to 8,148 this year.

Hon. A. Thomson: That seems to be rather a contradiction.

The Chief Secretary: That includes Midland Junction.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: It is not the fault of the staff; those employees want to go away too.

Hon. H. SEDDON: If the trained men enlist and raw men are put on to replace them the efficiency of the organisation will be affected. Then again, as is pointed out in the paragraph I have just read, considerable delay has been experienced in dealing with maintenance work, and that is dangerous, because if maintenance is retarded for any length of time, it will have a considerable effect later on.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Is it not a fact that they are short of material and cannot do many of the repairs?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Much of the trouble is due to the fact that they cannot get certain steel and spares, but on the other hand it appears to me that under the urge of war a lot of maintenance work that should have been kept up to date has been deferred, and that is one of the factors operating at the present time against efficiency. In dealing with the workshops the report states—

Several additional machines and a quantity of equipment were added to the workshops plant and the programme for modernising the workshops machinery is proceeding. There still remains a heavy residue of old and obsolete machines; but replacement can only be carried out to a very limited extent under existing conditions.

The Commissioner himself has pointed out another of the handicaps under which he is operating at the present time. I referred a little while ago to the question of staff.

In his report the Commissioner shows that the number employed on working expenses in 1941 was 7,137 and 7,133 in 1942. Therefore the ordinary working staff is roughly about the same, but, as I pointed out a while ago, there has been a change because many of the men who have enlisted have been replaced by others. It is on the capital expenditure side that there appears to have been a large increase, because employees on capital works and railway construction in 1941 totalled 750, whereas in 1942 they totalled 1,015. That may be explained by the number of men engaged on munitions work, but it is interesting to see that at that stage there had been a considerable increase. On the other hand, as was pointed out in the remarks of the Premier, the Midland Junction Workshops are doing important work by supplying railway rolling-stock to other railways of the Commonwealth. Construction work for all railways in the Commonwealth, irrespective of gauge, is now being undertaken at the Midland workshops. That is regarded as one of our contributions to Australia's war effort. On this question of industrial matters there is a significant paragraph on page 18 of the Commissioner's report. It is as follows:—

An adjustment in the basic wage for the quarter ended the 30th June, 1941, was declared by the State Arbitration Court on the 28th July, 1941, and increased the rates as follows:—

Metropolitan area—From £4 8s. per week to £4 10s. 5d. per week.

South-West Land Division—From £4 9s. 3d. per week to £4 10s. 10d. per week.

Goldfields and other portions of the State—From £5 3s. 6d. per week to £5 5s. 7d. per week.

There was no other variation in the basic wage during the year. The effect of the above variation was to add approximately £37,000 per annum to the railway working expenses.

Lower down the report continues—

From the 8th August, 1942, a further increase in the State basic wage in the metropolitan area (4s. 6d.) and the South-West Land Division (4s.) will represent additional railway expenditure of approximately £70,000 per annum.

Members will see, therefore, that we have to do something from the point of view of the Commissioner. While I quite agree with the motion, the alternative is to do something in the direction of spreading a burden over the whole of the community, and also if we are going to maintain our rail-

way rates we can only do it by providing the necessary capital and methods to ensure efficiency. That will involve a considerable amount of money under both headings because before we can do that we have to institute entirely new methods.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Neither of which we have much chance of doing today.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That is so. In conclusion one thing can be said, and that is that we are rapidly reaching an impossible position in this State. If we are continually going to increase charges and, as a result, place burdens beyond their capacity on the industries carrying the country, we will have nothing ahead of us but disaster. From that angle I support the motion in its entirety, but offer these remarks because I think that the whole of the circumstances and facts should be taken into consideration by the House in passing the motion.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY:** I could not help but think when listening to the remarks of some members how easy it is to criticise, particularly when one does not take into consideration all the circumstances. Some members have said that the railways in this State are today the most inefficient in the Commonwealth. No qualification was included; just a plain straightout statement was made! I disagree entirely from that point of view. I think that the remarks of Mr. Seddon may have dispelled to some extent the view held by the members to whom I am referring. I believe that the railways in this State are doing a most efficient job today when we consider all the circumstances in which they are placed. I am wondering whether the efficiency of the railways has anything to do with this motion, which would, no doubt, have been moved even if every member had been of the opinion that they constituted the most efficient organisation possible.

The motion is before the House simply because there is a desire to prevent any increase in freights and fares that will affect people outside the metropolitan area. One might say, "Well, that is quite a reasonable attitude to adopt in view of the circumstances prevailing in the agricultural and pastoral areas." Those who hold that view are entitled to their opinion, but when they advance that argument they should also be prepared to take cognisance of the position in which Western Australia is placed, as

indicated by Mr. Seddon. It is not a very happy picture; perhaps it has never been more serious than it is today. Perhaps because of that, those in control of the railways can visualise what lies ahead during the next year or two and they have been prompted to submit a proposal with the object of correcting the position as they see it, the effect being a war surcharge of 12½ per cent. on all freights and fares.

On the other hand, it is not fair to state, as set out in the motion, that Mr. Raynor, the Deputy Secretary of the Railway Department, had made any such proposal. I will explain just how Mr. Raynor came to be associated with it. Members are aware that quite recently the Commonwealth Grants Commission visited Western Australia. As usually happens, when the Commission intends visiting a State it notifies departments of the information desired from them. In this instance the information was supplied by Mr. Raynor acting on behalf of the Railway Department. During the course of his examination on railway figures, Mr. Raynor was asked what the department proposed to do about it. In reply Mr. Raynor pointed out that in a report that had been submitted to the Minister for Railways by the Commissioner of Railways the latter had suggested that one way by which the financial position could be met was the imposition of a war surcharge of 12½ per cent. on all freights and fares. That is how Mr. Raynor came into the picture and how the 12½ per cent. increase suggestion arose.

I have been supplied with a lot of information on the subject and the departmental officials demonstrate clearly the position regarding many of the matters already mentioned by Mr. Seddon, such as belated maintenance work that cannot be undertaken at present but which is building up to such an extent that a very substantial sum will have to be expended in due course to cope with the arrears; the increased costs involved in connection with everything used by the railways; the added burden due to the increase in the basic wage; the increased coal prices, representing an addition of 4s. per ton; the added cost of sleepers—in the case of jarrah to £5 17s. as against £3 15s. formerly and in the case of wandoo, £6 as against £4 in 1939—the increased cost of stores and materials generally; the inferior substitutes that have to be used; the interrup-

tions in the continuity of work; overtime and the holding-over of holidays; and a whole host of other factors. All these go to show that the immediate future is going to be very serious as it affects railway finance.

So much is this so, that it has been pointed out by the department that the time is not far distant when the deficit on railway working, if set out fully, would serve to indicate that instead of being a comparatively small sum it may involve between £500,000 and £600,000 per annum. It should not require much thought on the part of members to realise how serious that position would be. Naturally it is the duty of the Commissioner of Railways to advise the Government on such matters and to point out any method by which the position can be met. Thus, in the report presented to the Minister for Railways, the Commissioner said that he considered the position could be met by the imposition of a 12½ per cent. increase on all freights and fares.

That proposal has not yet received the consideration of the Government. The report has reached the Minister for Railways who, of course, will deal with the matter and later make a recommendation to Cabinet. Members should consider the point that had Mr. Raynor, as the representative of the Railway Department, not been in a position to reply to the question put to him by the Commonwealth Grants Commission as to what was proposed to rectify the position disclosed by the railway figures, the Commission would have been the first to criticise the department for having no solution of the problem.

Hon. A. Thomson: The one presented was the easy solution.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We cannot blame Mr. Raynor or the Commissioner of Railways for submitting to the Minister the departmental view of the means whereby the financial position of the Railway Department could be met. The fact is that the department is playing a very important part in Australia's war effort, which has an effect on its finances in many directions. Members are aware of what is being accomplished at the Midland Junction Railway Workshops.

Hon. A. Thomson: Are they not working on the cost-plus basis?

Hon. C. B. Williams: They are taking contracts away from private employers.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They are working under more than one system. Nevertheless, members know what work is being carried out at Midland Junction in connection with the war effort. Members may not be aware—this fact has not yet been published, so far as I am aware—that the department has assisted the Commonwealth with regard to the provision of locomotives and rolling-stock that are now being used in other parts of Australia. The effect of that is that we have to operate with our limited resources, in consequence of which our locomotives and rolling-stock are being worked to a greater extent than would be contemplated in normal times.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: They are all over-worked.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, and in many instances there is not the time available to give the attention to the equipment that is essential. We cannot blame the Commissioner of Railways for inefficiency arising from war-imposed conditions. I have already said that I have been supplied with a mass of figures the details of which I do not propose to submit to the House. I have said sufficient to indicate that there is quite a lot to be said in favour of the suggestion advanced by the department in the report submitted to the Minister for Railways. The amount involved is considerable, but I shall put an important phase to members.

Suppose for argument's sake that instead of the deficit on railway workings being what has been disclosed during the last year or two, it was increased to £400,000 or £500,000 a year as I previously suggested, in consequence of which the effect on the State's finance was to create a deficit of £200,000 or £300,000! In view of the fact that the State has no possibility whatever of increasing taxation because of the system that now obtains, the position could quite easily be reached, in my opinion, whereby we would have no money whatever for public works of any description. It is well-known to members that the deficit is the first charge on loan moneys allowed to the State.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: But why saddle the country and goldfields people with the extra charge?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They have not been saddled with it.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: They may be.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am pointing out what the position really is, and naturally the goldfields and country people will have to share in the liability.

Hon. A. Thomson: They do not mind sharing in the liability, so long as it does not amount to £2 per head as suggested.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is useless to scream before one is hurt.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is quite correct.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I want members to realise that this is not a problem that can be solved by this House baldly passing a motion that there shall be no increase in freights and fares unless this Chamber first agrees to the proposition. After all is said and done, we must never forget that Parliament deliberately took out of the hands of Parliament the authority to fix freights and fares. Parliament appointed a Commissioner of Railways and gave him all the authority he could wish for. Parliament even went so far as to declare that the Government should have no right to dismiss the Commissioner of Railways.

Several members interjected.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I regret that two or three members, including Mr. Miles, cannot resist from throwing up the increase in the basic wage. I take the view that the workers are entitled to every penny they have received. Neither Mr. Miles nor any other member can justify a refusal to our workers of an increase because of a rise in the cost of living. Such provision has been made for workers in every other State of the Commonwealth. We are quite prepared to stand by any decision we have made as a Government.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And you have extended your life for another 12 months!

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Chief Secretary may proceed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am just wondering whether I should say any more on the subject. The motion asks us to decide that there shall be no increases in railway charges without their having been first submitted to Parliament. The House may carry the motion. All that I have to say is that the proposal which has been discussed in this Chamber has not yet been considered by the Government. At the right time it will receive consideration in order that the Government may decide how to meet the critical situation with which the State is faced. War-time conditions are, naturally,

quite different from those of peace-time. Even at present no-one can forecast what additional costs and charges we may be faced with in the very near future. Possibly it may be necessary for the Government to agree to some increased charges. Whether it is necessary to bring those increases before Parliament is another question. I can just imagine what would happen if a question of increases in freights and fares on our railways, tramways, and so forth were to be the subject of decisions by this Chamber.

Several members: You would never get any increase!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Surely we have to place some confidence in those who are charged with the administration of our railways, and to trust the Government to do a fair thing in dealing with such matters. At the present moment the responsibility rests on the Commissioner of Railways. If he desires to increase freights and fares, he submits his recommendations to the Minister for Railways; and if the Minister approves those increases, they will be made. That is the procedure which will be adopted on this occasion. I sympathise with the goldfields and agricultural areas; but I want it to be remembered that those areas have received concessions for many years. The concessions have been very valuable indeed. Western Australia is doing more than any other Australian State with regard to concessions to primary producers.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: Do not you think it was rather a dangerous suggestion to make to the Grants Commission?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Which suggestion?

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: That by putting our railway charges up 12½ per cent. we should not need so much money by way of Commonwealth grant.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I put it to the hon. member that if he were appearing before the Grants Commission and were asked what had been done towards finding a remedy for the situation, he could not very well have helped telling the Commissioners what had been done.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: Quite right.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The report of the Commissioner of Railways to the Minister is an official document. If Mr. Raynor had said to the Grants Commissioners, "I do not know," the Commissioners might very

well then have said to Mr. Raynor, "Why do not you know? It is your duty to know." Here is an extract from the report of the Commissioner of Railways to his Minister—

The sum required for the rehabilitation which will be necessary would be a formidable one, and towards it I would recommend a war surcharge of 12½ per cent. on all fares, freights and charges other than are covered by special agreements.

That is the form in which the recommendation was submitted to the Minister. What I have read is, of course, only one extract from a very lengthy report. I suggest to members that in view of the fact that the matter has reached the Minister but has not yet been considered by the Government, there is no need at the present time for the motion appearing on the notice paper.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East): While I do not like the form of the motion as a protest, yet after listening to the Chief Secretary my view of it has been improved. The Chief Secretary has given the House much valuable information; but, after all, he has told us that the attitude of the railway authorities was to recommend increasing freights and fares by 12½ per cent. If a private business made a loss, it would not be able to increase the price of its commodities but would have to find an avenue through which to reduce costs. The Railway Department simply asks to be given an additional £450,000 yearly; and that amount is to be loaded on to country industries. Solvency of the railways would not save the State. We must keep our industries going in order to produce revenue. It is merely slipshod to say: "Increase railway freights and fares."

Every Government utility is a trading concern, but is not making a decent profit. Increase their charges? That would finish them altogether. There is a tremendous loss on the State Shipping Service, which nevertheless will have to be maintained for the sake of the North, where a great deal of revenue is being produced for the State. I am as much opposed to an increase in shipping freights to the North as I am to the proposed railway increases. During the time I controlled North-West shipping I reduced the freights all round by 20 per cent., notwithstanding the fact of a heavy loss. The freight on cattle I reduced by 15s. per head, for the simple reason that those who produced the revenue supported the State. Directly, that reduction represented a loss

to the Government; indirectly, it represented the making of a profit.

As to repairs, it is not the war that has caused all the trouble with the railway plant. It arose before the war started. Tradesmen have told me that even before the war the engines on the main trains, those to Kalgoolie and the Eastern States, did not cool down in time to allow of the packing jobs being done. This debacle began at the time when the present Government, just before an election, cut £100,000 out of the fund for belated repairs. Since then the railways have never been in proper repair. Mention has been made of what has been done in the war zone; but the railways are reaping a handsome return from the war traffic. Trains are loaded now, and the operations of the Defence Forces have added considerably to railway business and profits. The capitalisation of the railways, £26,000,000, carries heavy interest and sinking fund. Whilst I am strongly opposed to any writing-down of that capitalisation, yet the State cannot expect the system, with £26,000,000 of capital loaded on to it, to show a profit. Our railway policy in the past has been foolish in many ways, and thus it comes about that railway freights are imposed on industry to make up the amount involved in working costs and interest and sinking fund. Some lines now in existence should never have been constructed. The department has to carry all those lines.

I am just as strongly opposed to writing-down railway capital as I am to increasing fares and freights which will be piled on our industries. Someone might suggest reducing the capital of the Railway Department by £10,000,000, to £16,000,000. What will happen then? First of all, there will be one section agitating for lower freights and another section paying higher wages. The writing-down of the Railway Department's capitalisation would mean that the freights would be reduced instead of increased, and that costs would rise. There are many directions in which the railway authorities can look towards the balancing of their budget. In such a huge organisation, if it were gone into deeply and fearlessly, the authorities could make the system pay without imposing increases which the producers cannot afford. Whilst I do not agree heartily with the motion as it is phrased, my disagreement is not so serious that I cannot support it.

**HON. L. CRAIG** (South-West): While agreeing with the protest, I think it would be wrong for this House to ask that before freights and fares are increased, the proposals should be submitted to Parliament. The Commissioner of Railways is appointed by Parliament and given power so that Parliament shall not be able to interfere with the conduct of the Railway Department. With the first part of the motion I agree, but I will not support the suggestion that before increases are made the proposal shall be submitted to Parliament. I am not agreeing to an increase being made, but I do not think it is for Parliament to say.

**Hon. H. V. Piesse**: What did the Commissioner do the last time he was asked?

**Hon. L. CRAIG**: He did not take any notice, and I hope he will take the same attitude again. It is a question of principle whether the increased costs of industry—Government or private—should be passed on to the public. The question we have to ask is whether the community as a whole is to bear the added cost, or whether industry is to bear it. An interesting question to raise would be: What charges are being made to the Commonwealth for the use of our railways for carrying troops and for other purposes. I wonder if special rates are being quoted to the Commonwealth, because a tremendous amount of damage is being done to the rolling stock and carriages by the transport of large numbers of troops? The loss incurred by the railways may be largely caused by the rolling stock and carriages having been made available to the Commonwealth. If it is competent for me to do so, I would suggest an amendment to the motion. I move—

That in lines 6 to 8, the words "and further, that no increase in railway charges should be imposed without submission to Parliament" be struck out.

**Hon. C. B. Williams**: That will cut out the kernel of the motion.

**Hon. L. CRAIG**: No, I do not think so. This House is protesting against the people using the railways being charged with the added cost. We say that the community should not carry this extra charge, but I think it would be wrong to suggest that freights and fares should be submitted to this House for approval or otherwise. It is outside the function of Parliament altogether to fix railway rates and charges.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member ought to have objected to the withdrawal of Mr. Thomson's amendment, which was to strike out the words "without submission to Parliament."

Hon. L. CRAIG: Mr. Thomson intended to add other words.

The PRESIDENT: No objection was raised.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I suggest that the amendment I have moved is a good one. If it is not in order, I will abide by your decision, Mr. President.

The PRESIDENT: The amendment is practically identical with one that has already been withdrawn without any opposition, but as the previous amendment was withdrawn the hon. member may propose it again.

HON. C. B. WILLIAMS (South—on amendment): It seems to me that what I thought was a very simple motion has caused quite a lot of trouble. If the amendment is carried, I might just as well ask leave to withdraw the whole motion. Mr. Craig forgets that prior to 1939 this House was consulted every year regarding railway freights.

Hon. L. Craig: And discovered the mistake!

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: That is a matter of opinion. What are we here for? Are we here to be dominated by some nit-wit that we appointed for a term of years to a job which he cannot handle? We have no right to allow a continuation of what is taking place in Perth. We find buses that should be feeding trains, running parallel with them. We find that people in the metropolitan area are enjoying cheap rates and other concessions because the Commissioner of Railways or the Government will not take action to see that the buses do not run along a road parallel to the railway line. Instead of buses being permitted to pass the station at Bassendean, they should be taking people to Bassendean station where they can catch the train to Perth without one penny more overhead expenses. The same applies to Midland Junction and beyond. Private enterprise has got its hand in; we have allowed it to do so. We who represent the back country are expected to stand up and justify what the Railway Department does.

Compare what occurs in the metropolitan area with what takes place in the country. Here perambulators can be taken from

the suburbs to Perth and back free of charge and people can take cheap goods back from the city emporiums to their homes free of charge. If people in Kalgoorlie want to take perambulators to Perth they have to pay 15s., and they are not able to take back cheap groceries from the city. We are expected to admit that we must sit down and say that we have put the Commissioner of Railways outside our province. To a certain extent the Commissioner of Railways should be free of parliamentary control. He should be free of jerrymandering politicians, but is he really? He is not. In my motion I ask that we request another place to ensure that before any further freights are imposed, there shall be a reversion to the practice that prevailed prior to 1939, when Parliament was consulted on these matters. I agree with Mr. Craig that, though we were consulted, our wishes were thwarted. Still, we did express our opinion that the freights were unjust.

If we are to sit here as dumb Doras, there is no need for Parliament at all. A quarter of a million people living in and around Perth get everything from the railways. They have cheap this, cheap that and cheap everything! My electors at Norseman, 130 miles away, have one of the finest beaches in the world at Esperance, but they do not have a Diesel car to run them down to Esperance on a Sunday; and they do not enjoy a return fare of 5s. to Northam. They do not receive such concessions as that, but they have to pay. This is going to be my only reply to this debate. I am satisfied the House should carry the motion as a protest.

Are we here to take dictation from somebody who is running one of our State trading concerns? Are we to have these extra charges placed upon us because those in control cannot make the job pay? Those controlling the Midland railway made it pay after they put a good man in charge. This is no reason why the Government should not make the State railways pay. I was elected on a socialistic platform but I have long since lost faith in the manner in which the principle of socialism is being put into practice. It seems to me that under the system as it operates, a job is started and then a hundred people are put on the salary roll before a shilling is earned. The workers should fight hard and solid to ensure that everything the State controls is a payable proposition, because they get bet-

ter jobs in the Government than in outside occupations. But under the policy of the Government we have to sit down and take what is handed out to us. I ask Mr. Craig to realise that I want Parliament to have a say, just as it had prior to 1939.

On two occasions we carried resolutions of protest; we were over-ruled, but we did our duty. We said, "We are here as members of Parliament; we are the executive of government of this country; we delegated our authority to the Minister for Railways because we know it is too cumbersome for everybody to be a boss." We should have a say, and I am asking that we be given that say. The people of the metropolitan area do not pay sufficient. We know the trams are run too cheaply, just as are the trains. The people of Perth get their electricity too cheaply from the same officials and the Government does not want to show a profit because the people in the metropolitan area would ask for a further reduction in the price of electricity at the expense of the rest of the State. The people in the isolated portions have to pay. Why were railways constructed to the goldfields? They were for the goldmining industry in the first place, but they have paved the way for the development of the pastoral industry which would not have been in existence but for the goldmining industry.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What rot! The pastoral industry was there long before the goldmining industry.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: Was the pastoral industry in existence when the hon. member was at Norseman 40 years ago? There was not enough water there to supply the hon. member, let alone sheep! Why should I have to reply to such nonsensical remarks? The hon. member was evacuated from there on one occasion because there was no water, and he had to go back to Southern Cross. There was no pastoral industry on the goldfields before the goldmining industry. I hope Mr. Craig will not persist with the amendment, and that if he does the House will reject it.

Amendment put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

## **BILL—LOCAL AUTHORITIES (RESERVE FUNDS).**

### *Assembly's Message.*

Message from the Assembly notifying that it had disagreed to three amendments made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Hon. V. Hamersley in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 5, Subclause (2): Delete the words "according as the Minister may direct" in lines 8 and 9 on page 3.

The CHAIRMAN: The Assembly's reason for disagreeing to amendments Nos. 1 and 2 is—

The right to refer to the Minister for decision is a proper and desirable provision having regard to the special powers which Parliament proposes to delegate to the local authorities.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move—

That the amendment be not insisted on.

I believe members who supported the amendment misunderstood the meaning of the clause. The establishment of these reserve funds constitutes an important part of post-war reconstruction. It is impossible for local authorities to spend the money now being collected in rates because of a dearth of manpower and scarcity of material for road maintenance and construction. If they do not establish reserve funds, they will have to make substantial reductions in their rates. If reductions were made, it would be extremely difficult after the war to increase the rates.

The object of providing for the Minister's direction is to support the local authorities, not to control them. Many people would be prepared to agitate for a reduction of rates. One has only to walk through the city and suburbs to realise the interest some ratepayers take in their district while other ratepayers allow everything to go to the pack. Such people might bring pressure on local authorities to reduce the rates. After the war we shall be faced with serious problems, and unless the local authorities have this support, they will not be able to fulfil their obligations to their employees who enlisted in the Fighting Forces. We have reason to be proud of the work of the Local Government Department, which will be of great assistance to the local authorities in preserving their funds and advising as to their proper use. The chairman of the Local Government Association has asked the Minister to adhere to the Bill. He feels perturbed at the possibility of losing the department's support. We should accede to the request of the local bodies, and give them the support they need.

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: I voted for Mr. Thomson's amendment but, as a result of further consideration and discussion with



local authorities, I intend to support the Minister. The provision for the establishment of reserve funds has been received with great satisfaction by the local bodies. This has enabled them to carry over reserve funds until the time when the money will be needed. If they had to take their surpluses into account when striking their rates, they would have to reduce the rates. We must have money in reserve for necessary works when the war is over. If local bodies had to reduce their rates, they would have to be raised later to make provision for works not undertaken during the war. As a general principle, I have a great objection to handing over authority to other people, but in this matter the Minister's direction will be a safeguard and will not militate against the satisfactory work of the local authorities.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: We should insist on the amendment. We recognise the valuable work being done by the local authorities, and yet seemingly some members cannot trust them, after they have created reserve funds, to dispose of them in a proper manner without giving the Minister over-riding power. The ratepayers provide the money and elect their local representatives and, unless we are prepared to deny democracy its rights, we should not fear pressure being brought to bear by some ratepayers for the disposal of these funds in any particular way. If we adopt this attitude to the local authorities, the people of the State might well ask for the overlordship of Canberra to ensure that this Parliament is not subjected to pressure by some of the electors. We should show our confidence in local authorities to handle their own affairs.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I opposed the deletion of these words, and hope the Committee will not insist on the amendment. The chairman of the Local Government Association has told me that the local authorities specifically asked for this authority for their own protection. If there was a reserve fund, ratepayers might strongly object to rates being maintained at their present level. In my district there is no hall or road board office, and this might be one of the first things on which some ratepayers would have us spend the reserve funds.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Are not they entitled to it?

Hon. L. CRAIG: The provision of those requirements should be financed out of loan funds. This money was raised for the maintenance and upkeep of roads. Several members of this Chamber have given the amendment further consideration and have changed their minds. I know of one member not present who said he would support the measure as it was originally drafted.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I hope the Committee will insist on the amendment. I do not agree with the argument put up by the Honorary Minister, Mr. Gibson and Mr. Craig, that the ratepayers should not have the right to decide this point. Funds have accumulated because of war conditions and because the local government bodies cannot secure materials or labour to carry out their works. But have not the ratepayers the right to decide what shall be done with their money? The policy should be to reduce the rates if there is no work to be done. Mr. Black's name has been mentioned, but does he represent all the municipalities and road boards in the State?

The Honorary Minister: He is speaking for the association.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I do not know whether he is speaking for them all. I hope the Committee will insist on the amendment.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I find myself in a difficult position. I moved the amendment to strike out the words in question, and I did so because of communications I had received from road boards protesting against allowing the Minister to veto the considered opinion of the ratepayers' representatives. I have since changed my view. Mr. Black, the chairman of the Local Government Association, and Mr. Rosman, the secretary of the Road Board Association, want this particular measure. I have been told that if the Legislative Council refuses to agree to the replacing of the words in the Bill, the Minister will drop the measure. There are 90 road boards in the country districts and it is from the country boards that I have received objections to this provision. I feel that I cannot somersault, and consequently I am reluctantly compelled to act against the wishes of Mr. Black and Mr. Rosman.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I spoke to the chairman of the Country Municipal Association on this matter, and he at the time did not seem to know what I was talking about. I asked him whether he was quite sure, and he replied that it must have been

the municipalities that objected to this provision. I think the Committee should insist on the amendment. I am in agreement with it.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: One phase of this amendment I am inclined to think has been overlooked. Elected road board representatives are not engineers or practical men. This money has been accruing because the local authorities cannot make use of it, having neither machinery nor labour. Later, it will be necessary for them to take the advice of the departmental engineers upon the best way to expend the money.

Hon. G. W. Miles: But there is nothing to prevent them from getting that advice from the department at any time.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: With the exception of a few highly qualified men occupying the positions of engineer and secretary of a board, those controlling road boards are not trained men. After the war, country roads will be in a shocking state and it will be necessary for the boards to get the best advice obtainable in order wisely to expend their funds, and this they can obtain from the department.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: No municipality or local government body will establish a reserve fund unless it wishes to do so. The Minister will not and cannot say to a local government body, "You have so much revenue and must establish a reserve fund." There is much in the argument that it might be far better to reduce the rates than establish a reserve fund; but if a municipality or a road board wishes to reduce rates, there is nothing in this Bill to prevent it from doing so. That should be made quite clear to the Committee.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Sir Hal Colebatch has very clearly explained that the creation of a reserve fund is entirely in the hands of the local authorities. What would be the position of the local authorities if they could not obtain the advice of the skilled technical officers of the Works Department? I have had considerable experience of that department and know how country local authorities take advantage of the advice of its officers. The local authorities also want the support of the department. If this matter were placed before the Road Board Association I am certain it would want this provision embodied in the Bill.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: We have our own opinion without referring to the Road Board Association. If a board accumulates funds I do not see why it should not administer them without referring to the Minister. I hope the amendment will be insisted on.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: The Honorary Minister's statement is most absurd. We in the country know our roads and the work required. We should not have to look to the Minister for advice as to how we should expend this money.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am inclined to think that Mr. Piesse does not know what this is all about. This measure does not by any stretch of the imagination provide the Minister with the power to tell road boards on just what roads they are to place bitumen.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: They have to apply to the Minister.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. The Bill provides that the Minister shall have power, if the reserve fund is created, to grant approval for the expenditure of that money so that it will be expended in the way intended when it was first raised. Without this Bill, road boards could not create a reserve fund. They would have to reduce their rates if they appeared to show a surplus on their estimated expenditure. If the measure is agreed to there is nothing to stop a road board from doing that. My experience is that it is desirable that the Minister should have some authority over such a fund as will be created under this Bill. Some forms of expenditure are limited to loan funds and others to revenue funds. Without mentioning particular instances I can understand that requests might be made and pressure brought to bear on a local authority to spend this money in a manner not anticipated when it was raised. This will apply to municipalities as well as road boards. It is not to be assumed that the Minister will be autocratic, and adopt an attitude which could not be justified.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	14
Noes	..	..	..	..	6
					—
Majority for	..	..	..	..	8
					—

AYES.	
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. F. E. Gibson
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. C. R. Cornish	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. C. D. Williams
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. W. J. Mann

(Teller.)

NOES.	
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. G. W. Miles	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. H. V. Plesse	Hon. A. Thomson

(Teller.)

Question thus passed; the Council's amendment not insisted on.

No. 2. Clause 6, Subclause 2—Delete the words "according as the Minister may direct" in line 4.

The CHAIRMAN: The Assembly's reason for disagreeing is the same as that applying to the previous one.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move—That the amendment be not insisted on.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not insisted on.

No. 3. Clause 8—Delete paragraph (b).

The CHAIRMAN: The Assembly's reason for disagreeing is—

The only provision in the Bill for the withdrawal of the portion of the reserve funds is that contained in the subclause which has been deleted. It is essential that such a provision should be embodied in the Bill.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move—

That the amendment be not insisted on.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not insisted on.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

### BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Industries Assistance Act Continuance.
- 2, Financial Emergency Act Amendment.
- 3, Road Districts Act Amendment (No. 2).

Received from the Assembly.

### BILL—STATE (WESTERN AUSTRALIAN) ALUNITE INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (in reply) [5.21]: I feel sure that members will agree to the Bill, but I am desirous of replying to one or two points raised during the debate. In the first place the measure we are considering, which really consists of the agreement arrived at between certain people and

the Government to work the deposits at Lake Campion under a partnership, represents the culmination of considerable work and research over a period of years. In order that members may have a fairly accurate knowledge of what has been involved in the work carried out to date, the Minister responsible caused a memorandum to be circulated and I certainly thought that the information presented would prompt members to agree that the department and the persons mentioned in the memorandum were entitled to a great deal of credit for the manner in which they had persevered with a proposition that at one time appeared to present insurmountable difficulties.

We are now assured that all those difficulties have been overcome, and that it is now possible for the production of potash from the Lake Campion alunite deposits to be obtained on a scale that will be of the utmost value to the Commonwealth as a whole, not only during the war period but subsequently as well. I would like to express my commendation of those who have been associated with the project. That applies not only to the Minister for Industrial Development who controls the department concerned but to the members of the syndicate and all the professional men who have been associated with the project almost from the inception. I refer to men like Mr. A. F. B. Norwood, who Mr. Seddon admitted, is one of the foremost scientists in his particular line in the Commonwealth, and also to the various professional officers associated with the C.S.I.R. and our University. One and all have given of their best in the endeavour to solve the problems they were faced with, and we are assured now that they have succeeded in that direction.

A very interesting contribution to the debate was made by Mr. Seddon and, as members will no doubt recollect, he said he would offer arguments both for and against the proposal. He certainly did that, and he left me wondering at one stage whether he was really opposed to the action of the Government or was in favour of the course that has been adopted. Subsequently in conversation with the hon. member, I became satisfied that he really believes the Government did the right thing in dealing with the matter as indicated in the memorandum. During the course of his speech Mr. Seddon, referring to the action of the Government, said he was reminded of the say-

ing relative to the "valour of ignorance," and he added, "I am wondering whether the action of the Government in establishing this industry cannot be so described."

Hon. W. J. Mann: I do not think he meant that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I wondered if there was any real justification for such a statement. Mr. Seddon went on to say that the establishment of a chemical industry involved the outlay of a tremendous volume of capital. He spoke of the large monopolies that have been created and operate successfully throughout the world, thereby leaving the impression in my mind that he held we should be particularly careful about establishing a chemical industry in this State. In other words, I gathered he suggested we should leave the industry alone seeing that as the chemical industry, generally speaking, was in the hands of a large monopoly extending throughout the world we could not possibly hope to succeed. If the Government adopted that attitude regarding the alunite industry or any other activity, the probability is that we would never have established any undertaking in Western Australia.

Then the possibility of the establishment of the aluminium industry was mentioned by Mr. Seddon who spoke about the tremendous capital required for that purpose and suggested that it was doubtful whether the industry could be established within the Commonwealth. As a matter of fact, the Commonwealth Government to all intents and purposes has decided that the industry shall be established in Australia. I have no doubt that members will recall that a few months ago a Government announcement was made on the subject. I also draw attention to the fact that only this week a statement appeared in the Press reporting the arrival in Australia of several American experts who had come out officially with a view to exploring the possibilities of exploiting the mineral and chemical resources of the Commonwealth. That indicates the activity displayed regarding the utilisation of the tremendous resources we have not only in Western Australia but in the other States of the Commonwealth. In fact the Commonwealth Government is very anxious to have the alunite industry developed as quickly as possible.

Although it is true that the Commonwealth Government did not care to be associated financially with its establishment in this State, it did help us in every other way. For instance, it has gone to great lengths to assist the syndicate in obtaining the necessary machinery, plant and equipment, and has also helped very materially in regard to the manpower position, which could easily have been very awkward indeed. As a result of the co-operation of the Commonwealth Government, manpower has not up to the present occasioned us any anxious moments. Most industries are now suffering great disabilities through lack of manpower and so forth. There has been the utmost co-operation between the Commonwealth and the State Government in that respect. Mr. Seddon raised that question, and also another question about the establishment of the manufacture of aluminium in Australia, more particularly the manufacture of aluminium from alumina obtainable from Lake Campion. He said—

It is recognised that we cannot hope to manufacture aluminium from alumina produced at Lake Campion.

The Commonwealth Government is hopeful of establishing the industry for the manufacture of aluminium not in Western Australia but elsewhere. Undoubtedly aluminium can be manufactured from alumina produced at Lake Campion. In that connection I may observe that the Commonwealth Government has been in communication with the American Government—and those negotiations have proceeded for quite a while now—with regard to the acquisition by Australia of the necessary machinery and equipment which are so indispensable to that particular industry. I am advised that little doubt exists that before very long an attempt will be made to establish the industry in the Commonwealth. If that is so, then the alumina which will be produced from Lake Campion will be available to that industry; and I am told that the Lake Campion alumina will be produced at a cost that will make it very attractive to those in control of the aluminium industry not only here but in countries outside the Commonwealth.

Another question raised by Mr. Seddon as well as by other members was why some members of the syndicate consented to sell to the Government their entire interests in

the original concern. I was asked whether I could supply any particular reason for their attitude. I find that I have no particular reason to offer, but that the Government had no objection to any member making inquiries of these men on the subject. They simply said, "If the Government is going to take full control, we do not mind. We will just withdraw, so long as we are compensated to the extent of whatever it may be that we have invested." They mentioned a figure of £2,000 each, being a total of £6,000; and there have been no recriminations whatever. One member of the syndicate had committed himself to the extent of, I think, about £35,000. Then, as the result of war activities elsewhere, the £35,000 was not available; and this no doubt influenced the gentlemen in question.

Again, as pointed out by Mr. Craig, the Commonwealth regulations then dealing with limitation of profits to 4 per cent. on capital may have had some influence on the three members of the syndicate in question. But, whatever the reason, they had done their share towards the establishment of this industry; and at that particular time they preferred to retire from the syndicate and to allow the Government to carry on as suggested. I think it only fair to point out that when the Government came to the conclusion that it would be necessary for it to provide the bulk of the capital, it did insist that it should have majority representation on any board of management. That, again, may have been a reason why one or more of those three members of the syndicate preferred to retire. They no doubt thought when entering into this undertaking that there might be big possibilities in it, and therefore they would like the direction and control of affairs. But as circumstances developed, that became less likely. Here was perhaps another reason which assisted towards their determination to retire.

Several points of a technical character were raised by Mr. Seddon, for instance with regard to cost of roasting, the question of fuel, and whether the fuel used in a commercial venture would be as satisfactory as the fuel used at the University. Then there was also the question of tonnage, relating particularly to the statement that the plant was being erected with a view to the treatment of 130 tons per day. Having no personal knowledge of the matter, I referred

Mr. Seddon's questions to a responsible officer. Unfortunately, Mr. Bowley and Mr. Fernie are away at Lake Campion, and I have not been able to obtain their views; but I have received advice on the subject from the Minister for Mines. It reads as follows:—

**Roasting:** The cost of all stages of the process, that is roasting, mining, etc., must be taken into consideration in arriving at the ultimate production cost. The cost involved in roasting would very likely be offset by the low cost of mining at Campion. This would, he thinks, be very much less than mining costs say at Strassburg.

**Fuel:** Professor Bayliss states that Mr. Norwood is satisfied that the required temperature can be obtained using low-grade fuel. The difficulty encountered during the experiments at the University was to keep the temperatures sufficiently low when using a high-grade fuel. Then with regard to the question of tonnage to be treated, it will be remembered that Mr. Seddon asked whether it would be necessary to mine—I think he used that term—say, 200 tons in order to produce 130 tons of the alunite which was to be treated. I think Mr. Seddon was under a misapprehension when speaking on that point. It appears that I was right. The alunite at Lake Campion is what is called alunitic clay, and it is estimated that 130 tons of that alunitic clay will produce 13 tons of potash. So it is not a question of mining the larger quantity that is referred to. It is the actual quantity that will have to be obtained in order to keep the plant working to full capacity. Thus there is really no difficulty in that respect.

One or two other points were raised by Mr. Seddon, also of a technical nature. All I have to say in reply to his remarks is that we have had the very best men obtainable in charge of these experiments. Those men have assured the department and the syndicate that they have actually solved the problem with which they were faced. There may be one or two aspects in regard to treatment which it would not be right to refer to publicly at the present time, but I understand that, as the result of experiments, it has been proved conclusively that this deposit can be treated commercially in accordance with the memorandum. The Government is of opinion that there is a national asset at Lake Campion which should be exploited, and the Government is anxious to exploit it successfully in the interests of the State. It is, no doubt, an unusual procedure to enter into a trans-

action of this kind, but we have entered into it believing that it is the only means by which we can give the people concerned really equitable terms.

The members of the syndicate who still remain in partnership with the Government cannot hope to get anything out of the venture unless it proves a success. Anything that they are likely to receive, anything that it is possible for them to receive, can be obtained by them only if the industry is successfully established. For that reason I think we should be prepared to commend the attitude and the actions of those men, not only for the way they have persisted against the disabilities referred to but because of the fact that they are prepared to give this country the benefit of their research and of the work they had put in and of the money they had expended.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Those men will receive salaries?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Three of them are on salary; and they are very capable men too, I understand. Mr. Norwood was one of two recommended to the Government by the C.S.I.R. He has spared no pains, and has received no remuneration whatever, and cannot receive anything from the venture unless it proves a success. I appreciate the manner in which the Bill has been received. The points raised by Mr. Seddon have all been examined and I believe I have dealt with most of them here. I can but reiterate that the professional men who have been engaged on this venture have done remarkably well; and in view of their advice to the Government and to the syndicate I consider we have no option but to approve of the action that has been taken and of the Bill as it has been presented to this House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee.*

Hon. V. Hamersley in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Approval and ratification:

Hon. W. J. MANN: I would like to ask the Chief Secretary whether there is any other agreement between the Government and Messrs. Martin and Norwood. I do so because I have heard it said that there is an agreement for the payment to those gentlemen of a royalty based on the ton-

nage of potash produced. I have heard that from more than one source, and would like to know whether it is a fact that there is something supplementary to this agreement. I have read the agreement carefully, and cannot find any evidence of it there.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have no knowledge whatever of any other agreement. So far as I am concerned, this comprises the whole of the agreement made between the syndicate and the Government.

Clause put and passed.

Schedule, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

#### **ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.**

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [5.48]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 11 a.m. on Tuesday, the 8th December.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 5.49 p.m.*

## **Legislative Assembly,**

*Thursday, 3rd December, 1942.*

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

#### **QUESTION—MINERALS FOR WAR INDUSTRIES.**

Mr. TRIAT asked the Minister for Mines: 1, In view of the national importance of minerals for war industries, will he advise the House what steps have been taken to exploit our minerals now that overseas and Commonwealth moneys are available? 2,