

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Lambert
Mr. Brown	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Smith
Mr. Collier	Mr. Troy
Mr. Davies	Mr. Walker
Mr. Duff	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Hudson	Mr. O'Loughlin
	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Brown	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Draper	Mr. Money
Mr. George	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Willmott
Sir H. B. Lefroy	Mr. Maley
	(Teller.)

Mr. Speaker: I give my casting vote with the Noes.

Question thus negatived.

Committee resumed.

The Chairman: The question is: That the Schedule be agreed to.

Hon. P. Collier: I move—

That the Chairman do now leave the Chair.

The Chairman: The question is that I leave the Chair and report progress.

Hon. T. Walker: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. P. Collier: I simply moved that you should leave the Chair

Question stated and a division called for.

Hon. P. Collier: I have got you now, Mr. Chairman. You will not be able to vote for your own ruling this time.

The Chairman: I will not take any instructions from you.

Hon. P. Collier: You are not fit to be Chairman of Committees.

The Chairman: I know how to behave myself and you do not.

Hon. P. Collier: Behave yourself! You ought to be dragged out of there.

The Chairman: Order!

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes	14
Noes	17
Majority against				3

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Question thus negatived.

Progress reported.

Mr. HUDSON: I should like to know where we stand. What stage have we reached?

The SPEAKER: The Chairman reported to the House that the Committee had considered the Bill, made progress and asked leave to sit again. I do not know how much progress has been made.

House adjourned at 11.55 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 3rd December, 1920.

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

URGENCY MOTION—FIREWOOD CUTTERS' STRIKE.

Mr. SPEAKER [4.33]: I have received the following notice from the leader of the Opposition:—

I desire to give notice that it is my intention, on the assembling of the House this afternoon, to move a motion for the adjournment of the House to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the closing of the mines in Kalgoorlie and Boulder, consequent upon the strike of woodcutters in the district.

In order to comply with the Standing Orders, it will be necessary for seven members to rise in their places.

Seven members having risen in their places,

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.34]: I am moving the adjournment of the House in order to afford members an opportunity to consider the position that has arisen in the principal mining centre of the State. No doubt members are aware, from their reading of the newspaper reports, of the position that exists in Kalgoorlie and Boulder. Within the past week a strike has occurred on the wood line whence the mines draw their supplies of fuel, and this has resulted in the closing down from day to day of the whole of the mines in that district. Some 3,000 men are now out of work, and with their families and dependants are in very straitened circumstances. May I briefly recount the circumstances which led up to this trouble? The men who have been engaged in getting the firewood for the mines have until quite recently been members of the Australian Workers' Union, but during the last month or two efforts have been made by one or two individuals to induce the cutters to withdraw their membership from the A.W.U. and to join what has been described as the O.B.U. Unfortunately, and I say it advisedly, they have been successful to a very great extent, as I believe something like 80 per cent of the men engaged as firewood cutters have withdrawn from the A.W.U. and joined the O.B.U. Since this occurred the same persons who were responsible for the division in the ranks of these men have successfully endeavoured to induce the section which joined the O.B.U. to go on strike. I am not informed as to the whole of the circumstances attending the cessation of work, but I understand it was over a comparatively trivial matter, as to the allocation of a block of land to one or two particular cutters. However, the fact is they have ceased work. It is interesting to know that nearly the whole of the men who withdrew from the A.W.U. and joined the new union belong to the foreign element or are of foreign extraction.

Mr Pilkington: Is the O.B.U. a registered union?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, it is not. As a matter of fact there is no such union in Western Australia as an O.B.U., but one or two individuals who induced these men to join up simply formed a new union which they called the O.B.U. Such a union does not really exist in Western Australia. Practically the whole of these men who withdrew from the A.W.U. are of foreign extraction, and I understand that the British section of the cutters who have remained members of the A.W.U. have continued at work. They are working at the present time, but some 50 or 60 woodcutters are not capable of supplying anything like the requirements of the mines. Consequently the whole of the mines have closed down, and unless the trouble is settled very speedily, it is almost certain that these mines will not re-open this side of Christmas. If this be so, we shall have 3,000 men in the Kalgoorlie and Boulder district idle till the new year, and it is well known that, owing to the inadequate wages they have been re-

ceiving for years past in comparison with the cost of living, none of these people have any savings by them, and on the first day when they ceased to work, they practically reached the end of their resources. The position will be that the maintenance of these men and their families will fall on the Government. This morning I received an urgent telegram from the responsible officials of the Miners' Union in Boulder, asking me to approach the Premier and request that an officer be sent to the fields at once to arrange for food supplies for those who are in need. It is rather an extraordinary thing that a few hundred foreigners, a very small proportion if indeed any of whom are naturalised Britishers, should thus be able to paralyse one of the principal industries of the State. It is a condition of things that ought not to be permitted to continue. It seems to me that we have reached the point when the Government would be justified in considering whether the section who have taken this action should be given cutters' licenses in future. I believe that the Government have already decided, if not under the Act then on some other authority, that no additional foreigners will be permitted to take out woodcutters' licenses, but those who now hold licenses or have had them in the past will have the right of renewal. I believe I am right in saying that the action of the men who ceased work, and consequently have thrown all the miners out of work, is very strongly resented by the people of the Kalgoorlie and Boulder district who are suffering as a result, but they are powerless to act in the matter. I suggest to the Government that perhaps some Minister, probably the Minister for Mines who also controls the forests, might visit the fields at the earliest possible moment if it is thought that his services would be of any use, so that the whole of the circumstances might be considered on the spot. We ought not to allow a handful of men, and non-Britishers at that, to hold up the whole of the mines in that district. It is unfortunately true that the wood cutters hold the key to the situation. Although the men in the mines have no dispute whatever, the wood cutters by withdrawing their labour, are able to affect the whole of the community in the Kalgoorlie and Boulder district, and something like 3,000 men are now out of work, 3,000 men who had no say at all in the dispute in question and who have no opportunity to protect themselves. The maintenance of these people will fall on the Government and it will involve the expenditure of many thousands per week, because these men and their families cannot be allowed to go in want through no fault of their own. If the trouble is not speedily settled the mines will remain closed until after Christmas. I hope that the Minister for Mines and Forests who controls the issue of woodcutters' licenses will be able to give an assurance that he will take steps to bring about a speedy settlement of the dispute. I have no wish to labour the question beyond impressing on

members the importance of it, and it should hardly be necessary to do that, because members realise that any action which results in the closing down of the chief producing mines of the State and the throwing out of work of such a large number of men, thus paralysing the whole of the industrial life of that large centre, is of most serious and urgent importance to the whole of the people of this State. I hope the Minister will be able to proceed to the fields at an early date. If I can be of any service I shall be glad to accompany him, or if he can suggest some way of bringing this element responsible for the trouble under the control of Parliament, or of the department, I shall do all in my power to assist him. I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr. TEESDALE (Roebourne) [4.45]: I should like to place on record my appreciation of the action of the leader of the Opposition upon this matter. The thanks of the community are due to him for calling attention to it, and for his offer to help in this difficulty. It is a scandalous state of affairs that an industry, which at present is working fairly quietly, and is reasonably likely to keep on working should be, as it were, paralysed by three or four scoundrels. Had I my way, it would not be a question of withdrawing the licenses from some of these men, but of making use of half-a-dozen rifles against them. There are one or two scoundrels who should not be allowed to remain in Australia. Australia has been altogether too solicitous about them on two or three occasions and too long-suffering, and has released these men when they should have been compelled to serve their full sentences. This is the sort of treatment that is meted out to those who are considerate to others. It is looked upon as an expression of weakness when one is considerate, the worse steps immediately follow. If the Minister for Mines and the leader of the Opposition could go up to the fields and find out who is directly responsible for this trouble, the Federal Government could be approached and asked to deport these men. They are the curse of the country. They are no good dead or alive, and they ought to be kicked out.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Seadden—Albany) [4.47]: One may or may not be disposed to re-echo the sentiments expressed by the member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale). I am afraid they will not help us to solve the problem we are faced with at the moment.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Take him up with you.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I would rather send him as John the Baptist. I recognise that the position is a serious one, but how to solve it at present is rather difficult. There is a handful of men on the fields who have taken the law into their own hands. They have withdrawn their membership from an organisation which is working

under a registered agreement, and have thus placed themselves outside the pale of the law. Members will thus realise that the solution of the difficulty is not so simple as would at first appear. Some time since we had a strike of workers on the wood lines, which held up the mining industry for a considerable time and was the cause of a tremendous amount of distress. Finally a solution was found by an agreement being made between the timber companies and the branch of the Australian Workers' Union which was responsible for the men. That agreement has been operating fairly satisfactorily ever since, and the men have been constantly at work. During that dispute some little friction arose owing to the attitude adopted by certain sections on both sides, which caused a fair number of the foreigners who were employed on the wood lines to retire from that work. Many, indeed, actually left the State. When I was last in Kalgoorlie I was advised that the number of men employed on the wood lines was not sufficient to supply the raines and keep them working at full capacity.

Hon. P. Collier: If they stopped getting firewood for 24 hours the mines would be in an awkward position.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I was advised that unless something was done to make up this shortage in the number of men, the mines would have to close down for a week or a fortnight at regular intervals in order to keep the plant operating. I refer to that portion of the plant which is required to be kept in operation continuously. That would mean that the mines would have to work under such difficulties that many of them would have to close down, probably for a lengthy period. That is a serious position, but I do not know exactly how it is to be overcome. The goldfields climate during the summer is very trying, taking it in the gross, particularly along the wood-lines. A great many men are employed with the axe who take advantage of the winter months, when the climate on the fields is the most favourable in the world, to go there and work on the wood lines. The member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) will bear me out in this. As soon as the hot weather comes they obtain employment in the timber districts along the coast, and this leads to a shortage in the firewood supplies for the mines. I do not see how that difficulty is to be got over. The fact remains also that a fair percentage of the men engaged on the wood lines are foreigners. Many of them have become naturalised but they still possess the foreign temperament. I understand that when they were approached by a certain disturbing element in the Labor movement—

Mr. Willcock: They are out of the Labor movement.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They were in the Labor movement at the time.

When they were associated with that movement, they were approached by a disturbing element both from the political and industrial point of view. When these persons were expelled from the Labor movement, because of their actions, they began to organise the One Big Union. I am advised by certain Labour officials from Kalgoorlie that they took this action in order to get even with the recognised Labour organisation, which had expelled them. The most simple method available to them of doing this was to go out along the wood lines, where this foreign element existed, and endeavour to hold up the firewood supplies and the operations of our mines. If that is the case I hold the view that these persons have done something in the nature of a criminal act. I am not aware of any law which would enable us to take action against them. They constitute a disturbing element. They are committing a serious offence from the point of view of the damage they are likely to do and the sufferings they are likely to cause amongst the other workers on the fields. Their action is, therefore, a serious one. It is, however, no uncommon thing for men to set out deliberately to organise a stoppage of work. But when men set out to organise a stoppage of work in a subsidiary industry in order to get even with the great body of workers, who can have no control over them, and do this for a specific purpose, they form about the worst class of individual that it is possible to find, or that the State has to contend with. If there are means by which we can get even with those persons, without going to the extent suggested by the member for Roebourne, I should like the opportunity of adopting them. At the same time I do not know how we are to do it. There are over 3,000 men employed on the Eastern Goldfields, who are at the present moment producing almost all the gold that is being turned out in the State. Every day that these men are out of work they are losing gold to the value of £8,400 a day. That is the value of the gold that would be produced if these men were constantly employed. Taking it by the week it represents a sum of about £70,000. This is a very serious thing from the point of view of the general community, and it is still more serious when we realise that 60 per cent. of this production is required for the purpose of paying wages and salaries. It will thus be realised that something like £30,000 is already lost to men who are not responsible for the trouble, through the deliberate actions of two or three disgruntled individuals who represent this disturbing element now existing on the goldfields. I do not know that either the leader of the Opposition or I could do very much in the handling of this disturbing element. Probably we should be rather in the nature of red rags to a bull. I understand that the Italian Consul has

gone to the goldfields to endeavour to induce these people to understand the real position. Apparently they have been led to assume that the O.B.U. is a world-wide organisation to which the Italian workers in Italy, who are trying to get control of the industries there, belong. They have also been led to understand, I believe, that if they do the same thing here on the wood lines, they will obtain possession of the mines later on. Of course, that was rather a strong inducement to put before the men, who might not understand British traditions, and this might have persuaded them to take an action of this kind. I am waiting for a report as to what has taken place as the result of the visit of the Italian Consul. Until he advises me that he can do nothing I do not know that we can do very much. If the worst came to the worst, we could adopt the suggestion made by the leader of the Opposition. I could advise these men that unless they renew their licenses, which in most cases have either expired or are about to expire, within a week and return to work, the licenses will not be renewed. It is the policy of the Government, if it can be done without seriously disturbing the industry, not to grant licenses to other than British subjects. This has been our desire for a long time.

Mr. O'Loughlin: You cannot get the Britishers to replace them.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There are so many of them, that if we refuse to renew the licenses we will hold up quite a number of industries and greatly affect the State. Because of this we have to move cautiously. The feeling runs so high, I understand, that if it were necessary for the purpose of getting over the difficulty, we would be in a position to organise a certain number of men, possibly not so well fitted for wood cutting as the others, in different parts of the State, who would be prepared to fill their places, until such time as suitable labour could be found. I feel however, that the time is not yet ripe for action of this nature.

Hon. P. Collier: If people are willing to operate along these lines, would the Government assist them?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If I am advised that the Italian Consul has been unable to do any good in the matter, I am prepared to proceed with the leader of the Opposition to Kalgoorlie and confer with the responsible organisations, the mayors of Kalgoorlie and Boulder, and others, to see whether we can solve the problem in the direction of removing these men from the wood lines and establishing the industry upon a more permanent basis. I have no objection to organisations amongst men for the purpose of protecting their own interests, but when persons commit a criminal act, such as has been committed in this case, and deliberately bring about discontent, I have a very strong objection. These

people have nothing to gain by their action. It was only a question of whether a piece of bush was culled bush or not.

Hon. P. Collier: If it had been a question of wages, I could have understood the trouble.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, or a question of the betterment of conditions. These men were, unfortunately, led by others who had promised them the millennium, and the result is that this criminal action has been taken. I am sure that the balance of organised workers on the fields will not tolerate that sort of thing. Certain officials who saw me in Kalgoorlie believed that this was going on and they said that, sooner or later, certain individuals, whom they mentioned as being responsible, would cause trouble. The object of these individuals was not to benefit the workers along the wood lines, but to get even with the organised workers on the mines. If this is the case we must ask everyone in the community, particularly the workers on the goldfields who are likely to suffer such a big loss, to organise and come together to defeat the object of those who desire to disturb the peace of the community. Realising the difficulties of the position, I am keeping closely in touch with those who can advise me, and when I think it is desirable to go to the fields, I will do so. For the moment, however, I do not think it is desirable. Anything the Government can do, or any action they can take, that is likely to remove that disturbing element, will be taken. If I could carry out the suggestion of the member for Roebourne, and there was power to do so, I would advise the Commonwealth to remove these men. They have done no good for themselves or anyone else. We ought to be able to take action against them and prevent them from holding up an industry of this kind. I give the House my assurance that if there is any requirement, in the way of action by the Government, that can be furnished, and that will solve the difficulty, it will be forthcoming. We will do all that is possible to bring about an early termination of the trouble.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [5.0]: I am very pleased indeed that the leader of the Opposition has brought this matter before the House. It is a great pity that, according to what we have heard just now, two or three men are able to evade the law and thus bring misery upon hundreds of families and for the time being close down an industry of the magnitude of gold mining at Kalgoorlie. Surely this House can frame legislation to prevent such evasion of the law for the future. These strikes are causing untold harm.

Mr. O'Loghlin: But many strikes are justified.

The Minister for Mines: Certainly.

Mr. HARRISON: We have the machinery of the Arbitration Court.

The Minister for Mines: Besides that, we have an agreement operating on the wood lines.

Mr. HARRISON: The cessation of work on the part of 100 individuals is doing infinite injury to the industrial public of Western Australia, and seriously reducing the revenue of the State. The strike at Fremantle which prevented the holding of sales of skins and wood during October and November seriously affected the finances of this State. If the sales of wool at Fremantle had been proportionate to the sales in Victoria, it would have meant to this State a cash return of £200,000 for October, and perhaps a similar amount for November. Of course the financial effects of the present position on the goldfields will be much more severe. The State cannot afford to lose large proportions of the money that should be in circulation. If members on the Opposition side and on this side were to lay their heads together to secure legislation which will deal more effectively with these matters, it would be a good thing for everybody, and especially for the industrial section of the community. I trust that action will be taken in regard to the goldfields dislocation, and that if possible criminal proceedings will be instituted against the two or three men who have obstructed the gold-mining industry.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kalgoorlie) [5.4]: I have no particular desire to enter into the causes of this dispute, but certainly it is not one of the ordinary events that occur in the course of industrial development. It appears rather to be a deliberate attempt to break up an industrial organisation, and, for some purpose, to paralyse the unions which have been established for the protection of the honest labourer on the goldfields and in the State generally. The subject is very wide, and if one so desired one could enlarge upon it extensively. However, what I want particularly to draw the attention of the Government to is the imperative need for immediate action directed not only towards the settlement of the dispute—if dispute it can be called—and of getting the wood cutters back to work so that the mines may be restarted, but also towards preparations for the sustenance of those people who, without any cause for which they themselves are responsible, find themselves on the verge of starvation. There are thousands of families on the goldfields, the wives and the children as well as the bread winners, facing Christmas in company with destitution, so to speak. I hope that at once there will be energetic action not only for the purpose of getting the wood cutters back to work, or of getting some men to do the work of wood cutting, so that the mines may resume operations, but also for the purpose of assisting the miners who have taken no part whatsoever in precipitating this disaster—for disaster only it can be called. I should like to have the assurance of the Premier, as well as that of the

Minister for Mines, that steps will be taken immediately to organise relief.

The Premier: We have had some experience of that before, you know.

Hon. T. WALKER: I know that, and it is a matter of grateful remembrance; but this is another occasion, and if possible a more deserving occasion. The present is a time when, above all others, we ought to see that there are no families in want and distress; and I have risen chiefly in order to seek an assurance from the Government that there will be an organisation established for the purpose of distributing relief in necessitous cases, and this without delay and without any too grievous humiliation of the people in the way of charity doles. What has been said about trying to split the workers on the goldfields has been said well. I fear that there is in all industrial countries an organised movement to divide the workers. I fear that this is a phase of the movement having for its object the disruption of the solid organisations that exist for the sake of the real purposes of our industrial organisation. I do not know what the actual source of the movement may be, but to me it has a suspicious taint. However, that aspect of the matter has already been dealt with, and I do not wish to insist upon it further. I shall be glad to have an assurance that as regards immediate relief there will be nothing left lacking on the part of the Government.

Hon. P. Collier: I think the Government ought to send a man to the goldfields.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [5.9]: While partly in agreement with the reasons which induced the leader of the Opposition to move his motion, I personally do not think this is a matter in which the Government should take action except as regards relief. In my opinion the matter is one which the Labour movement itself may well be left to look after. If certain disruptive elements have got into that movement for some purpose—whatever that purpose may be—the Labour movement is sufficiently strong to deal with them. It is said that 20 or 30 men of disruptive tendencies have been at work upon the foreigners along the wood lines and have played upon their feelings. But that influence can only last for a few days, until the wood cutters begin to understand the position rightly. We can put the true position before the wood cutters. I know the arguments which have been used on these foreigners to make them go into the O.B.U. One of the arguments is that the O.B.U. forms part of the big international socialist movement. No doubt these wood cutters when in Italy were in that movement, and now they think that by joining the O.B.U. they are assisting in a world-wide socialist movement, though nothing could be further from the truth. The action of the individuals who are working on the wood cutters will certainly not be approved by anyone who has the welfare of socialism in Australia at heart. Unquestionably the organised

Labour movement of Australia is working towards socialism in the future, but the individuals I refer to are working entirely against the interests of the Labour movement. They are not out for the good of the Labour movement at all. I utterly doubt the bona-fides of people who, while they claim to be anxious to advance the welfare of the workers, create disruption and distrust in the Labour movement. However, the industrial population should be competent to deal with the trouble unassisted. This particular phase of it can, I believe, safely be left to the 5,000 or 6,000 organised unionists on the Kalgoorlie goldfields.

Mr. Davies: But the section in question have gone further now, and have attacked the community.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But the first people to suffer are the unionists on the goldfields.

The Premier: It is an attack on unionism.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Undoubtedly. However, the 5,000 or 6,000 unionists of Kalgoorlie have a sufficiently strong organisation to be able to protect themselves. When a bogus organisation gets into an industrial community and attacks the weak spot of that community—the weak spot in this particular instance being the supply of fuel to the mines—then the whole strength of the Labour movement should be behind the effort to destroy the disruptive element. If the mines are going to stop for the want of firewood—

Hon. P. Collier: They have stopped.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If they are going to continue idle on that account, the industrialists on the goldfields will be quite within their rights, and the Labour movement will be quite within its rights, in sending out other men to get firewood. The firewood industry is, of course, the key industry to gold production at Kalgoorlie. At any rate, the Government ought not to chip in until they are asked to do so by the organised labour of the whole State.

Mr. Davies: I say that is nonsense.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The hon. member and I generally disagree on matters of principle as regards the Labour movement.

Mr. Hudson: The Labour movement can have no authority over the criminal law.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am totally opposed to criminal law being introduced into this matter, or any similar matter, because if that is done the criminal law may come back, boomerang fashion, on the Labour movement by and bye. I have seen too much of criminal law, and of edicts under the War Precautions Act, used in connection with industrial troubles during the last four or five years to be anxious for more of the same thing. The Labour movement should be found strong enough to deal with this particular trouble. At this stage the Government could perhaps assist by enabling other men to go out and get firewood. A man cannot go firewood cutting unless he has an equipment, consisting of axes, tent, and so forth, of a value of about £10. I

repeat, I am not at present prepared to support any law for prosecution in connection with industrial troubles. Like the leader of the Opposition and the member for Kanoona (Hon. T. Walker), I trust the Government will do everything possible to assist people who may be rendered helpless or necessitous as the result of the existing state of affairs. I strongly urge that the criminal law should not be set in motion at the present time. The Italian Consul has gone to the goldfields, and the secretary of the A.W.U. for Western Australia is there, and so are the secretary of the mining branch of the A.W.U. and the secretary of the Kalgoorlie branch of the Labour Federation. These gentlemen, with others prominent in the Labour movement on the goldfields, have formed themselves into a committee to go into the whole matter; and until they definitely request the Government to take some specific action outside the sphere of relief, the Government would not be well advised in taking any action whatever outside that sphere. I hope the Government will render any financial assistance that may be necessary to keep people on the goldfields from starving.

Mr. LUTEY (Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [5.15]: I hope the suggestion which has been made by the leader of the Opposition that a Minister or a responsible officer should be sent to Kalgoorlie to co-operate with the Labour organisation in dealing with this problem will be acted upon. I hope too that the distress which is bound to occur, will be dealt with sympathetically and promptly. Undoubtedly distress will prevail on the goldfields and I can assure the Premier that, judging from what I know of the state of affairs as they existed some little time ago, an awful position will be created in the course of a brief period unless the mines are able to resume work very soon. The business people there are not able to stand up to such a position as the present and it will mean starvation for very many people, unless relief is given to them as soon as possible. I hope the Labour organisations will be able to deal effectively with this white-anting movement which is out to deliberately destroy the Labour movement on the goldfields at the present time. I sincerely trust that a responsible officer will be despatched to the goldfields at once in order to assist the labour people to deal with the matter effectively.

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [5.17]: I do not propose to say very much regarding the motion except that I hope the Government will not attach much importance to the remarks of the leader of the Country party, Mr. Harrison, who spoke about the introduction of the criminal law to deal with the position. This party has had some harsh experiences during the last few years and the application of laws of this nature has

resulted in less justice and freedom than was formerly known.

Hon. P. Collier: It is not a criminal act to cease work.

Mr. Willecock: Someone wanted to deport certain individuals.

Mr. TROY: I object to a proposal to invoke the aid of the criminal law. Time will clear up these matters. The Labour movement has had a bad time. It has been deserted by one section which is now serving the interests of the profiteers and by another section, the members of which do not know where they are. Despite these temporary disturbances, and the temporary activities of the persons referred to at Kurrawang, I think that sanity will prevail in the end. I deprecate any statement that a measure should be introduced of the character referred to by the leader of the Country party.

Mr. DAVIES (Guildford) [5.19]: I would like to have a word or two on this subject. I was not present when the leader of the Opposition brought forward his motion for the adjournment of the House. This is a good augury for the future and I congratulate the leader of the Opposition in bringing this matter before the House. I disagree with the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willecock) when he stated that this was a matter for the Labour movement only. It is a matter for the general community. The sooner the general community take it up, the better.

Mr. Willecock: You mean from a criminal standpoint, I suppose?

Mr. DAVIES: Certainly not from the criminal standpoint.

Mr. Willecock: How should they deal with it? Do a Billy Hughes act?

Mr. DAVIES: I suggest that hon. members can repudiate these people and organise the State so that these troubles cannot take place.

Mr. Willecock: We have repudiated them already.

Mr. DAVIES: The repudiation has taken place to-day, but let me tell the member for Geraldton that only a couple of days ago a conference of the A.W.U. was held in the Trades Hall.

Hon. P. Collier: Do not let us make this a party matter. That was a different question altogether.

Mr. DAVIES: I do not want to turn this into a party question for a moment. So far as my knowledge goes of the leader of the Opposition, of Mr. McCallum or of Mr. Panton, I know perfectly well that they have no sympathy whatever with the I.W.W.

Hon. P. Collier: I have every sympathy with genuine O.B.U-ism. I have no sympathy with the bogus organisation.

Mr. DAVIES: It all depends upon what you regard as genuine O.B.U-ism. This trouble is not confined to Western Australia. The Labour movement in the United Kingdom is up against the same thing.

Mr. Willecock: We are up against them.

Mr. DAVIES: It is weakening the Labour party in the United Kingdom. Men who rank highest in the Labour movement there are going out into the highways and byways repudiating and denouncing these people.

Mr. Willecock: We have denounced them and not only that, thrown them out of the movement.

Mr. DAVIES: Too long were such men tolerated in the Labour movement. It would have been far better had the Labour movement repudiated them two or three years ago. I stand with the leader of the Opposition in denouncing these people. Action should be taken to see that no people on the goldfields are distressed on account of the action of these people. It is a most peculiar thing that this is the second Christmas in succession that such a thing has occurred. It is peculiar that it should happen again when we are approaching a time when there should be peace and goodwill among men.

Mr. Willecock: Now, or at any time.

Mr. DAVIES: Whatever may be said regarding the earlier dispute as to whether it was legitimate or not, in my opinion, the present trouble is not by any means a legitimate dispute.

Mr. Willecock: We have been saying the same thing for some time.

Mr. DAVIES: I heard what you said but I did not hear what the leader of the Opposition said.

Mr. Willecock: We all repudiated it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. DAVIES: It is time that a definite stand was taken and that the people as a whole denounced these agitators.

Hon. P. Collier: What more could you do than expel these people from the ranks of organised unionism? Could we drown them? It is the duty of those administering the law to go further with such a matter.

Mr. DAVIES: Has the Labour movement at Kalgoorlie issued a fiat to these men that if they do not resume work within a certain time, others will go out and get the wood?

Hon. P. Collier: Some of the unionists are working now.

Mr. DAVIES: That does not improve the position so far as the mines are concerned. The miners should not have to lose a day's pay.

Hon. P. Collier: What would you do?

Mr. DAVIES: I would organise a band of men and go out along the woodline.

Hon. P. Collier: And cut wood?

Mr. DAVIES: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: That would only help for a day. Men could not go out along the woodline to get wood and keep the mines working.

Mr. DAVIES: There are a good many men who are not working in the mines.

Hon. P. Collier: Simply because they cannot continue their employment in the mines.

Mr. DAVIES: There are men unemployed because of the strike.

Hon. P. Collier: What would you propose? That they should work for a day

along the woodline and in the mines the next day?

Mr. DAVIES: Something should be done if only in the nature of a demonstration. As to whether this is a matter for the Labour movement only—

Mr. Willecock: Who else would you have deal with it?

Mr. DAVIES: It is ridiculous to allow this to go on.

Mr. Willecock: You do not know much about it and you only "blew" in here at the last moment.

Mr. DAVIES: I do not want to turn the discussion along party lines.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not think either of us should make political capital out of it.

Mr. DAVIES: I am not desirous of doing that for a moment.

Hon. P. Collier: The position is getting a bit delicate.

Mr. DAVIES: It is not my intention to make a political matter of this at all. It is far too serious a problem to do that. I realise what must be the position of the workers on the fields. We know there are men on the coast enjoying high wages, and, notwithstanding that fact, there are some callous enough, perhaps I should say criminal enough to knowingly throw these men on the goldfields out of work, men who are earning a mere pittance to-day. Whatever I can do to rectify the present position, will be willingly done.

Mr. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [5.27]: It is regrettable that this stoppage of work on the woodline should have occurred at this time, particularly as it affects so many individuals on the goldfields who are practically working on the bread line, and who are forced into unemployment. The Kurrawang wood line is in my district, and recently, I went to the head of the line. I heard there was a certain body organising there for certain purposes which were disclosed to me at that time. I tried to ascertain the full strength of the position and found that these people had secured a certain number of members for their organisation. Most of them are foreigners who, unfortunately, are easily influenced and led. Now they are seeking for some trivial reason to cause the suspension of work on the wood line and on the Golden Mile. If the Government had been desirous of securing industrial peace—

The Premier: There could be no doubt on that point.

Mr. LAMBERT: They would have been more careful in the past. The union complained of this afternoon is bogus, but that is not the only bogus union on the goldfields, and their existence will lead to disruption of industry.

Mr. Hudson: You are getting on to the party aspect.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not know what the hon. member is mumbling about. An

endeavour was made to foist a bogus union on the gold mines, and the union in the present instance is much in the same position. A good deal of the difficulty could be remedied if it were not for the fact that the wood supply is isolated and is shared by two companies—the Kurrawang and Lakeside companies. If trouble occurs, the whole mining industry on the goldfields is held up. It is to be hoped that the Government will seriously consider the desirability of tapping other sources of fuel supplies which can, I believe, be easily reached.

The Minister for Mines: I do not know of them.

Mr. LAMBERT: There is a big area of timber that can be speedily tapped below Coolgardie.

The Minister for Mines: That is absolutely incorrect. I had a report specially made the other day and it shows that such is not the case.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not know who made the report.

The Minister for Mines: I sent a man there for the purpose of supplying the report.

Mr. LAMBERT: Forests there have been traversed by the private wood companies who desire to work in them. A considerable amount of wood can be got there.

The Minister for Mines: The wood there would not be sufficient to keep one mine going. It would not have any effect at all.

Mr. LAMBERT: By running a spur line out from Widgiemooltha for a distance of 30 or 40 miles we could get into some fine forest country.

The Minister for Mines: All the reports I have are to the contrary. I do not know anything of the sort.

Mr. LAMBERT: That statement is contrary to all information and knowledge I have.

The Minister for Mines: One or two individuals want to get hold of the State forests there but they are not entitled to get them.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am in sympathy with the Minister on that point. It is only right that where those forests will be useful for mines closer at hand, they should not be made available for the purposes of mines further afield. I am in sympathy with the Minister's policy in that respect. Still, influences are at work up there. Every time there is trouble on the fields the two big firewood companies can hold up the whole industry.

The Minister for Mines: You could not alter that, unless you had sufficient private contractors to replace them.

Mr. LAMBERT: On the Norseman line there are two or three private contractors keeping the Kalgurli and the South Kalgurli mines going. Further down the line, if spur lines were run out a few miles by the Government, ample supplies would be rendered available.

The Minister for Mines: The Government will not do it at my recommendation. Fancy running 30 or 40 miles of railway for a few tons of firewood, which could not then be hauled at a profit.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the motion is a matter of urgency.

Mr. LAMBERT: This is a matter of very great urgency. The closer the preserve maintained in respect of the supply of firewood to the mines, the greater the danger. The Minister himself went up there and looked into the question. When we have a company which simply says, "We will not concede the demands of the men," what is to be expected? The present trouble may be trivial—

Mr. SPEAKER: The present trouble is what is under discussion.

Mr. LAMBERT: If this trouble were patched up to-morrow, the same thing might occur again in a week's time.

The Minister for Mines: Your proposal is no solution of the trouble.

Mr. LAMBERT: The Kurrawang company is hard up against it for cutters. They have been drawing on their reserves ever since the last industrial trouble on the fields. It is significant that all the small private contractors along the Norseman line can get plenty of cutters. They cut by the load, whereas the others cut by the ton over the weighbridge.

The Premier: It is not wood, it is cutters you want.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am only pointing out that this would considerably assist. The Minister knows that the getting of wood is a close preserve for the company.

The Minister for Mines: Nobody else can get it where those companies are getting it.

Mr. LAMBERT: But several other places have been pointed out to me as good forests.

The Minister for Mines: You cannot profitably carry the wood from those places.

Mr. LAMBERT: What does it cost the Kurrawang Company?

The Minister for Mines: About 13s. 6d. or 13s. 9d.

Mr. LAMBERT: If the company can get rails, the Government can get them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Where?

Mr. LAMBERT: Of course the hon. member wants all the rails for use down at Fremantle.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And you would put the Fremantle harbour at Coolgardie.

Mr. LAMBERT: For years it has been seriously suggested that the small contractor should be encouraged.

The Minister for Mines: In what way?

Mr. LAMBERT: Instead of allowing two private companies to control the industry, the Government might run out light spur lines to permit the small contractors to bring in their wood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must keep to the motion. The question is, not the

running out of spur lines, but the strike of woodcutters.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am pointing out one of the dangers existing up there. The same thing occurred when the Minister for Mines was Premier. It has been suggested that the small contractors should be encouraged wherever possible, even if the Government had to provide rails in order that the wood might be brought in.

The Minister for Mines: Even then it could not be done profitably at the place you are speaking of.

Mr. LAMBERT: It would be interesting to have the reports of the responsible departmental officers. I could say a good deal about some of the officers who went up there to report. Whether they had regard for the interests of the two companies I do not know. We have had the Lakeside Company operating for the last five or six years practically right alongside the Norseman line.

The SPEAKER: The terms of the motion do not affect the company.

Mr. LAMBERT: If you do not wish me to speak I will sit down.

Mr. SPEAKER: The motion is one for the adjournment in order to discuss the closing of the mines in Kalgoorlie and Boulder consequent upon the strike of firewood cutters in the district.

Mr. LAMBERT: If you do not think that embraces the supply of firewood to the mines, it is unnecessary for me to say anything further.

Mr. SPEAKER: It embraces the locality of the strike. If there is a strike at the place mentioned by the hon. member, he is in order in discussing it.

Mr. LAMBERT: Unfortunately I did not hear the leader of the Opposition. As for the crowd fomenting trouble up there, not only is there no sympathy with them in the Labour movement, but from the head of the A.W.U. to the members of the executive of the district section of the A.W.U. every endeavour has been made to get rid of them. In other circumstances the Government would be very alert. A little time ago they equipped 800 or 900 soldiers to put an end to an industrial trouble on the goldfields.

Mr. Willcock: We do not want anything like that.

Mr. LAMBERT: No, but the Government could spend a few thousand pounds then to make a demonstration in Kalgoorlie, whereas now apparently the whole of the mines will stop work, because an attempt will be made to induce the public to believe that the O.B.U. is being supported by the Labour movement.

The Minister for Mines: Do not be silly.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member had heard the leader of the Opposition he would not have made such a statement.

Mr. LAMBERT: If the leader of the Opposition made that statement I will make it again, and I will emphasise it, no matter what the leader of the Opposition said. I was tackled yesterday and the day before

by people who asserted that the O.B.U. are being supported by the Labour movement on the goldfields. In every other industrial disturbance on the goldfields, no matter what endeavour was made by the leader of the Opposition and the executive of the Labour organisation or the members of the Parliamentary Labour party to preserve industrial peace, attempts were made to throw the blame on to the unions up there or on to the Parliamentary Labour party, or both. Before this trouble occurred every possible endeavour was made to get rid of those fellows. The Government could have got rid of the men responsible for this trouble, if only they had taken action. For three months past it has been known to me that those men went up there for the sole purpose of getting the foreigners into this bogus union, so as to stop mining operations on the Golden Mile. They have boasted of it. It was known to everybody that those men were organising for one set purpose.

The Minister for Mines: I have not noticed on the files anything from you drawing attention to it, although you are the member for the district.

Mr. LAMBERT: If the hon. member took as much notice of anything I sent in as he is taking of my remarks now, it would not be worth my while writing. The coming of the trouble was known and the authorities must have been aware of the plans of those men, one of whom came from the Eastern States. Mr. Leslie, of the Kurrawang Company, knew two months ago that those men were working for a set purpose.

The Premier: Who could have prevented their going there?

Mr. LAMBERT: A lot could have been done.

Mr. Willcock: It is trenching on dangerous ground to stop a man going anywhere.

Mr. LAMBERT: There are many means by which the Government could have brought them to book.

The Minister for Mines: You would have been the first to make a noise if the Government had taken any such action.

Mr. LAMBERT: Nothing of the sort. Action to preserve industrial peace would have been supported by all members, and the Minister knows it.

The Minister for Mines: I know nothing of the sort. It would depend on the methods employed. The method you suggest would not be very favourably received.

Mr. LAMBERT: I did not suggest anything. Even if this trouble is bridged over, while the supplying of firewood is made a close preserve we are always likely to have trouble. Notwithstanding the reports the Minister has had from departmental officers, I seriously ask him to consider other sources of supply of firewood. The Premier was fully alive to the importance of that when he was on the fields. On a previous occasion the two firewood companies deliberately sat down and said, "We will let these men stop work." They would not

negotiate. When the Kurrawang section of the A.W.U. desired a conference with these men to discuss the new schedule of rates, the two companies refused to meet them.

The Minister for Mines: Has that any-thing to do with the present case of urgency?

Mr. LAMBERT: Yes.

Mr. SPEAKER: What happened 12 months ago has nothing to do with the motion before the House.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not know whether these men have a legitimate grievance or not. Even if it should be a legitimate grievance, if the two companies adopt the same attitude as that which they took at the termination of the last agreement, we shall have all the mines closed down again. This time the trouble is trivial. Last time it was a serious matter when the three years' agreement—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in discussing the three years' agreement.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am only letting the House know what transpired on the last occasion.

The Minister for Mines: We want to know what is transpiring now.

Mr. LAMBERT: If these men have a legitimate grievance, it is possible that the companies have precipitated this trouble.

Mr. Willecock: We do not want to have the bogus crowd recognised.

Mr. LAMBERT: The hon. member does not know the position as I know it.

Mr. Willecock: I think I know more about it than anybody in the House, because I am a member of the executive.

Mr. LAMBERT: I was there two months ago when they started to organise this trouble. There should be a way out of the difficulty. If these men have a grievance, the foreigners who are precipitating the trouble should be forced to realise their responsibility to the country in which they live, and they should not be permitted, as members of the A.W.U. or the O.B.U. or any other body, to cause a general cessation of work on the mines. I do not know what remedy one could suggest. I understand that the Italian Consul has gone to Kurrawang. Possibly he may be able to exercise some power over these men. This is not the first occasion on which they have caused trouble. They have given trouble before and have not had the sympathy of the A.W.U. They simply say they will knock off work, and stay out until they get what they want. The whole trouble dates back a considerable time and, while the supply of wood is held as a close preserve by two companies, we will always have trouble. We should assist the small contractors who are prepared to supply the mines with fuel.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [5.50]: The Government are fully

alive to the seriousness of the trouble, and I am very glad to know that the unions have repudiated the union of foreigners on the goldfields, which is led by one or two notorious characters. I wish we had some power to deal with them. We should be possessed of some such power. Unfortunately, however, we have not got it. I hope to-morrow will bring better news. The Minister for Mines has told hon. members what he has in view, and he hopes that something will result to-morrow. I have had communications from Kalgoorlie, and we are all aware how serious the position will become if all the mines close down even for a few days. I repeat that the Government are fully alive to the seriousness of the position and will do everything that it is possible to do.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder—in reply) [5.52]: In the circumstances I ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Public Service Appeal Board Bill.

QUESTION—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE, SUPERPHOSPHATE.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Premier: 1, What firms or agents acted as distributors of superphosphate to clients of the Industries Assistance Board during the year ending 30th June, 1920? 2, What was the amount supplied by each firm or agent?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Westralian Farmers, 11,270 tons; George Wills & Co., 3,203½ tons; Wigmore & Co., 784½ tons; Paterson & Co., 722 tons; Elder, Smith & Co., 605½ tons; Dalgety & Co., Ltd., 356½ tons; Padbury Stores, 243 tons; Gardner Bros., 79 tons. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION—OIL REWARD CLAIMS.

Mr. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Have the Government received representations from the Agent General advocating the granting of larger reward claims or leases than proposed in the Mining Bill for the discovery of mineral oil? 2, Is it his intention to lay the correspondence on the Table of the House?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, On 30th July and 5th August, cables were received from the Agent General sent on behalf of interested parties, urging the granting of larger oil leases than proposed in the Bill. To this I replied on the 17th August, giving the provisions of the Bill, and a further cable was received on the 27th August, to which I replied on the 9th

September. 2, Yes. Copies of the cables are herewith, together with copy of a letter received from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, and my reply thereto. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I will lay the papers, which I have here, on the Table of the House.

MOTION—POTATO CROP, TO POOL.

Mr. MONEY (Bunbury) [5.55]: I move:

That in view of the price of potatoes being insufficient to pay the cost of production it is, in the opinion of this House, urgently necessary that the Government take immediate steps to pool the present crop and to fix the price of potatoes for local consumption at an amount sufficient to pay the cost of production, including wages and reasonable profit, and that the Government assist in affording facilities for export and in obtaining the highest possible price for the exportable surplus.

The subject matter of the motion is urgent. As hon. members are aware, for some time past an inducement has been held out to settlers to produce, produce and produce. This has been emphasised in connection with dairy produce and particularly in the direction of potato growing. The position in which the potato growers find themselves to-day has been brought about by their having observed to the letter the direction to produce. They have now produced more than the market can absorb. Within the last 24 hours, 90 per cent. of the potato growers of the State have made representations to the Premier, and have pointed out that there is now a surplus of no less than 3,000 tons to be dealt with. Already 1,200 tons of potatoes have been bagged, and if they cannot be dealt with promptly they will deteriorate, while a big quantity will be lost. In connection with this particular crop, it is impossible for the grower to conserve his potatoes under the ordinary conditions. At the present time those potatoes are sound, but at this time of the year—and in the month of December particularly—the potato moth makes its appearance and, if it gets a hold, these potatoes will be absolutely unfit for consumption in the short space of two or three weeks. Viewing the seriousness of the position, the growers had a conference to consider what should be done, not only for the benefit of themselves but also for the consumers of the State. Having mentioned these facts to hon. members, I can ask the question, "Is it not right that something should be done?" Is it right that we should ask people to go on the land and produce and, when they have produced, find that there is no market for their products? I feel certain that the House will say that these growers should not be left. Are not the potato growers entitled to treatment similar to that which is accorded the wheat

grower and the wool grower? Should they not receive assistance similar to that given to the butter producers in the State?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But then, you see, the potato growers have not the same influence as other primary producers.

Mr. Johnston: We will look after them all.

Mr. MONEY: After the expressions of opinion given utterance to in this House within the last 48 hours, I am satisfied that hon. members are at one so far as the primary producers are concerned. I listened last night with great attention to the leader of the Opposition and the member for North-East Fremantle, and I took particular note of their words. They said, "Why are not all the producers entitled to benefits such as those accorded to the wheat and wool growers?" Undoubtedly it is essential that steps should be taken as soon as possible to mete out similar treatment to all. The only thing we can do to overcome the difficulty so far as potatoes are concerned, is to establish a pool at once in connection with the present crop. Let all possible cold storage space be made available. Cold storage is the only known method at present of keeping potatoes free from the moth and disease. We ask that arrangements be made for potato growers similar to those made for butter producers, and we ask for some advance against the potatoes which are received from the small growers. The small growers consist largely of returned soldiers. We are not making this request on behalf of returned soldiers alone, but quite one half of the returned soldiers who have settled on the land in the South-West are growing potatoes. Some of them, realising that there is now no price for potatoes, are considering whether they will dig their crops or leave them in the ground to rot. To dig and bag their crops would cost £2 per ton, and reckoning 4 tons to the acre the outlay would be £8 per acre. They ask whether it is worth while going to the further expense of £8 per acre unless it can be shown that they will be able to get something in return? This matter is of interest, not only to producers, but to the State as a whole. If something is not done, £20,000 or £25,000 will be lost to the growers and to the State and probably more than that, because it may cost very much more to supply our needs when the local supplies become scarce. If we have to import a large quantity of potatoes through failure to preserve our own crops, we may have to pay £25 or perhaps £35 per ton, instead of the £10 per ton which is calculated to be a reasonable price for the crop now available. This crop is probably the most expensive one ever grown in the State. The seed cost £20 a ton, and manure cost 20 to 25 per cent. more than usual, so that the position is indeed serious. It would be to the benefit of the consumers if something were

done. To them it would mean more moderate prices and more regular supplies. In the past it has been a case of over-supply or no supply at all.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You said just now that the potatoes would not keep.

Mr. MONEY: We are urging the Government to make available all possible cold storage space to keep as many as possible.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is none in the metropolitan area.

Mr. MONEY: The hon. member is wrong. I have information that a certain amount of cold storage space is available.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: One or two little private places; that is all.

Mr. MONEY: Again we are at variance. I am informed that there is available space for 600 to 700 tons, and it is calculated that if we could provide cold storage or cool storage or methods of fumigation to conserve 2,000 tons, it would be possible to overcome the period of difficulty. If a pool were formed the potatoes would be delivered to the pool, and it would be the duty of the officials to preserve this produce for the community and save this asset to the State. It should not be necessary to say anything further to commend the motion to members.

Mr. Pilkington: Do you suggest that a minimum price be fixed?

Mr. MONEY: I suggest that a payable price be fixed.

The Attorney General: Why does the necessity arise this year?

Mr. MONEY: Because of the greater production and no payable market for export to the Eastern States.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [6.5]: The position which has arisen this year will be a recurring one; of this there is no doubt. When we realised the trend of events we made every possible inquiry through the Department of Agriculture and other sources to ascertain the true position of the potato-growing industry. It was thought that markets might possibly be offering in South Africa and Mauritius, and a cable was sent by the department to ascertain the position there. The reply was that the only months during which potatoes could be shipped at a profit were August, September, and October. These are the very months in which this State is bare of supplies. The price in South Africa at the time the message was sent was £15 per ton on a rapidly falling market, so that the markets of South Africa and Mauritius are cut out. The Eastern States did not need our supplies; in fact the price for potatoes in Victoria is about £3 a ton, and the only chance of a market there would be in the event of a failure of the crops. The present crop has been an unduly expensive one. The seed cost from £20 to £22 a ton; manure has been at a very high price, and the production cost of the potatoes delivered on the Perth market is £10 per ton. I have gone very carefully into this calculation and

have based it on inquiries from every part of the State where potatoes are grown.

Mr. Brown: Does that include profit?

Mr. PICKERING: No, that is the cost of marketing the potatoes grown in the districts from Osborne Park to Torbay Junction. If we do not conserve the abundant supply which is available to-day, the position will be very serious indeed before the next crop comes in.

The Attorney General: I do not think this situation occurred last year.

Mr. PICKERING: No, because there was a failure of crops in New South Wales and we were able to export. Have not we been urged to produce, produce, produce? A great deal of money has been expended by the Government to settle people on the land, with the idea of producing potatoes for this State's requirements. A great deal of the land repurchased is being used mainly for the production of potatoes, and the State must make efforts to conserve the crop now that it has been produced.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If you have more than are required and they will not keep, what do you propose to do?

Mr. Naun: Make provision to keep them.

Mr. PICKERING: After consultation with the experts of the Department of Agriculture, we are limited to cool storage. It has been proved that if potatoes are kept at a temperature not exceeding 40 degrees they will not deteriorate. The question of providing cool storage for potatoes must be considered by the Government. There are buildings in course of erection which may be available for next year's harvest. I am referring to the Fremantle freezing works.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How will they affect the present crop?

Mr. PICKERING: This afternoon I had an interview with the engineer in charge of the works, and he assured me that there would be sufficient space to store this crop.

Hon. T. Walker: What, thousands of tons?

Mr. PICKERING: The estimate is 2,000 tons.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The works have not yet been erected at Fremantle.

Mr. PICKERING: They are sufficiently advanced to give insulated treatment. It would not be possible to guarantee perfect treatment, but such storage would enable the potatoes to be carried over for some time.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They cannot guarantee the temperature.

Mr. PICKERING: Not as at the freezing works, but because we cannot get a guaranteed temperature, should we do nothing? Are we going to let this crop go to waste, and not assist the growers in any way? If we can find means to assist these growers it is our bounden duty to do so, and I am surprised that the member for North-East Fremantle, instead of endeavouring to assist, should throw cold water on the proposal.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I think these growers should be protected, more so than some of

your wheat growers, but you must have storage accommodation.

Mr. PICKERING: There is another method which can be employed in conjunction with cold storage, namely fumigation. By fumigation the moth can be destroyed. The real reason why the present crop will not keep is because it is liable to be attacked by moth and fly. One thing necessary to properly control the position is a pool. The Government should at once consider the advisableness of passing a measure making it possible to organise a pool. It will be necessary to give to the growers a guarantee of at least £5 per ton. If this is not done, hundreds of small growers will be ruined. On a 2,000 ton crop a guarantee of £5 per ton, which would have to be paid to the grower on his delivering sound potatoes into the store, would amount to only £10,000. The price to be asked for these potatoes should be decided in the way enunciated by the leader of the Opposition the other evening. He said he was prepared to support legislation to give effect to a price fixed in this way.

Mr. Pilkington: He was talking of a maximum price; you are talking of a minimum.

Mr. PICKERING: This would be the maximum; the minimum would be the maximum.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We say the Prices Regulation Commission should fix the price.

Mr. PICKERING: It is necessary that a pool should be established and the price we are asking for the potatoes is £10 a ton. This, we estimate, is the actual cost of delivering them on the market. We say that if the £10 is given it will not pay the growers, because there must be a considerable loss in connection with this crop.

Mr. Teesdale: Is there no chance of the market recovering?

Mr. PICKERING: We can see no prospect whatever of the market recovering, but, given cool storage and fumigation, we might be able to carry over the whole of the crop, and thus ensure continuity of supplies. The present price of potatoes going into the market gives the grower no return. A few people living adjacent to Perth are getting the benefit of what little demand exists, but, as I have pointed out, there are 1,200 tons of potatoes ready bagged which cannot be railed to Perth. The price we are asking is merely intended to afford relief; it is the minimum price at which these potatoes could be sold.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: All you get is 4s. 6d. a bag.

Mr. PICKERING: A grower would be very lucky to get that, though potatoes cannot be produced at that price to-day. I am sure it is not the desire of the House that an industry such as this, which is being exhorted to do its utmost to supply the needs of the State should be nipped in the bud. There has been a lot of new settlement in my electorate, some of the settlers being returned soldiers, and they are depending upon this crop. I hope the Government will consider the great ur-

gency of the question. The Government, through their departmental officials, have already shown that they are alive to the seriousness of the position, but I hope that they will now take the necessary step of introducing legislation for the formation of a pool.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—LUNACY ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—DIVORCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 25th November.

Mr. HUDSON (Yilgarn) [7.32]: Some time last year an amendment of the Divorce Act of 1912 was brought down from the Legislative Council, and I took charge of it on behalf of its sponsor in another place. The Attorney General proposes by the Bill now before us to undo some of the work which was done by the measure passed last year. I am somewhat concerned to find a reason for the introduction of this measure, which is to repeal portion of another measure passed so recently. I am unable to find anything to satisfy me that any real necessity exists for the Bill. The Attorney General, I take it from his remarks, has indicated that Parliament was somewhat hasty in passing certain portions of the legislation which was introduced last year, that this was done late at night, and that it did not receive the serious consideration it deserved.

Hon. T. Walker: That reflects upon another place.

Mr. HUDSON: The measure in question was introduced in another place. It was fully discussed there and was open to the public Press for some considerable period before it reached this Chamber. Notice of its provisions and of the intention to pass it was given to representatives of the different churches, and their opinion was sought. The fullest publicity was therefore given to the measure before it reached this Chamber. I wish to correct an unintentional inaccuracy in the speech of the Attorney General. He said the measure had been introduced late at night. The clause which he now proposes to repeal was passed before the tea adjournment on the 26th November last year. It was neither late at night nor really late in the session, inasmuch as the Bill had received the fullest publicity.

The Attorney General: That is correct.

Mr. HUDSON: I mention that not by way of criticism of the Attorney General, but to show that I am in search of some reason

for the introduction of this Bill. The leader of the Opposition laid it down the other night as a principle that no legislation should be introduced into this Chamber unless there was some demand for it and its introduction had been sought.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There are plenty of requests for this Bill.

Mr. HUDSON: If there was such a demand for it, surely we should have been told of this by the Attorney General. In the absence of such a statement one is at a loss to know why the Bill has been introduced. The Attorney General was asked whether there had been any abuse of the provisions of Section 5 of the Act of last year. He was not able to give any illustration of such abuses, nor was he able to show that an undue number of cases had been brought under it.

The Attorney General: I do not think you asked for that.

Mr. HUDSON: I did not ask for it, but in answer to an interjection the Attorney General said that if there had been any abuses of the privileges given under the Act, it would have been his duty as Attorney General to interfere.

The Attorney General: There is no case that I know of.

Mr. HUDSON: The inference to be drawn, therefore, is that he did not know of any particular case.

The Attorney General: Nor is one likely to know of any.

Hon. P. Collier: One is not likely to have sufficient evidence to justify one in intervening, but one may have suspicions.

Mr. HUDSON: The interjection of the leader of the Opposition might apply to divorce generally, whether a case was brought under this particular section or the other provisions of the 1912 Act, or brought at all.

Hon. P. Collier: If the parties have been separated for five years there is not much doubt about the matter.

Mr. HUDSON: I am dealing with the necessity for the repeal of the particular section of the Act that I refer to, and am looking for some justification for the introduction of this Bill. It would be stultifying the actions of Parliament to alter an Act that was passed last year without full and sufficient reasons for so doing this year. I have ascertained that remarks have been made with regard to the measure by one of the judges who has been called upon to administer it. I found that the observations were not directed against the policy of the Bill, because that would be outside the purview of a judge. It would be impertinent for him to criticise in his judicial capacity the policy adopted by Parliament, and I feel sure a judge would not do that. We can therefore dismiss that aspect from our mind. I admit that certain criticism was offered to that portion of the Act which this Bill seeks to repeal. The only direct observations that were made were to point out the

anomalous position created by the fact that under the legislation we are discussing, divorce was possibly made easier, but anomalies were created because of the fact that a period of five years desertion was allowed to remain in the original Act. I have endeavoured to find out what was in the mind of the Attorney General when he brought down this Bill. He has not brought forward anything to justify us in passing it, and outside his remarks I have found nothing to justify me in supporting it. If any hon. member can bring forward any justification for the passage of this Bill, I shall be glad to hear it.

Mr. O'Loughlin: What has been the effect upon the volume of work in the courts?

Mr. HUDSON: Since the war the volume of work all over the British Dominions has increased.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I do not think there were ever so many cases as the number brought under Section 5.

Mr. HUDSON: There has been no abnormal increase in consequence of that section, but there have been thousands more cases in other countries, in New South Wales, Victoria, and in England since the war. I do not see how this section can be objected to unless it can be shown that there has been an abnormal number of cases brought before the courts under it. I am at a loss to know why the Bill has been brought down and I intend to oppose it. Section 5 of the Act of last year provides that in the event of an application for the restitution of conjugal rights being refused, the failure on the part of the respondent to comply with the order for restitution becomes a ground of divorce without its being necessary to wait five years for desertion. This was brought down in order to remedy specific cases. It was also bringing our law into line with the English law and the law of New South Wales. It was not designed to bring it line for line into conformity with the law in England, because in England they are not so far advanced generally in legislation of this kind as we are. It has, however, brought us into line with the law in New South Wales, which came into effect in 1899, and is still in force. The Attorney General intimated that he had not been able to find that particular section. It is Section 11 of the 1899 Act, and has been in operation in New South Wales ever since. No evidence or proof has been forthcoming, nor has there been any attempt to produce such evidence, to show that the Act of New South Wales has been abused or has worked any injury to society or has done harm to anyone. On the contrary, in the absence of such evidence it may be taken that it has worked rather beneficially to the community. There is indeed a good deal of vigilance exercised in New South Wales in regard to legislation of this kind. I fail to see why we should make this reactionary move, and go back

to the time before the legislation of last year was passed.

Mr. Nairn: Back to the middle ages.

Mr. HUDSON: Why should we go behind the legislation of New South Wales?

Hon. P. Collier: Why should we follow the legislation of New South Wales?

Mr. HUDSON: There is no real reason why we should, but we did follow it. However, the point is that we are now asked to revert to the legislation of the sixties. I do not think the leader of the Opposition desires that. Let me inquire what is offered by the sponsor of the present Bill. At present our law affords relief to people who are unhappy in their married life, and who seek to bring into operation the provisions of the Act passed last year. Reconciliations, however, often take place, and thus lifelong estrangements are avoided. In other cases relief is given, the parties being divorced and not being required to fill in a long period of five years' separation before they obtain the relief to which they are entitled. In place of that, the Attorney General proposes to go back to the position of requiring people who are unhappy in their married life to remain separated for a period of five years before they can obtain any relief. "But," says the Attorney General, "you can apply to the court for an order for restitution of conjugal rights, and can get a decree or order directing such restitution." But what does one get then? The Attorney General would reply, "You can get an order for a judicial separation without waiting two years." In essence the Attorney General says that this procedure of application for the restoration of conjugal rights is well enough in principle, but that the only remedy which is to be given for failure to comply with the order for restitution of conjugal rights is a judicial separation. Thus the Attorney General proposes to keep such people apart and give them no further opportunity in life in the direction of matrimony. I submit that that would be going back too far altogether. In the absence of any evidence of abuse of the existing Act—and if there were abuse we could remedy the evil without this drastic method of repeal—we should not allow this Bill to pass the second reading. I intend to oppose the second reading, and may have something further to say at a later stage.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [7.50]: I support the second reading of the Bill, as I do not believe in making divorce too easy. The last speaker has stated that a Supreme Court judge has expressed an opinion almost condemning a certain section in last year's Act.

Mr. Hudson: I did not say that. The judge's condemnation referred to the five-years period just as much as to that section.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The condemnation referred to the shortness of the period of

time which must elapse before the granting of a divorce. When the Act was introduced here last year, I gave my attention especially to the deletion of a clause rendering it possible for the husband or wife of an insane person elsewhere to come here and secure a divorce. I believe the particular attention of the House was directed to that clause, and the section which this Bill proposes to repeal doubtless escaped the attention of many members. I do not know even that the hon. member who introduced the Bill drew particular attention to the circumstance that under the measure it would be possible to get a divorce within 12 months.

Mr. Hudson: Yes, I did draw attention to that. I can give you the reference.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Under the section in question it is sufficient for a married couple who have had a quarrel to enter into a temporary agreement under which one of them applies to the court for an order for restitution of conjugal rights and very shortly afterwards obtains a divorce. We know that with the lapse of time there is a possibility of a separated couple coming together again. Occasionally time heals serious wounds, and a regard for the interests of the children of a separated couple should prevent us from giving facilities for hasty divorces. In my opinion the law in this respect was quite liberal enough prior to the passing of last year's measure. The member for Yilgarn (Mr. Hudson) has said that the law in New South Wales is the same as under this section, which the Bill proposes to repeal. That may be so, but everything that is done in New South Wales is not right.

Hon. T. Walker: But it is not necessarily wrong either.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not know that we can always go by the law of New South Wales. At all events, many of the women of this State are much interested in the section referred to, and they have written to members of Parliament—I myself have had several such letters—asking that this provision should be deleted.

Hon. T. Walker: The opposition to the section comes principally from the churches.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: People who attend the churches have just as much right as other people to ask that a wrong law should be amended.

Hon. P. Collier: The opposition, I think, comes mostly from women who are past the age of divorce.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not think so. However, I do not wish to deal with that aspect of the subject. Undoubtedly there is a tendency nowadays to make divorce very easy, and I do not agree with that tendency. We can do far more good by trying to reunite a married couple who have drifted apart, than by making it very easy for them to get a divorce and thus become separated for all time. I shall not now go into various matters connected with the subject of

divorce which were discussed last session, and which were forcibly placed before the House by the member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington).

Mr. NAIRN (Swan) [7.55]: I do not know that we need be particularly alarmed because of the fact that throughout the world divorce is now much more prevalent than it was prior to the war.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a sign of progress.

Mr. NAIRN: I think it is a regrettable and even a lamentable fact. At the same time, we must pay attention to facts which exist. There has been a tremendous upheaval of social and other conditions, and the matrimonial problem has also felt the shock. As regards the innovation which was made in our divorce law last year, apart from an opinion expressed by one of our Supreme Court judges no particular allegations have been made as to harm having resulted or being likely to result from that innovation. Let us give the new law a fair trial. The opposition to the section which the Bill proposes to repeal would come largely from a class who object to any divorce law whatsoever, who are strongly opposed to divorce in any circumstances. Generations ago the stage was passed when anyone would think of compelling people to live in a state of extreme unhappiness for a period of five years. Someone has said that that was a good provision, and tended to preserve the sanctity of the home. We are all desirous of preserving the sanctity of the home, but where is the sanctity of the home when two married people are torn asunder as far as human beings can be? From our own observation we know that in most instances where a reconciliation can be effected it is effected; but where husband and wife have been separated for years, reconciliation is impossible; and that would be the position under this Bill. As for the children's interests, the children could not possibly be worse situated than where there is no home and no possibility of a reconciliation, and, further, no chance of freedom from a tie which in effect has been long dissolved.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The section in question allows no time for reconciliation.

Mr. NAIRN: I am prepared to give consideration to that aspect of the matter; but I will not agree to a restoration of the old barbarous period of five years, and I hope the House will not agree to it.

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [7.58]: I support the Bill as it stands. An opinion on the divorce law has been expressed by at least one gentleman who speaks with authority, who is a man of considerable standing in the community, and whose duties afford him an opportunity of seeing the facts as they are presented in the courts of law. Such a man ought to be in a better position to express an opinion on our divorce law than nine-tenths of those who have not that opportunity. There can

be no question that the section which this Bill proposes to repeal encourages collusion. That section opens an easy way for getting out of one's obligations in the case of people who enter the matrimonial state without being prompted by a sense of responsibility and true affection. I do not wish to appear pharisaical or puritanical in a matter of this character, but I am of opinion that by making the law too easy we encourage divorce. I make that statement believing it to represent the strict and absolute truth. If people can enter the matrimonial state easily and can get out of it easily, they will be disposed to take a sporting chance. There is abroad in the community at present a pretty loose type of morality. It is particularly abroad in those lands which have been engaged in the war. It is unquestionable that the churches which are not altogether averse to divorce have viewed this problem seriously and have called upon the community to realise the gravity of affairs. At the recent Lambeth conference, the Church of England prelates discussed this matter fully. I understand that the Church of England is not averse to divorce, but, realising the gravity of the position in England and elsewhere, the bishops of the church have been invoked to oppose any liberalisation of the divorce laws. There are countries where divorce is not recognised. We have evidence that those people live in a reasonably happier state than in other countries. I speak of the people from whom I have sprung—the Irish people. They do not recognise divorce, and the divorce rate is lower in Ireland than elsewhere. The morality of the people of Ireland is of a high order. Their married state is generally exemplary but I believe that if they held the same views on divorce as people in other parts of the world do, they would find just as many reasons for divorce as are found in the other countries.

Hon. P. Collier: But the happiness of the Irish people is due to their peaceful temperament.

Mr. TROY: Oh no, it is not. It is due largely to their teaching. They do not look for disagreements during their married life; they endeavour to sidestep them. The member for Yilgarn (Mr. Hudson) said that no harm could be done to the community under the Act. It is too early to judge that. Suppose this Act remains, and we continue to have divorces as has occurred during the last 12 months, very soon a child will not know its own father. The position will become so tangled that we will not know where we are. There will be such a lack of morality that it will lead to inevitable detrimental results. I am not a puritan and do not desire to speak in a puritanical vein. I am satisfied, however, that if we allow divorces to be secured under the provisions which this Bill seeks to destroy, the results will be injurious to the community. It can-

not be otherwise. If we permit a lax morality, the future of the State will be seriously affected. If I had no other reason than that, I would support the Bill as introduced by the Attorney General.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [8.5]: At the risk of being greatly misunderstood, I am going to oppose the second reading of this Bill. I oppose it partly for the reason given by the member for Yilgarn, that there has been no proof whatever, or evidence of any kind, that it is necessary, or that the Bill we passed 12 months ago has been a failure or has done any harm. There is a great confusion, apparently, in the minds of some members as to the cause of the flooding of our divorce courts since the war, not only in Western Australia but in every State of Australia, and throughout England and America. It is always so after a war. After wars, that kind of immorality, for which relief is found in the divorce courts, is prevalent. That is nothing unusual; it could be prophesied before ever a war commenced. We know it must come, the laws of human nature being as they are. To argue, therefore, that a mistake was made last year in passing the Divorce Act Amendment Act, because we have had so many divorce cases through the courts, is to argue without due regard to the causes of those divorces. There has been confusion as to the causes. Where can the Attorney General say a wrong has been done? Show me where the facilities to get a divorce have done an actual wrong to society, to an individual or to children, and then I shall hesitate. If it is a measure of relief, if it is a measure to obviate society and individuals from the effects of the cancerous ulcers of adulterous lives, then it is good and a blessing. I fully respect the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) and the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Troy). I respect their views. They are entitled to them. I desire to hurt no one's prejudices, inherited from parents or born of their experience.

Mr. Troy: Why call them prejudices?

Hon. T. WALKER: Because they are prejudices. If I desired to argue that point I could keep the House all night. What I am contending, however, is that whatever religious grounds may be associated with marriage, and whatever religious ceremonies and obligations, in essence, marriage is simply a contract. The law recognises that by secularising marriages.

Mr. Pilkington: It is a contract in which third persons are interested.

Hon. T. WALKER: Quite so. That is not denied. We are all interested in the well-being and happiness of human lives, but marriage is a secular contract, recognised by the law. It is not necessary that we should attend to the functions of any church in order to have a legally bound contract. I cannot see why, when that contract becomes not only irksome but injurious and pernicious in more senses than one, we should not be

able to have that contract dissolved. There is no logic to gainsay that such a course, under such circumstances, would be right. Members have quoted religious sanction. Let me tell hon. members that if they go back to the oldest source of religious sanction, they will find divorce laws which were much easier than those under the Divorce Act here. Go back to the old Jewish law, from which all our Christian institutions have sprung and then let us see what the divorce laws were. This is the divorce law as recorded in Deuteronomy—

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

Hon. P. Collier: That is pretty prompt.

Mr. Troy: Is that desertion?

Hon. T. WALKER: If he find fault with her because of uncleanness, he can get rid of his wife.

Mr. Troy: Because of uncleanness!

Hon. T. WALKER: That was ample ground for divorce under the Jewish law. It is this old prejudice, this old established superstition that shrouds the whole question and blinds us when we come to deal with social legislation. Uncleanness happens to all women periodically. Every woman is unclean when the functions of nature come upon her. So she was unclean under this old law. The position in those days was that if a man did not like a woman, and she was not satisfactory to him, all he had to do was to put a bill of divorcement into her hands and turn her out of his home. It is from those old times of the degradation of woman, when she was a slave, absolutely a possessor of man and his chattel, that these marriage laws have come. Under the British law a woman absolutely lost her legal identity when she became married. It was only in 1882 that we restored her to anything like a legal footing. These old books in the Bible are written for man, not for woman. "Let a woman obey her husband." That is the text, and that is the spirit of the foundation of those views we have heard: and under those notions woman has ever been looked upon as a possession, an absolute property. Nay, it was permissible in old England to sell a wife, and that not very many centuries ago.

Mr. Nairn: You can sell her to-day.

Hon. T. WALKER: Yes, in one sense, but I mean, to treat her as a chattel. Woman has forever been held in subjection as the property, the thing to use, of the husband. The consequence is, being brought up in that narrow atmosphere, with no idea of the world to look upon, she has suffered in the development of her intellect.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Our divorce laws have put them on an equality with man.

Hon. T. WALKER: But this is a modern development.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: However they are on an equality.

Hon. T. WALKER: Not even yet are they on an equality. We have tried to make them so, but the custom of society still holds women in an inferior position.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Never mind the custom.

Hon. T. WALKER: But custom is law. The law itself is only the expression of materialised custom. When we get to a stage where we think it safe to express a custom and maintain it, we stamp it and call it a law. If we had put women upon an equality the hon. member, instead of having me, so objectionable to him upon this subject, sitting next to him, would have instead some beautiful fair Venus, the Moses, I was going to say, of this Assembly.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We are going to have them after the next election.

Hon. T. WALKER: Perhaps so. Now I want to draw attention to another thing. All these matters relating to divorce were, in days gone by, matters for the Church to deal with. They belonged to the ecclesiastical law. It is only in quite modern times that we have allowed divorce to take place without an appeal to an Act of Parliament. Not so very long ago we required an Act of Parliament to divorce people. Then the ecclesiastical courts came into our ordinary law courts, and now we have the consideration of these contracts, as to whether they should be annulled or continued, dealt with in our ordinary courts. I want to know if, in consequence of this, we behold in the community any greater misfortune, any great immorality in consequence of it, any greater human suffering, either in the home or in our general life, in consequence of it? We do not. But we do find cases where genuine relief has been given. Will anyone in this Assembly tell me there is any, either divine or human, law which can be called just, which would put two people in perpetual bondage to each other who have no love or affection, who must live a cat-and-dog life, who must brutalise their nature by their antipathies to each other, and who must, in those circumstances, give birth to offspring polluted by impure minds and defective brains. Yet that is what is sought. I will frankly admit there may be cases of people, particularly hysterical people, whom a quarrel or two will make feel that they are unfitted for each other because they do not understand each other. In consequence they are playing at cross purposes, and in speed and temper they may rush to the courts. They can do it now. But in order to do it, instead of frankly considering this as a contract to be submitted to the court for its consideration on the evidence presented, they first of all prepare for dissolution of the contract by immoral conduct. There are cases where immoral conduct has purposely been indulged in to provide grounds for divorce. Then we do not require any five years or any

simple suit for the restitution of conjugal rights; it is quite sufficient to obtain the decree of the court if the immoral act is committed. Formerly it could only be done in the case of the wife. The husband had to be guilty of something in addition. The modern laws relating to divorce have put man and woman upon an equality in that respect, and the sin of the one is just as much ground for divorce as is the sin of the other. But it was not always so. However, we can all bring to mind cases where violation of the marital contract has been sufficient grounds for divorce, whether on the part of the wife or of the husband. So we need not wait for five years. The object of the Bill is to still give the right in a suit for restoration of conjugal rights, but making also necessary what we have without it, namely five years' desertion. Five years' desertion we have now upon the statute-book. I have never heard a complaint against it. The Bill says "Yes, you can have a suit for restoration of conjugal rights, but in addition you must fulfil the requisites of the Divorce Act of 1912. You must have five years' desertion." Then the Bill is unnecessary, and all we need do is to repeal in an amendment of the Divorce Act the amending Act we passed only last year. What is there to fear in the existing Act? That everybody is going to rush into the matrimonial courts and seek for this restoration of rights the Act gives to them? Before the existing Act can be put into operation there must have been already some species of desertion; otherwise there is no need to ask for restoration of that companionship which we know as marriage. If that desertion has taken place, why compel people existing in that strained relationship to wait for five years? It is wrong to the parties to compel them to wait for five years before they can get justice. If they are living apart and are determined to live apart, already separated by their lack of affinity for each other, why compel them to live in that wretched, miserable, homeless state for five years? What do we gain by it? Any benefit to the children?

Mr. Troy: Are you going to adhere to the present system? Do you think it preferable to the five years?

Hon. T. WALKER: The present system is five years.

Mr. Troy: No, less than that.

Hon. T. WALKER: I know; they can do it in less time. The five years is sufficient where you do not want to ask for restoration of conjugal rights. But they can do it in less time, and what virtue is there in making them wait five years?

Mr. Troy: This admits of collusion.

Hon. T. WALKER: When collusion takes place the parties are not fit to live together.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It might be a brief quarrel.

Hon. T. WALKER: In which case they can make it up next day.

The Attorney General: Is there no necessity to consider the children?

Hon. T. WALKER: Of course there is.

The Attorney General: If you admit that, you must be against collusion, and you must desire to prevent it.

Hon. T. WALKER: Of course I desire to prevent collusion. I desire to see every man and woman who has entered into this contract living happily, without any need for collusion. I desire to see them bound together, not by ceremony or deed or registrar, but by bonds of real affection; and where that exists all your divorce laws are worthless, will not touch them. Where there is genuine mateship, true companionship, blending of natures, with that affinity which blends sex with sense and happiness, where there is that, your divorce laws are nullities, of no value whatever. Need anybody happy, knowing what home means and family life means, rush to the divorce court on the score of five years' separation, drunkenness, criminality, or for the restoration of conjugal rights? It is only where there is disparity, where you torture one or both perpetually by keeping the bonds as they are, it is only there the value of divorce comes in. Surely we are humane enough to think it is a crime to keep people in that perpetual state of unrest, mental unbalance, nervous friction, and perpetual anguish for five years to get relief. Where the case is strong enough, we ought to separate them as being unfit for each other, when, to prolong the marriage is only to prolong the torture and lead to immorality. I just wish to make my views known. I am with the member for Swan (Mr. Nairn) when he spoke of the past, that old past leading to the time when woman was a slave, and she has been little more in society up to the present. In the old past she was a mere thing. There was one council of the church which actually seriously debated whether woman was human and whether she had a soul or not.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But those days have gone.

Hon. T. WALKER: But the views of those days still linger. We will not give her a chance unless she has been five years separated. By the law of 12 months ago we gave her a chance if the husband had in effect positively deserted her. To-day members will not give her the same chance.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That shows equality.

Hon. T. WALKER: There is no equality about it. This is what is at the back of the heads of members: what is going to become of the woman of the house? Where is she going to wander off? Where is my property?

Mr. Troy: That is piffle.

Hon. T. WALKER: The hon. member is bound by other conventionalities—

Mr. Troy: No, I am not.

Hon. T. WALKER: If we made divorce ten times as easy as has been suggested, the hon. member would not be seeking the divorce court.

Mr. Troy: I might be.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do not make it too easy.

Hon. T. WALKER: And the member for North-East Fremantle would not be rushing there, either. It is only in cases of necessity where the divorce court is a benefit. The Attorney General, in introducing the measure, said we thought we were following the English law and that we were not doing so after all, because the English law gives only the right to judicial separation on the suit for the restitution of conjugal rights. He would make that appear to be something better than divorce.

The Attorney General: Your imagination is more powerful than I thought.

Hon. T. WALKER: What joke is the Attorney General trying to make? I say that judicial separation which gives a home to neither and gives neither a chance to get a home for the future, which separates them absolutely, is a state of civilised torture that future generations will look back upon as evidence of twentieth century barbarism. A woman is separated from her husband judicially or by deed of separation, having the care of the family, with no one to respect her as Mrs. so and so living apart from her husband, tabooed, the doors of society closed upon her, compelled to live a life of isolation from her fellow women particularly; and the women are always the worst.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: She mixes with society and with other women.

Hon. T. WALKER: No, the other women will not receive her. Once a woman is thrown out upon her own, and left high and dry, the women of the world look with sneers—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Woman's sympathy comes in in cases like that.

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not give much for woman's sympathy where it is sympathy for an unfortunate sister. As a rule the worst enemy an unfortunate woman can have is her own sex. The member for North-East Fremantle on this subject speaks as one who has not mingled with the world; he does not know the world. He is like a child on this subject. Consequently he has all the fond memories of childhood in his bosom as well as in his brain.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And consequently I sympathise with the children who will be left in this manner.

Hon. T. WALKER: Then let us see how they are left under the existing law. They are left now generally to the care of the State unless the parties are fairly well off, when some allowance might be made; but generally it is inadequate for the proper bringing up of the children. In some cases of these separations the woman has the custody of the children and has to work for her living, because the poor man's allowance permitted by the law for the support of the wife and children is entirely inadequate. Consequently she cannot support them. We can find children in the care of the State Department now in great num-

bers, the results of these separations. The woman cannot make a home for herself unless she does it in an immoral way. If she gets some protector, some companion to look after her, that man cannot marry and cannot be to her in that near social relationship which will enable him to feel it is his absolute duty to maintain, support, comfort and protect her. Consequently she has nothing like a home, and mostly the children drift into the State department.

Mr. Griffiths: If you make divorce easy, you will increase the number.

Hon. T. WALKER: How make it easy? What happens under the law as it stands? What is the cause of the great flow of divorce cases through all the courts of the world to-day? It is because men have separated from their wives and left their wives behind. Temptations have come in the way of both, and both have committed social wrongs.

Mr. Pickering: Indiscretions.

Hon. T. WALKER: Sometimes they are not more than mere indiscretions. The consequence is the divorce courts are filled. It is separation without the law, a mere separation put in pickle to live on their own that has produced the amount of what we call immorality which provides grounds for divorce. Take the other side: let us suppose that without any stigma of disgrace a woman can obtain a divorce and can ultimately find someone who respects and loves her, and will undertake, voluntarily to be her protector in a legal sense for the remainder of her life.

Mr. Pickering: It would encourage them to make several trials.

Hon. T. WALKER: How, several? There is no part of the world where divorce is more easy than it is in America, and where do we find evidence of immoralities there that do not exist in other parts of the world?

Mr. Griffiths: They are pretty warm in some spots.

Hon. T. WALKER: It does not matter how warm they are; the fact remains that there is no more immorality, in fact there is less sexual immorality in America than there is in Paris, Rome or London. I submit that it is absurd to prefer these separations which must inevitably lead to immorality—it takes strong natures to resist it—instead of giving that freedom which allows for rules to be made. It may sometimes happen and in fact does repeatedly happen that neither the man nor the woman is individually to blame, but in conjunction they are both to blame. The man has married a woman not fitted for his temperament, and the woman has married a man with whom she cannot congenially associate. The two together create that repulsion and friction which make life intolerable, and they want to separate; whereas the woman mated to another man or the man to another woman results in safe, stable, loving homes being established. That is a possibility if we undo a wrong that has been done. It is infinitely preferable to allow them to separate as individual beings

having individual rights, not bound or coerced by either. It is preferable to remaining married without the blessings, comforts and sanctions of marriage or anything else, to be absolutely single and yet have all the restrictions of marriage upon them? That is a wrong state of society and one that should not be encouraged. The Attorney General has not given us one case in which harm has been done. The increment of divorce cases is not due to the Bill but to the law and to the effects of the law. The Attorney General has shown us no good reason whatsoever for repealing or altering the measure we passed last year. As the member for Swan put it he is taking us back to the past and mooring us to the old ecclesiastical superstitions which it is the business of the world to get rid of as soon as it can.

Mr. BROWN (Subiaco) [8.42]: Until quite recently marriage was celebrated between man and woman mainly with the object of getting home and family life, and was regarded largely as a religious ceremony, and I believe it was of advantage to the whole community that this was so. Later on we saw fit to treat marriage largely as a civil contract whereby it, to a large extent, lost any need for affection between the contracting parties. Further on it was necessary, in order to meet that civil accommodation, to appoint registrars of marriage, whereas previously a religious contract was necessary. So soon as we extend these principles of easy divorce, it appears to me that family life will become less religious than it is at the present time. So far as the existing law is concerned, we have had evidence within the last two or three months of the number of cases for the restitution of conjugal rights, and the greatest objection I have to the existing law is that it is possible for a man and woman to marry, and within 12 months to get a divorce. In the natural course of events a child is born within 10 or 12 months of the marriage. At present it is possible for a marriage to take place and a divorce to follow before the child is born. The child then has a pretty hard row to hoe if it should live afterwards. This easy system of divorce also makes it possible for either or both of the parties who are divorced from each other to immediately re-marry. Thus, children are born from parents such as these and have very little chance of prosperity in the future. The five years' period might be amended in Committee: Two or three years is quite sufficient to test those persons who want a divorce and to show whether it is possible or not for them to come together again. This would also be a great advantage to the children that are being brought up. If no alteration is made to the present Act the religious aspect of marriage, which is the true aspect, would be lost sight of bit by bit, until marriage becomes purely and simply a form of sexual contact to see what the result will be. If it is not satisfactory to both parties there will be no

home life and no family life. They will merely go to the court and get a divorce, and continue the thing ad lib. In the interests of the children I support the second reading of this Bill, and hope that in Committee the five years will be reduced to three or two.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [8.47]: I support the second reading. My thoughts on the matter are very similar to those of the member for Subiaco (Mr. Brown). A smile went round the House when reference was made to religious bodies and churches having expressed the opinion that the Act passed last year has been inimical in its action. As the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) remarked, there is no doubt that the opinions of these people ought to be listened to and that they are entitled to consideration at the hands of this House.

Mr. Hudson: They did not say there was any abuse of the Act, but there was apprehension that there would be.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That appears to be the feeling of these people and it is very largely my own feeling. Perhaps I am old fashioned in my ideas on the question of marriage. With the member for Subiaco I regret that it is losing its religious aspect, and that family life is passing out. It is one of the failings of Australian life that the family aspect is to a great extent being dispelled. This may be due to the conditions under which we live.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is no evidence of that.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a wild statement.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: In the early days on the goldfields the conditions certainly tended to destroy family life.

Hon. P. Collier: There was no family life in the early days.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The conditions helped to destroy it. The same thing has occurred since the war. In the early days men brought their wives from the Eastern States after a long absence, and when they came together they found that new feelings had been created and that each had conceived certain likes and dislikes. Very often this trouble occurred through the long separation.

Hon. P. Collier: That is a libel on the goldfields people.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I have seen it myself.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a ridiculous libel.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Not at all.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a monstrous libel.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I spent 11 years on the goldfields and know that the life tended to bring this about.

Hon. P. Collier: It has been better in that respect since you left.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I have heard the same thing with respect to the leader of the Opposition, because he is not up there so much now.

Hon. P. Collier: I am watching you here.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: During the last 12 months there has been an abnormal amount of work in the divorce courts. It has been pointed out that we are living in abnormal times. The Attorney General will be able to cite cases where hardship has been inflicted, and where our Divorce Act by making divorce easy has tended to increase the number of cases. From authoritative information I have received I maintain that the reduction in the period which constitutes a ground for divorce has had the effect of crowding our courts. It has also had the effect of increasing the number of divorce cases all over the world. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill. It may be that in Committee the term of five years, upon which the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) laid such stress, will be decided to be too long. It is a very complex question. There are instances in which possibly the people should never have come together at all, and where it would have been better if they had been parted within 24 hours. I also know of cases where there has been collusion. It is with the idea of preventing this that I think the Bill should be passed.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: (Hon. T. P. Draper, West Perth—in reply) [8.53]: The opposition to the Bill is on the ground that I cannot cite any cases or give any actual proof of any cases where collusion has occurred.

Hon. T. Walker: I did not say that.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I have been challenged on that score.

Hon. T. Walker: Of cases where injury has been done by the Act.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It would have been impossible and improper for me to quote such cases. This, however, does not prevent me from exercising my judgment as a man of the world, or in noticing the immediate increase in the number of divorce cases which followed almost directly after the Act had come into force. I cannot close my ears to what I hear in the street.

Mr. Hudson: In that case you ought to amend the Act.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I cannot close my ears to the religious bodies or disregard their experience in this matter. I cannot shut my eyes to the letters I have received from various bodies in the country pointing out the evils which arise under the present Act. I do not bring forward this Bill purely from a puritanical point of view. I do not profess to be better than anyone, but I am not going to admit that I am any worse. It is no use disguising the fact that with the experience of what has happened in the courts since the Act was passed there is very grave reason to think there have been cases of collusion. It is a certainty that divorce

can now be obtained by collusion in a very much easier manner than was the case before.

Hon. T. Walker: That is only a contract by mutual consent.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It has been suggested by the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) and the member for Yilgarn (Mr. Hudson), that if we repeal Section 5 we might as well abolish the Act, and if we pass this amendment we might as well repeal that section. A petition for the restitution of conjugal rights is seldom used except for the purpose of obtaining money by one party from the other. The practical operation of such a decree in modern times is useless. In this State it can only be enforced by an attachment. An attachment in a case of this kind would be a barbarous remedy.

Hon. T. Walker: It was abolished by the New South Wales Act of 1899.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is the same as our present Act. It does not prevent me from saying that our present Act should not be repealed.

Hon. T. Walker: I think it does.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It has been pointed out that there were 500 cases of divorce in Sydney. I do not say that is due to the existing section of the Act of New South Wales, but I do say that a large proportion of the cases must be due to the operations of that Act.

Hon. T. Walker: Statistics will prove that it is not so.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I will pit my knowledge of the world against that of the hon. member.

Mr. Hudson: The number of cases has increased in England by thousands.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It does not appear to me that it is much use discussing the matter further. Hon. members are human beings and know without any words from me how the section of the Act passed last session has operated. I trust the second reading of the Bill will be carried.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 5 of Act No. 33 of 1919:

Mr. HUDSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of the proviso the word "five" be struck out with a view to the insertion of "three."

If this amendment is carried, I propose to move the insertion of "three," which would make the proviso read "no such decree nisi for the dissolution of a marriage

shall be made unless the desertion shall have continued for three years." Then our law will be uniform in this respect with the law of New South Wales and Victoria.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I realise that the Committee is against a period of five years. But if we are going to fix the period of three years suggested, that period should commence from the date of failure to obey a decree for restitution of conjugal rights. In England a divorce can be obtained immediately for disobedience coupled with adultery. Our object here should be to fix a period which would prevent collusion and would give the parties a chance to come together again. I would be prepared to accept an amendment that all the words after "for" in line 3 be struck out, and that "at least three years from failure to comply with a decree for restitution of conjugal rights" be inserted in lieu.

Mr. HUDSON: The suggested amendment would be worse than the present position. The Attorney General apparently has overlooked the fact that this clause seeks to amend Section 5 of the Act of 1919. A decree can now be given only in the case of desertion for five years. If the period of three years is adopted, I propose to move a corresponding amendment to the Act of 1912, thus making the period three years throughout. The Attorney General will be complicating the position by attempting to insert the words he has suggested.

Amendment put and passed; the word "five" struck out.

Mr. HUDSON: I move a further amendment—

That the word "three" be inserted in lieu.

Further amendment put and passed; the word "three" inserted.

The CHAIRMAN: There is a consequential amendment in the last line of the proviso, where "five" will be struck out and "three" inserted in lieu.

Mr. HUDSON: I move a further amendment—

That the following be added to the clause:—"Provided further that this section shall not apply to proceedings pending in the Supreme Court on a petition filed before the commencement of this Act, which shall be heard and determined as if this section had not been passed."

The object of this further proviso is to avoid prejudicing cases where a petition has already been lodged and proceedings have been commenced and expenses incurred, and generally to preserve the rights of those who have acted bona fide within the Statute which we are now seeking to amend.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Of course I cannot deny that in a Bill which may deal with proceedings that are pending, it is not unusual to reserve rights in this way. But it seems to me that we shall rather stultify ourselves if we do that in this particular

case. It is not always done, and there is good ground for not doing it here. I know the hon. member will not agree with me as to that. However, this Bill may not come into operation for some time. If we pass the Bill to-day, then between now and the commencement of the Act there may be a rush of proceedings.

Hon. T. Walker: Not at all! The community are better than you think.

Mr. Hudson: Do you think members would go home and start a row with their wives because of this measure?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I oppose the amendment. In any event, if members desire to pass it, a definite date should be fixed, say the 5th December.

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

Ayes	17
Noes	11

Majority for . . 6

AYES.

Mr. Brown	Mr. Money
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Collier	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Smith
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Jones	Mr. Walker
Mr. Lambert	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Lutey	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Broun	Mr. Troy
Mr. Draper	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Maley	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Mitchell	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

New clause:

Mr. HUDSON: I move—

That the following be added to stand as Clause 3:—"Section 2 of the Divorce Act Amendment Act, 1912, is amended by striking out the word 'five' in line 14 of substituted Section 23 of the principal Act, and inserting the word 'three' in lieu thereof."

There are some cross references in the drafting of this clause, but the effect is simply to strike out from the grounds of divorce given in the Act of 1912 that of desertion for five years, and substituting desertion for three years, which will be in consonance with the amendment that has just been made.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I object to the new clause. There is not much analogy between the clause we have just passed and the amendment. The clause we have just agreed to, dealt with special cases arising out of non-compliance with an order

for the restitution of conjugal rights, an order which it was found impossible to enforce through an antiquated procedure and one for which the Legislature in England and elsewhere endeavoured to supply a remedy. There is a difference between a refusal to comply with an order for the restitution of conjugal rights and simple desertion. I cannot see how the two come into the same category.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is a difference; one is not disobeying an order of the court.

Mr. Hudson: Where did you get five years from?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I inserted the five years previously. It has been altered by the House. I think a five years' desertion standing by itself is sufficient ground for divorce. I consider that it should not be made shorter.

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments and the report adopted.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 30th November.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [9.20]: I am not particularly desirous of availing myself of the opportunity afforded by this Bill of traversing the whole field of finance, for the reason I do not think any good purpose would be served by so doing. Members of this House are conversant with the financial position of the State, and they are more or less interested. It appears to me that the people of the country, the actual taxpayers, seem to have abandoned all hope, or, in other words, they have ceased to take any interest in the financial position of the State. The introduction of a taxation measure is nevertheless a matter of utmost importance. Perhaps it would not be amiss if we were to hesitate for a moment and consider where we are going. The Premier, although he announced when introducing his financial statement earlier in the session that, in his opinion, it would not be necessary to impose additional taxation during the financial year, has, by the introduction of this measure, indicated to members that he has not been able to maintain that attitude. Doubtless it will be claimed that the altered attitude has been due to the increased expenditure in wages in Government departments, particularly in the railway service, which could not be foreseen at the time of the introduction of the Budget. It cannot be denied, however, that the proposed increase in the taxation Bill now before the House, will mean that the taxpayers of Western Australia will carry a considerable burden which they can ill afford to do at the present juncture.

I would be justified in saying that the Opposition should not grant this Government any additional taxation, to quote a term so frequently applied when the Labour Government were in office, to squander. It is worse than useless, it is harmful and unjust to the taxpayers of the country, for the House to keep on, year after year, voting the Government additional sums by way of taxation when there is no evidence whatever on the part of the administration of any attempt to effect economies in any direction. So long as Parliament is satisfied to vote whatever increased taxation is thought necessary by the Government, no attempt will be made to economise or reduce expenditure where that should be done. The Premier will no doubt claim that the position is not due to extravagance on the part of the Government or to the need for economy, but it is nevertheless a fact that our expenditure has been increasing by enormous sums year by year. The Government have been obtaining enormous sums by way of increased taxation, and yet the net result is that the State seems to be drifting on to the financial rocks. It is interesting to note that the party sitting on the Government side—not alone the Government of to-day—have increased the burden on the people of the State by way of increased direct taxation from £320,000 in 1916 to £682,000 last year, an increase of £360,000 in four years. This is all due to Bills for legislation increasing various forms of direct taxation. The land tax has not been increased, but on the contrary reduced, by something like £1,100 less than was received in 1915-16. On the other hand, the income tax has risen during the same period from £91,000 to £271,000. That is an enormous increase in this particular form of taxation, and it is the particular form which, among others, has been selected for additional imposts under the Bill. For the same period, the amount of dividend duty collected has increased from £103,000 to £144,000, the totalisator tax from £12,000 to £45,000, and the stamp duties from £64,000 to £173,000, making, as I have already quoted, an amount of £682,000 collected as against £320,000 in 1916.

Mr. Pilkington: That increase is not all due to legislation, surely? It must be due to other causes as well.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A percentage of it would include increased trade and so on, and one could hardly get exact figures which would enable us to judge the proportion due to legislation and to other causes as suggested by the hon. member. One would be safe in saying, however, by far the greater sum is due to increased taxation, particularly under the heading of stamp duties. That tax was increased very considerably two years ago. The totalisator tax was increased, and so was the income tax. The incidence of the last mentioned tax was increased and I believe the augmented

amount received last year was due largely to the effect of the amending Bill which went through this Chamber two years ago. However, that is the position. One would not mind if the result of this increased taxation were reflected in the financial position. But, notwithstanding this additional amount, we find that during the same period the accumulated deficit has increased from £1,360,000 to £4,674,000 or an average increase over the four years of £681,000. It is an alarming increase. Surely the fact that this State, with its comparatively small population, is now almost within sight of an accumulated deficit of five million pounds, ought to make us pause, ought to lead us to ask "Whither are we drifting?" Surely we must all recognise that we cannot indefinitely continue to go on in this fashion. If this amending taxation Bill would serve to reduce the deficit probably the House and the people would accept it with a reasonably good grace. But judging by the past four years and by the outlook all the indications are that no matter how much we may grant additional taxation the deficit will remain in or about the figures it has now reached. From the result of the five months expired of the present financial year, there is no sign that we are going to be in any better position in June next; because for the five months that have expired we have a deficit of £587,000 to set against the estimated deficit made by the Premier in his Budget Speech of £399,000. We are to-day £187,000 to the bad, in excess of the sum estimated for the year by the Premier earlier in the season. Where are we going?

Mr. Smith: We are going to have a surplus next month.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I hope so, but I am not very optimistic about it. Last year, speaking on the Budget, after quoting from figures I said it would be necessary for the Government to bring in every year legislation which would return them about £100,000 over and above that which was received in the previous year, if we were to even keep the deficit at its yearly level. That is to say, if we were not to go further to leeward it would be necessary to collect £100,000 per annum in additional taxation. That prediction is borne out by the position to-day. And on top of this the Premier proposes to increase the income tax by 15 per cent. I do not know that in some respects perhaps it would not be warranted, having regard to the need for money. But I am sorry the Premier has not brought down also a Bill to amend the Assessment Act; because it ought to be recognised that, largely by reason of the amending Bill of two years ago, a big section of the community who are not in a position to pay taxation are called upon to pay because of the reduction in the exemption. Whilst the number of persons who last year paid taxation under the Land Taxation Act was only 19,000, as against 26,000 in 1916, or a reduction of about 7,000, the number of persons who paid income tax last

year was 31,000 as against 14,998 in 1916. In other words, the number of persons paying income tax to-day is more than double the number that paid in 1916. And that number has been doubled because that large section, the wage earning community, has been brought within the purview of income taxation by the lowering of the exemption. The number of persons who, paying income tax last year, were in receipt of a salary of under £200 per annum was 12,369, and the number who, paying income tax were in receipt of salaries under £300 per annum was 10,000, making in all 22,000 persons paying income tax although in receipt of salaries of less than £300 per annum. And those persons paid a total sum of £43,167. It means that last year we extracted £43,000 from that section of the community which, according to the finding of the Basic Wage Commission, are to-day compelled to live on less than a living wage. I ask the Premier if we are justified in doing that? It is bad enough to be taxing those in receipt of incomes between £200 and £300; but we have come down to collecting £18,000 in the year from persons in receipt of less than £200 per annum, less than £4 per week, a wage which has been declared, not only by the Basic Wage Commission but by our own Arbitration Court, and by every body or tribunal which has expressed an opinion on the subject, to be less than a living wage. From those actually on the bread line the State extracts £18,000 per annum in taxation.

Mr. Smith: How many people contributed it?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was paid by 12,000 people, an average of 30s. It may not seem much, but 30s. is a lot to a man whose wage is not sufficient to allow him to live.

Mr. Pilkington: A great many of those people would be single men and single women.

The Premier: And their earnings will be immensely advanced now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And their income tax will be advanced correspondingly. That is the point. Before the amending Act of two years ago the exemption was fixed at £200. That was a total exemption. It meant that, no matter what the income, the first £200 was exempt from taxation; but under the existing Act, as amended by the Government, that exemption has been lowered to £156 in the case of married persons. And with this difference, that there is not a total exemption of that amount. If the income should be £160, then instead of tax being paid on £4, the amount above the exemption, the exemption disappears, and the tax is paid on £160. That is the difference. The exemption was fixed at £200 or, under last year's Act, £156 on the principle that no person should be taxed on any amount which provides only a living wage. It was considered at the time that £156 constituted a living wage, and therefore the exemption was fixed at that figure.

But since that time wages have considerably increased. The man then receiving £156 is probably receiving £225 or even £250 to-day, but actually he is no better off under the £225 than he was with £156 three years ago; and, although that £200 will purchase for him no more than did his £156 formerly, he is called upon to pay taxation which he was not called upon to pay then. So if we are to adopt the principle of exempting the living wage, as the wage increases year by year because of the increased cost of living, so should the exemption increase proportionately. That is the position as it affects the workers to-day. Although, of course, it is not easy to contemplate a proposal to remit any of the forms of taxation whilst the financial needs of the Treasury are so great, nevertheless no matter how stringent our finances and great our needs, we should exempt from taxation all those in receipt of an amount less than a living wage. I find that those in receipt of salaries and wages averaged a lower annual income than any other class in the community. The Taxation Department classify taxpayers on occupational lines. There are builders and contractors, butchers and bakers, chemists, dairymen, doctors and dentists, engineers, surveyors, etc., farmers and orchardists, fruiterers, etc., grocers and storekeepers, hotelkeepers, lawyers, life assurance companies, merchants and manufacturers, mine owners and tributers, pastoralists and graziers, pearlers, restaurant and lodging housekeepers, salary and wage earners, tailors and drapers, tobacconists, stationers, etc., and miscellaneous. Of all that group the persons who have the lowest annual income are those classified under the heading of salary and wage earners. Even the more or less uncertain fruiterer fares better.

Mr. Brown: What about the lawyer?

Hon. P. COLLIER: He is well up in the returns.

Mr. Luty: What about architects?

Hon. P. COLLIER: They are not specified.

Mr. Pickering: They do not get anything.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The average chargeable amount of this class was £221, and those who stand at the top of the list are the pastoralists and graziers with an average annual income of £1,500. I am sorry that I did not take up this calling earlier in life.

The Premier: It is not too late now.

Mr. Brown: What about Eucla?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I saw the wisdom of it and made an attempt, but, unfortunately, I was not successful. In bare justice the exemption should apply to that section who are in receipt of insufficient wages or salaries. There were 64 persons who paid on £5,000 a year or over, and the total incomes of the 64 amounted to £628,000, an average of £10,000 each.

Mr. Brown: Nice wages.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is certainly a living wage, and I do not think they will be worried as to whether the Federal Government adopt the recommendations of the Basic Wage Commission.

Mr. Smith: How much did the Federal Government take from them?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I suppose the Federal Government took a considerable sum. The State took on the average £932 from each, but if I had £10,000 a year, I could spare £932 by way of a patriotic contribution to the revenue of the country.

Mr. Smith: You would be like all the rest.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No doubt human nature is the same the world over. We pay taxation neither willingly nor with good grace, no matter how small or great the amount may be. The 15 per cent. increase proposed by the Premier will hit some of these people fairly hard. Instead of paying a minimum of 2s. 6d. in the pound which they reached at £4,766 and then a flat rate of half a crown, they will now have to pay up to 4s. in the pound on £7,766 and thereafter a flat rate of 4s.

Mr. Johnston: Plus 15 per cent.

Mr. Smith: In England the taxation is much heavier.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, I do not know whether the taxation in England has been reduced since the war, but during the war it was as high as 13s. in the pound. During the war we in Australia did not shoulder our burdens by way of taxation in the manner that other countries have done, particularly Great Britain. In Great Britain the war debt has been reduced by no less than £200,000,000 levied from the people by way of taxation, in addition to revenue sufficient to meet the annual requirements of the country. Before the war was over England set about reducing the war debt by taxing those people who could afford to pay. In Australia we have pursued a directly opposite course. We have borrowed all we could and refrained from levying taxation on the people who could afford to pay it, and have passed the whole of the burden on to posterity. With the war debt which has been accumulated, posterity will have nothing for which to thank those who were responsible for the conduct of affairs during the war period and in the succeeding years. It is not too much to say that extravagant expenditure is rampant in the Commonwealth service and in all our States.

The Premier: Do you mean to say that we are paying too much in salaries and wages?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No.

The Premier: That is where the money goes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is strange that immediately the party on the other side of the House came into office four years ago, the expenditure commenced to leap up, and it has kept on increasing ever since, notwithstanding that the claim of the party in office was that they would effect economies and check the extravagant administration of

the Labour party. Every day the charge hurled against us was that we had proved our unfitness to control the affairs of the country; that we had mis-handled the financial affairs, that we had been extravagant. The leader of the Government party in 1916 held up the Labour party's deficit of £1,360,000 to the gaze and scorn of the public. It was placarded on every hoarding from one end of the country to the other. It was featured in leaded type in all the newspapers of the State and even beyond the confines of the State. Wherever one went in any of the other States, he found in the newspapers references to the results of Labour administration in Western Australia.

Mr. Troy: The State was better advertised then than ever it has been.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Because of our gone-a-million deficit. What a puny effort at building up a deficit was ours in comparison with our successors in office!

The Premier: You provided for the future.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the deficit of £1,360,000 was sufficient excuse to advertise the State all over Australia, what kind of an advertisement ought we to be receiving to-day with a deficit approaching £5,000,000?

Mr. Pickering: Yet the leading paper has cut out that feature!

Hon. P. COLLIER: At one time the monthly returns occupied two columns in the "West Australian." Shortly after we went out of office the space allotted was reduced to one column, and last month's returns were merely the subject of a paragraph.

Mr. Latcy: The returns are published in to-day's paper.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, but they are not featured as they used to be. In the course of the next few months I shall expect to see them dismissed in one line.

The Premier: I hope so.

Mr. Griffiths: Just a heading.

Mr. Troy: Still going strong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: How was our administration featured in special and leading articles?

The Premier: I think you deserve one now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: One could stake his existence that on the second of the month there would be a leading article referring to the incompetency of the Labour Government, and every little subsidiary organ from one end of the State to the other used to take up the cry.

Mr. Troy: And every little subsidiary politician.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In these days there is a leading article on the finances about once every three months, and then it is very mild. We are told in the leading article that the position is growing worse, and that the Government ought really to do something, but that there are features which may be regarded as satisfactory, and provided something happens and that some proposal on hand turns out all right, there will be no need to worry, but that all will come right in good time. This

kind of thing seems to have lulled the people into a sense of indifference or satisfaction, and no one now appears to worry whether our deficit is on the five million or fifty million mark.

Mr. Pickering: It goes out of one pocket into the other.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As one of the Premier's colleagues told us, it is in the pockets of the people. If that was so when the deficit was but a million, the people to-day must be wonderfully rich with five millions in their pockets!

Mr. Smith: Why should they object to extra taxation?

Hon. P. COLLIER: On the same line of argument, if we heap extra taxation on them, it will go into their pockets again. The member for East Perth suggested that the Government might meet the situation by issuing deficit bonds. That is the latest financial proposal to meet the situation! There are floating around Europe certain kinds of paper that are not considered to be very valuable. In Russia it is said that a drayload of paper money would be required to pay for 10s. worth of goods, and I do not know that our deficit bonds would be any more valuable.

Mr. Griffiths: As bad as the old greenbacks.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I would like to know what the Premier intends to do about it. Can he give any undertaking that if this additional taxation is granted the deficit at the end of the year will be reduced? The annual deficit has maintained a wonderful evenness. It has ranged from £650,000 to £700,000 a year, averaging about £680,000.

Mr. Pickering: That is business acumen.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It must have required considerable financial skill not to exceed or fall short of that amount. During their first year of office the Government had a deficit of £700,000 and if they had set out to maintain it at that figure they could not have been more successful. They must have devoted considerable time and thought to devising ways and means.

The Premier: You devised the means.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have been four years out of office and yet we are held responsible for the whole thing. If we are here 20 years hence, we shall hear echoes round the House to the effect that the financial position of the State is all due to the gone-a-million Government. We are told that our position is due largely to the extravagant borrowings of the Labour Government.

Mr. Troy: And the State trading concerns.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We piled up the figures of expenditure, we are told, and borrowed money, and as a result the Government have to find the interest and sinking fund on the total amount. Just as the Government have eclipsed our record in the matter of annual deficits, so have they eclipsed it, or are about to do so, in the matter of annual borrowings.

The Premier: You were consistent. You borrowed all the time.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Our greatest effort in the borrowing of money was slightly over three million pounds in one year.

The Premier: You averaged that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier, by his Loan Estimates, has reached £3,641,000. He is marching on with his borrowing just as he is with his deficit. He has left us in the rear. As borrowers we are insignificant in comparison with him. As deficit builders we are also insignificant, and as people who imposed additional taxation we are not in it with him. During the five years we were in office, when we accumulated a deficit, we were not given any increased revenue by way of taxation.

The Premier: You asked for it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: True, and we were entitled to have it, but another place, the House of review, in its wisdom declined to grant us any additional taxation. The chief spokesman against our taxation proposals in another place was the Minister for Education. He was quite prepared, he said, to grant any taxation that was necessary to carry on the affairs of State, but not for this extravagant Government to squander. What has been the result of the administration of the Government of which the Minister for Education is now a member? Have they justified the promises they gave to the people, and are the finances of the State in a more solvent condition than they were when they came into office? If we squandered money and brought the ship of State close to the rocks, what are the Government doing now? What are they doing with their money?

Mr. Johnston: That sounds like an echo of the past.

Hon. P. COLLIER: One can find what they are doing with it.

Mr. Smith: Paying off your legacies.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have only to look through the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure that have been presented each year since 1916 to find reasons for the position we are in to-day. Money is thrown away as if it were of no account, and given here, there and everywhere. One would imagine that money was available to the State at a ridiculously low price, and that we ought to avail ourselves of the opportunity of securing it and constructing the necessary public works. The Premier proposes to borrow nearly 3¼ millions of money at a time when the interest will be 6½ per cent. I admit that some of the money is being obtained at a lower rate for soldier settlement.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That will be the same eventually.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Governments that will succeed them will have good ground for saying that the burden that they will be called upon to carry will be due to the interest they will have to pay on money borrowed by the present Government at a high rate of interest.

The Premier: You will not be able to say that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Even if I am not here, I am not unmindful of some unfortunate Ministers who will be here. It is all very well to live for a year or two in this happy-go-lucky fashion. The Government are carrying the State to the verge of a precipice.

The Premier: Wait and see.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We now have to levy increased taxation on the people to enable us to pay interest and sinking fund on our loan money, as well as the ordinary services of the State. No money is left over for any other purpose. If we have occasion to erect a motor garage, as I believe the Government intend, it has to be built out of loan funds. We have reached the stage when every possible requirement of the State, in the way of works, no matter how trivial, will have to be carried out from loan funds, because the interest and sinking fund on the payments for the services of the State eat up the whole of our revenue. Ten or 12 years ago it was the settled policy of the State to construct a great proposition of these non-reproductive works out of revenue.

The Premier: That was in the good old days.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That policy has been abandoned. At one time all of our roads and bridges and schools were erected out of revenue.

Mr. Smith: Did you not bury an aboriginal out of loan funds?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Liberal Government buried a boundary rider on the rabbit-proof fence out of loan funds. The cost was debited up to agricultural development.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The motor garage will be only a temporary building.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The same thing applies to expenditure in all directions. We are borrowing money at 6 per cent. and $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to expend on works which will never be of a reproductive character. We will be saddled with interest charges for all time on these works. Long after they have been eaten by white ants or broken down by storms and have disappeared, the interest will go on.

The Premier: You will have nothing left to say on the Loan Estimates.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I can speak for hours on the Loan Estimates without covering any of the ground I am covering now. I have only touched upon one phase of the administration of the Government.

The Premier: You are giving ideas to your lieutenant.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He will have plenty of material. Apparently this does not matter. The House will not be justified in giving the Premier the increased taxation he is asking for. Until the Government show the House and the country that they are seriously alive to the situation; and are

making a determined effort to reduce our expenditure and carry out the pledges they gave to the people, they should not be allowed to impose further taxation. They should give some indication of their intention to square the finances and to exercise economy and carry out the work of reorganisation that they promised.

Mr. Pickering: We have not had much evidence of it yet.

Hon. P. COLLIER: None whatever! If there has been any reorganisation, it has not produced any results on the financial side. There has been nothing but increased expenditure in all directions. It is no use hiding our heads under the sand and saying that all will come right by-and-by if we increase the volume of our production. Whilst we are waiting for that to restore our equilibrium, the ship of State will be wrecked. We have no proposal yet to meet our five million deficit. The Premier cannot say with any degree of certainty—

The Premier: You will see.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That even with this additional taxation he will be able to reduce the deficit by any considerable amount this year.

The Premier: Yes I can.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Optimism is a good thing but will not overcome our difficulties or meet the situation. I prefer the characteristic possessed by the countrymen of my hon. friend, the member for North Perth, namely caution, which generally gives the best results in the end. I disagree with the proposal to place additional burdens upon a section of the people who cannot bear them. There are many people to-day who are already living below the bread line. It is proposed to add to the burdens of many of these a 15 per cent. additional tax.

The Premier: We shall not touch any of that lot.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It will affect anyone whose income exceeds £252 a year, which is £3 a week. Such a man is 13s. a week below the basic wage recommended as the living wage by the Commission. The Premier proposes to place a 15 per cent. additional tax upon men who are to-day, as married men, receiving less than the living wage.

The Premier: I do not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This is not a party question.

The Premier: Is it not?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I hope the House will take a serious view of our finances, and insist upon Ministers applying themselves to their departments with a view to effecting the much needed economy.

The Premier: Wipe out the Arbitration Court.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [10.14]: I had hoped that the usual practice would have been followed in this case. The Premier has put forward new

taxation proposals. The leader of the Opposition has expressed his views upon them, and I should have thought the leader of the primary producers' party would have taken up the running.

The Premier: You did not give him the chance.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I only rose to speak after the Speaker had risen to put the motion. The general practice is for the Speaker, when he rises to put the question, to put it without any delay. The Premier's Budget speech, which was broadcast throughout the State, was full of optimism, and declared that Western Australia was in a splendid financial position, and that the time was not far distant when all the deficits which had accrued during the preceding four or five years would be entirely wiped out, thanks to increased production and increased business. The Premier's Budget speech also stated that there would be no further taxation this year.

The Premier: But I qualified that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Premier qualified it because of the prospective increase in the railwaymen's wages.

The Premier: There were other increases.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The public servants had been practically fixed up prior to that time. The increase in railway rates made since then has amounted to more than the increase in wages granted to the railway men. Increased taxation was put on through the railways.

Mr. Pickering: You call that taxation?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the hon. member interjecting had allowed me the necessary time, I would have said that I do not contend the Premier was wrong in imposing increased railway rates. In doing so he was merely asking those who obtained direct benefit from the railway service to pay the increased rates. That, indeed, applied to every member of the community.

Mr. Pickering: It applied to the producer directly.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The producer merely got his share, and he passed that on to the consumer. The inland producer paid increased railway rates only on a machine here and there, or now and then a suit of clothes. Generally speaking the producer, if he is a good farmer, is able to provide his food requirements from his own holding, and thus is not affected by increased railway rates in that respect. In his Budget speech the Premier expressed himself very definitely in regard to increased revenue. He said he wanted members to understand that he did not wish to impose any additional taxation for the time being, though of course he did not know what might happen in the course of a few months. From this it appears that the Premier anticipated the deficit would be reduced during the current year.

The Premier: So it will be.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The State has experienced a large increase in business activi-

ties, and our exports have increased considerably. Of course shipping had not been available for some time, and when it did become available our exports, quite naturally, increased to a considerable extent. The Premier at that time thought that increased trading activities would enable him to reduce his deficit. But now he finds five months of the financial year gone with a considerable increase, instead of a reduction, in the deficit.

The Premier: Not an increase over last year's deficit.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In view of the increase in the deficit, the Premier is anxious to be able to show the people next year—if he is here then, as I hope he will be, though not as Premier—that at all events some of the prophecies made in his Budget speech have been to some extent verified. However, in that Budget speech the hon. gentleman stated that he believed in getting increased revenue from increased production and increased trade on every hand. He declared that the country could not be taxed into prosperity.

The Premier: Neither it can.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Premier stated his belief that prosperity would come from the agricultural, pastoral, timber, and mining industries. However, the Premier has brought down additional taxation. Is that for the purpose of increasing the prosperity of the people? Will that enable the people to become more prosperous?

The Premier: I am afraid it will not make them more prosperous.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I hope hon. members will relieve the Premier of that fear by not granting him additional taxation. I would not like the Premier to lose any sleep because of his fear that the State may be retarded in its prosperity through the imposition of additional taxation. According to the Premier's belief, the only means of achieving prosperity is to refrain from increasing taxation. I agree with the leader of the Opposition that the Premier ought to have brought down a Bill to amend the Land Tax and Income Tax Assessment Act. The increased amount paid by way of income taxation is due not to the prosperity of the people, but to their poverty, to their difficulties. While it is true that wages have increased, it is also true that the cost of living has increased in much greater proportion than wages. The recent increases in wages have brought about an increase in taxation payments. The person who has been living on a bare subsistence wage, a wage not sufficient to enable him to live in comfort, has had a further amount taken from that wage by way of payment to the Treasury.

The Premier: Incomes have increased throughout the State.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is what I was pointing out. But £200 to-day is worth no more than £100 was worth two or three years ago; and yet the person whose annual income now is £200 has to pay taxation on it, whereas formerly he was altogether exempt. In respect of that exemption, let me point

out, he was in a position exactly similar to that of every other taxpayer in the State. At that time every taxpayer was allowed, shall I say, bread and butter.

The Premier: I always supported the £200 exemption.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That being so, let the Premier bring down a Bill to amend the assessment Act, and we will assist him to carry it.

The Premier: I could not do that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Even at this late stage of the session we will assist him to pass a Bill which will grant something that is of vital importance to the recipients of low wages in this State, and also to their families. There is another matter in respect of which the Premier promised me, in answer to a question, that he would amend the Act.

The Premier: What was that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: An amendment to relieve widows from paying income tax on military pensions.

The Premier: Yes, I did promise that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: A widow, even a widow with a family who receives a pension in respect of the loss of her husband at the Front, has to pay income tax on that pension.

The Premier: Yes, the exemption was promised in such cases. I told the department about it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not wish to delay the House, but there is one thing which the leader of the Opposition overlooked. He stated quite clearly that when there was in 1916 a deficit of £1,360,000 that fact was broadcasted throughout the State. Now we have a deficit of £4,600,000, but very little indeed is said about that fact. According to reports published in Western Australia to-day, everything is all right, and things will go on smoothly so long as the present Government are kept in office. The one thing of which the leader of the Opposition forgot to remind the Premier was that the present Government had kept a certain promise—the only promise that the present Government have kept during all the time they have been in office.

The Premier: I never broke a promise in my life.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The present Government promised the public that in the event of their being returned to office the time was not far distant when they would wipe the deficit out altogether.

The Premier: Who promised that? I certainly did not.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That was promised by some Ministers when seeking re-election. They said that the deficit would soon be a thing of the past, and that all that was needed for this to be achieved was a change of Government. They declared that no further taxation was necessary, and that it was only the Labour party who wanted to impose increased taxation. They said, "Put us in office, and there will be no increased taxation." In 1905 the same sort of story was

told as regards the land tax, which was declared to be unnecessary. Within 12 months, however, those who made the promise had placed a Land and Income Tax Act on the statute-book. Similarly, within 12 months of taking office the party who promised to wipe out the deficit passed an Act of Parliament to fund the deficit—and by that means wiped it out of existence. The promise to wipe out the deficit, I repeat, is the only promise made by the Government to the electors that has been fulfilled. I would not object so much to increased taxation if the Government could show that they were doing something with it; but I will guarantee that there is not to be found throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia any work of magnitude that has been constructed by the present Government out of revenue. They have not erected for themselves one such monument.

Mr. Money: Are not you a bit previous?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I forgot Bunbury harbour.

Hon. P. Collier: And we started that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes. I will deal with that matter later. But the Government cannot point to anything in this State that they have created out of the increased revenue they have obtained. Perhaps the Premier will point to soldier settlement and claim that that is a splendid thing which the present Government have done. Perhaps it is a good thing, though some people feel a good deal of doubt about that.

The Premier: What about Yorkrakine?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That was years ago. I did that.

The Premier: You are wrong. We were partners in that.

Mr. Harrison: You should have given them railway facilities at the same time.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Like the majority of the promises of the party which the member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) is supporting, promises regarding that railway were broken and the line was taken 30 miles away from the settlers. There is no work which can be quoted that the Government have carried into effect. The Premier might refer to soldier settlement but that has been built up on the "flimsies" of the Commonwealth. If we do not watch ourselves, the "flimsies" or paper money of the Commonwealth, will reach the same position as the franc notes in France or the mark notes in Germany. Money has been expended, not for the purposes of settling soldiers, as the primary object, but for buying out individual farmers throughout the State. Taxation has had to be increased to cover the cost of that scheme, and there is a danger that the State will be confronted with a loss in that direction. Personally I hope that a loss will not be experienced.

Mr. Harrison: The returned soldiers who bought farms have rattling good propositions.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There are some who hold opinions different from that. I heard one gentleman much older than the hon. member and with a longer experience of farming, state that the returned soldiers

under the land settlement scheme in Western Australia had a halter around their necks, and that it would be impossible for them to pay the high rate of interest and the high cost of the land.

Mr. Troy: If that is his opinion, he has a very poor opinion of this country.

Mr. Harrison: The land that was bought for soldier settlers in many cases, was sold for less than the cost of the improvements.

Mr. Troy: That is so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I trust that before this Bill goes through, the Government will endeavour to bring down the Assessment Bill in order that we may have an opportunity of imposing taxation in this State under fair conditions. The land tax should be increased—I do not say the increase should be a large one—but it should be increased as the income tax is being increased.

Mr. Harrison: This Bill provides for that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No persons should be relieved of the necessity to pay both taxes. If I live in a house which, after struggling for years, I have been able to erect I have no right to pay a tax for the land on which that house is built, if in other circumstances I let that house, and the income derived from that house should be greater, the land should not be exempt from taxation. All the landlords of Perth are exempt from one tax, and pay whichever may be the higher, yet the working man who has struggled hard to build his house has to pay land tax and income tax as well. Is that a fair condition to apply?

Mr. Money: They do not seem anxious to go on building houses.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Because building costs are fairly high at the present time. A man who speculates in building houses and lets them to tenants, should be placed in exactly the same position as the man who puts his money into any one of the industries or manufacturing businesses in the State. He should be made to pay both taxes. The present system is wrong. Why should one section escape the liability and another have to face the double taxation? Owing to increased prices, incomes have increased a little, with the result that the income tax receipts have been higher and in some cases people have paid income tax and not land tax. When the Assessment Bill is before the House, the taxation should be put on a fairer basis, for everyone should be on the same basis regarding double taxation.

Mr. Johnston: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

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

Ayes	11
Noes	15
			—
Majority against	..		4
			—

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Lambert
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Collier	Mr. Troy
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Johnston	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Jones	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Broun	Mr. Money
Mr. Brown	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Draper	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Maley	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Mitchell	(Teller.)

Motion thus negatived.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [10.40]: I regret we have to deal with a taxation measure at this late hour after a strenuous week. The matter is of considerable importance, as measures of increased taxation always are. Less than three months ago the Premier in his Budget Speech announced—it was the dominating feature in that edifying address—that it was not proposed to increase taxation at the present time. That policy appealed to a great many of the Premier's supporters, and a majority of those in this party in coalition behind the Premier applauded it. In the brief space of time which has since elapsed the policy of the Government has been changed. I admit there have been increases in the rates of pay to railway men and other State employees. But on the other hand the increased charges in increased railway rates and fares amount to £71,000 more than the amount represented by increased wages in that department.

The Premier: Not a penny more this year.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Those were the figures given us at the time. We were told the increased wages amounted to £266,000, whilst the increased railway freights and fares represented £337,000 for this year, showing an increased taxation on the people who live on the land through the railway service of £71,000. At any rate the Government have decided to increase direct taxation under this measure by 15 per cent. all round—to increase both the land tax and the income tax by 15 per cent.—and I do not propose to follow the Premier on this point of divergent policy. I prefer the announcement he made on the 14th September last in his Budget Speech—

Hon. W. C. Angwin called attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

[The deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Mr. JOHNSTON: I maintain there should be no increased taxation at the present time, and as a member of a party which is anxious to stand behind the Premier I regret that I am not prepared on this point

to make the sudden change of policy which the Government enunciate in this measure.

The Premier interjected.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I do not remember hearing of this increased taxation until the Bill came down. In this measure it is proposed to increase by 15 per cent. the land tax and by 15 per cent. the income tax. I notice with surprise that the ordinary exemptions which taxpayers receive in regard to their income tax, the exemption of so much for a family, does not apply in calculating the £250 per annum allowance, below which the increases do not operate.

The Premier: It applies to the tax.

Mr. JOHNSTON: It may, but if a man has a gross income of £252 per annum, and if he has considerable exemptions on account, say, of a large family, he still has to pay the increased 15 per cent. on the whole of the £252.

The Premier: No.

Mr. JOHNSTON: That is my reading of the measure. I am glad to hear the Premier say it is not so, because if in Committee I am able to show him that it is so I feel sure he will accept an amendment so that the taxpayer shall get the full exemption on his income up to £250, before the increases operate.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you think it will go into Committee?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I do not know that it will. For my part it will not, for I oppose the measure entirely, but I often find myself in a minority in matters of this kind in the House. It is proposed further to increase the land tax by 15 per cent. on all land, however well improved it may be. This is very objectionable. In this regard I regret the Premier did not adopt a policy which I understood him to foreshadow in at least one public address in the country, namely, increased taxation on unimproved land rather than on all land whether improved or not.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Where did he foreshadow that?

Mr. JOHNSTON: At Harrismith.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It has never been published.

Hon. P. Collier: Where is Harrismith?

Mr. JOHNSTON: It is an important agricultural centre in my electorate where a fitting reception was given to the head of the Government. I understood him to say—

Hon. P. Collier: Making wild promises to unsophisticated farmers!

Mr. JOHNSTON: No, the Premier was very fair and was not in a promising mood. His remarks were published in an important organ circulating in that part of the State. It was there shown that he had foreshadowed increased taxation on unimproved land only, not on all land. That policy might have commended itself to me and to a majority of members on these cross benches.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Not a majority of them.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I would have preferred

to see an increase in the taxation on totally unimproved land, rather than increased taxation on all land. A point of policy which will be acceptable to a majority of the people of this State is the increased general rate of taxation on incomes exceeding £7,766 per year, which in future will range up to 4s. in the pound.

The Premier: They have not many votes.

Mr. JOHNSTON: That is why the Premier has included them in his policy.

Hon. P. Collier: There are only 64 of them.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Whether they have many votes or not is not the point upon which the proposal has my support.

Hon. P. Collier: But it has an important bearing.

Mr. JOHNSTON: It is a fair public policy and it is just that taxation in its incidence should press more heavily on those who are able to meet it. Those who are in receipt of incomes of £7,766 per year have little to complain of if they have to pay 4s. in the pound. With regard to the general increase of 15 per cent. all round, it must be remembered that this is following upon heavily increased Federal taxation. It is not as if the taxpayers were paying only one income tax. When comparisons are made with the rate of income tax obtaining in the Old Country and in other places, it is often forgotten that people in Australia are paying two income taxes, a heavy Federal income tax and a State income tax which the Government desire to increase by 15 per cent., and these heavy taxes are superimposed upon two land taxes, road board rates, municipal rates, and water rates. Taking the whole of our local governing taxation the incidence of taxation in Western Australia is quite as heavy as the people can bear. I would point out how greatly the receipts from State taxation have increased during the last four years. In 1916-17 we received £402,337 from direct taxation; in 1917-18, £449,456; in 1918-19, £629,060; and in 1919-20, £844,196. Upon this sum of £844,196, a year the Government now propose to levy a super-tax as regards income tax and land tax of 15 per cent.

Hon. P. Collier: And dividend duties.

Mr. JOHNSTON: That is so, with an exemption as regards the increase only up to £250 for taxpayers whose income is less than that amount, but who will not be allowed the ordinary exemptions for children and otherwise in calculating that sum. It is surprising that the Government should have changed their policy with regard to increasing taxation, in view of the recorded utterances of the Premier not only in his Budget speech on the 14th September last, but throughout the whole of his public career. These sentiments weighed to a considerable extent with the members of the National and Country parties when he was selected for the proud position of leader of the combined

National party. On the 24th January, 1918, the Premier said—

It seems to me wrong to think that we can do very much more to raise money by taxation along the present lines. We have already a land tax, an income tax, indeed a multiplicity of taxes, and I doubt if hon. members can expect to impose increased taxation along the existing channels.

That is the very point. I agree with the Premier's recorded utterances that it is unwise to expect increased taxation along existing channels of income tax and land tax to the large amount of 15 per cent. That is why I oppose this measure. The Premier continued—

Another way, we are told, is to decrease expenditure. I am perfectly willing to practise the most rigid economy, but I do not think the country will be saved by decreasing expenditure on necessary functions of the Government. We are a new country with much to do and our only hope of getting out of the present position is by doing things. The point is that we should see to it that we get value for money spent. The Premier said he was willing to practise the most rigid economy and he was anxious to see that the people got the full value for the whole of the money expended. On these two points I stand to-day with the Premier's utterance.

Mr. O'Loughlen: But he has drifted away a bit from those sentiments.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I regret that I have not the "Hansard" report of the Premier's remarks when moving the second reading of this Bill for the imposition of increased taxation. This was one reason why I desired to secure the adjournment of the debate over the week end. It would have been very important if the Premier had shown that the policy of rigid economy and getting full value for the money expended had been carried into effect. But we know that has not been done. On the other hand, one notices that both the revenue and expenditure of this State are increasing by leaps and bounds, but great as are the increases in the revenue the expenditure seems to increase at a greater rate. In 1916-17 we had a revenue of £4,577,007, with an expenditure of £5,276,764; in 1917-18, revenue £4,622,536, expenditure £5,328,279; in 1918-19, revenue £4,944,850, expenditure £5,596,865; in 1919-20, revenue £5,863,501, expenditure £6,531,725; leaving us with an accumulated deficit on the 30th June, 1920, of £4,086,705. When one looks at the huge revenue being collected in Western Australia from so small a population—it amounts to £17 17s. per head—one must feel that this is wonderfully rich country that it can produce not only so large an aggregate revenue but so great a revenue per head from our small population of 330,946 souls. Particularly is that so when we remember the huge revenue that the Commonwealth Government are concurrently abstracting from the people of this country.

The Premier: A large amount is for services rendered.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The services rendered through the trading concerns do not appear in the figures I have quoted. This sum alone is considerable.

The Premier: Most of them do.

Mr. JOHNSTON: A large amount of the expenditure is for this purpose. When I urge the Premier to see whether he can avoid imposing this extra tax, I should like to remind him how heavily the people of the Commonwealth are suffering through the increased Federal taxation. We recently had a substantial increase in the tariff as well as increased direct taxation. Not the least of the difficulties with which this State has to contend is this tariff. I recognise it has increased the difficulties which have induced the Premier to bring this measure before the House. Another difficulty is the reduction in the amount of revenue received by the State from the Federal authorities, particularly the reduction in the per capita payments made by the Commonwealth to the State. This increased Federal taxation is bearing heavily upon the people.

The Premier interjected.

Mr. JOHNSTON: That is why I ask the Premier to hesitate before adding to the people's burdens through State channels. I have heard him on many occasions in this House say that the people cannot be taxed into prosperity. It was his political slogan. At a time when the cost of living is so high and industry in many directions is crippled through the high cost of living, and there are the heavy municipal and road board rates, all of which are added to the Federal taxation, I ask the Premier to stay his hand so far as the people of the State are concerned. The problem of increased taxation is particularly important to those of us who sit upon the cross benches. We have it on the highest authority in the State, from Ministers of the Crown and others, that practically the whole of the burden due to increased taxation as regards land and income tax must fall upon the man on the land.

The Premier: Everything comes back to the producer.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The farmer and the producer. The commercial sections of the community, I fear, always have passed on any increased taxation placed upon them. I have a speech here which I desire to quote from "Hansard" of the 18th April, 1918. When giving utterance to his views on this very subject, an esteemed hon. member said—

The system of taxation in vogue has been in operation for a considerable time. Even in good times it was not thought wise to make any amendment, but to-day, when the producer is suffering as greatly as he is, this new proposal comes along. It should be remembered that all forms of taxation find their way back to the farmer

and the producer, who is in this way heavily hit.

Mr. Luty: Not always.

The member: Yes, the producer is always hit. The tax will always find its way back to the man on the land.

• The Premier: Whose speech is that?

Mr. JOHNSTON: That is an extract from a speech of the gentleman who to-day is Premier of the State. I was pleased to note that even before I read this extract he re-echoed the same sentiment. He said that taxation of this nature always finds its way back to the producer. In the circumstances this increased taxation must be regarded with the gravest possible concern, and must receive most vigorous opposition on the floor of the House from members of this party on the cross benches, whose duty it is to look after the interests of the very section of the community who on such a high authority will probably have to pay all this taxation. On the Premier's own showing, the Country party must oppose this Bill. If the Premier can see his way to withdraw the Bill to which I am taking exception, his position in their regard, high as it is, will be even more secure.

Mr. Smith: You are offering a bribe now.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Premier in the speech I have quoted of two years ago referred to the need for economy and to the necessity for getting the full value for the expenditure within the State. In view of the greatly increased expenditure, and the greatly increased revenue, it would be gratifying to have a statement from him as to whether the rigid economy which is so generally advocated on the hustings has been put into effect in the departments of State.

The Premier: We are raising salaries every day.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I realise that. The rate of pay per head is probably going up for all the men employed in the Government service in Western Australia. That cannot be avoided in view of the recent report of the Basic Wage Commission. We have far too many men in the Government employ in this State, and many of them are underpaid.

The Premier interjected.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I think probably the solution of the difficulty in which the State finds itself, evidence of which was given in the recent civil service strike, will be found by reducing the number of men employed and paying them better. We should have the fullest information on these points before the measure passes the second reading. The increased freights and fares amount to £71,000 more than the last increase in wages to the men employed in the railways.

The Premier interjected.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am compelled to accept the figures given by the Commissioner of

Railways as correct, until the Government bring up later figures showing the exact amount of the increase in wages and railway freights. If the figures in the departmental statement are not accurate, the Commissioner of Railways is to blame for giving Parliament incorrect information. Those figures were, moreover, repeated in a leading article of the "West Australian" without bringing forth any contradiction or correction from the Railway Department. I regret that the Bill contains no provision for the averaging over a series of years of the incomes on which farmers and other producers will have to pay taxation. Everyone knows that the producer is at the mercy of the seasons as regards his returns. More particularly, sufferers from climatic vagaries are entitled to have their incomes averaged for taxation purposes.

Mr. Lambert: What about the miner, who is at the mercy of chance?

Mr. JOHNSTON: Just now I have in mind the farmer who, having put a large area under crop, experiences a drought and makes a loss for that year, of say £1,000, and in the following year, thanks to an excellent season, makes a profit of, say, £3,000. In such circumstances the producer's income should be averaged over a period of at least three years. During 1914, especially, settlers in new districts, having put in large areas, suffered very heavy losses. The producers have asked for the provision which I refer to, and I trust the Government will see their way clear to give effect to the demand. Even now the Commonwealth are inquiring into that phase of income taxation, and during the next few weeks a Federal Royal Commission will visit Western Australia for the purpose of taking evidence. If the Premier will undertake to adopt that Royal Commission's recommendations when they are made, I for my part shall be quite satisfied, for I believe that the Commission's report will be fair to the producers of this State. In reply to the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert), I say that the term "producer" as used by the party of which I am a member includes miners and, in fact, every description of producer. I urge the Government to exhaust every possible means of effecting administrative economies. This increased taxation was not submitted to the people at the last general election. We have no right to impose extra taxation in these dying days of a moribund Parliament. We have no mandate from the people for heavily increasing their burdens at this stage, a few weeks before the election. The Government show courage in introducing these proposals at this period, but their courage would have been more advantageously applied in submitting this increased taxation as a feature of the Government policy when the appeal is made to the country. I believe I am expressing the sentiments of the great ma-

majority of the residents of the farming districts when I say that if Ministers can prove that those measures of economy which the Premier promised in 1918 have been given effect to, Parliament should be prepared to meet the Government at least half way as regards the imposition of further taxation. But I agree with the leader of the Opposition when he says that before agreeing to new or increased taxes we should first be satisfied that every penny of revenue is being wisely expended. There is one direction in which the Government might fairly reach out for a little additional revenue, and that is as regards taxation of the prizes given for horse races. I find that during the last twelve years no less a sum than £1,021,597 was distributed as prizes for horse races in this State alone, and that the special tax on those prizes yielded only £16,755. During last year £102,340 was given as prizes for horse races in Western Australia, and on that huge amount a miserable £1,706 was collected by the State.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The horse owner is like every other business man and must get some return. He pays income tax.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I admit he pays income tax as well, but horse racing is a luxury-industry.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Perhaps you are interested in a luxury-industry, too?

Mr. JOHNSTON: That may be so. It is a luxury-industry which is heavily taxed. While I yield to none in the desire to see legitimate sport encouraged I contend that the huge amounts given as prizes for races in this State could fairly and properly carry much heavier taxation than that at present imposed. In view of the circumstances I have set out, I must, though with regret, in the interests of the primary producers of Western Australia oppose the second reading of this measure. I hope the measure will be defeated.

On motion by Mr. Troy, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.19 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 7th December, 1920.

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

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read assenting to the Railways Classification Board Bill.

SWEARING-IN.

The Hon. John Waters Kirwan, who was not present when members were sworn in after the biennial elections, took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

SELECT COMMITTEE, OPTICIANS BILL.

Extension of Time.

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson the time for bringing up the report of the select committee was extended for one week.

STANDING ORDER SUSPENSION.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.35]: A notice of motion appears in my name "That for the remainder of the session the provisions of Standing Order No. 62 be suspended." It has been intimated to me that a number of hon. members would prefer a different course from that which this notice of motion suggests, and with the permission of the House I intend to give notice at a later stage for a motion more in accordance with the wishes of hon. members.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous sitting; Hon. J. Ewing in the Chair, the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clause 4—Interpretation (partly considered):

Hon. H. STEWART: At the last sitting of the Committee an amendment was car-