

Rosy pictures are painted of what to expect when one settles on the land and what can be made from it. Although we struck very bad times we can go off the land, and probably will realise more than it has cost us. This shows that settlers of the proper type should receive every encouragement, and above all things, should be treated fairly, and that we should not give to Tom or Harry that which we deny to Jack or Bill.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [10.50]: I want to touch briefly on the question of repatriation. I agree with the member for Murchison that people can do well on the land and that they have done well on the land. After all, it depends to a great extent on the individual. With regard to repatriation, I agree with the remarks of the Minister when he stated that in Mr. Camm we had an officer who understood his business. While Mr. Camm may know his business, there is unfortunately a general feeling that the Government, in common with the Governments of other States, have done practically nothing in the way of genuine repatriation.

Mr. Jones: Except Queensland.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not concerned with what Queensland may have done. Our vast areas available for settlement should be ready to receive, not only our own men when they come back, but the thousands of other men who will be looking to Australia for a home. I urge the Government to approach the Federal Government for sufficient money as a set-off against such land as we may be prepared to place free at the disposal of our returned soldiers or sailors. It will be of inestimable value to the State to have thousands of men come and make their homes here. It is the State that is prepared to receive men which will get the population after the war. We should not wait until the war is over before we prepare for those men. Down at Nornalup Inlet, I am credibly informed, we have sufficient land to place thousands of men. I would like the State Government to urge the Commonwealth Government to provide money for the construction of necessary roads and railways, conditionally on our giving the returned soldiers and sailors land for nothing.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.55 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 6th March, 1918.

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

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

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

The PRESIDENT [4.34:] I have received the following communication from the Auditor General dated 5th March, 1917:—

Sir,—In pursuance of Section 53 of the Audit Act, 1904, I have the honour of transmitting for presentation to the Legislative Council a copy of the Hon. the Colonial Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts of the State of Western Australia for the financial year ended 30th June, 1917, together with my report thereon. (Sgd.) C. S. Toppin, Auditor General.

I place the report on the Table.

MOTION—FRUIT CANNING INDUSTRY, LOAN.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.40]: I move—

"That the Auditor General be requested to report—1, On the circumstances attending the loan of £5,500 by the Government to the Fruit Canning Industry, and 2, The present position and prospects of the venture."

Before asking members to accept this motion I think it would be advisable to be very clear in my reasons. In order to put the position fairly and clearly before members I would like to say that there is no hostility to the fruit growing industry as far as I am concerned. So far from there being any hostility I may say that I have been, and am, interested in the fruit growing industry, and nothing would give me greater pleasure, satisfaction, or profit than to see the fruit industry in this country established on a sound financial basis. Secondly, there is going to be no attack made upon the company in connection with this matter. It must be within the knowledge of members that occasionally, at any rate in some Parliaments, advantage is taken of the privileges which we have to make unfair attacks on people who are not able to reply. In this particular case, so far from wishing to make any attack on the two or three gentlemen whose names appear in the transaction, and in the circulars, I would like to take the opportunity of saying that in my opinion Mr. Price of the Illawarra orchard, who is associated with the Fruit-growers Limited, is head and shoulders above any other man in this country in the fruitgrowing business, particularly in regard to apples. I give that as my private opinion, but I believe it to be generally recognised that he stands quite in the front rank of fruit growers. That I believe will be accepted by everybody who knows anything at all about the subject. Similarly with Mr. Loaring, for both these gentlemen live in the district where I live, one at Karragullen and the other at Bickley. If some of the hon. members of this Chamber had an opportunity of visiting these orchards, I believe they would agree that the Illawarra orchard is one of the best apple orchards in Western Australia, and, as far as Mr. Loaring is concerned, that his orange grove at Bickley is one of the best citrus

groves in Western Australia. That ought to clear the ground to some extent, but I want to clear it a little further, and to say that I have not, at any rate yet, made any application to the Government for a plant subsidy and been refused. Let it not be said, therefore, that I, or anyone for whom I am privileged to speak, wishes to attack this company because it has been successful in getting money from the Government where other people have been unsuccessful. The whole of the criticism that I wish to make this afternoon is directed at the Government and particularly at two or three Ministers who are directly responsible for what has taken place. I am asking for this report, not because I am acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, but because I think we are entitled to have an independent report on the present condition of affairs, and the reason that I have selected this rather than a somewhat larger affair, is that it is a question of so small a scale that practically the man in the street, and even the woman in the street, would be able to understand and appreciate the position. It will be generally allowed that sometimes we are confused by the huge figures and complicated statements, such as we see in balance sheets of commercial transactions, legitimate or illegitimate, and my criticism or any attempt to follow the operations of an institution or company is mostly quite outside the capacity of the ordinary member of Parliament, to say nothing of the ordinary elector. Therefore, it will be a great advantage to have this miniature shown wherein we shall be able to see what has been done and what unsound lines of policy the Government have adopted, and also how unsound is their administration. I would point out that I am only making out a *prima facie* case. The file which I have asked shall be laid on the Table of the House discloses the position which justifies us in asking for more information. I am not going to be very conclusive in my remarks. I am going to be more chronological than conclusive, and hon. members will be able to follow me chronologically as they would if they took the trouble to look at the file for themselves. There is one other advantage in dealing with this matter and it is that it is not too late to retrieve the position. It will be seen, in the course of the statement I will make, that the fruit growing industry in this country, speaking now from the jam making and preserving point of view, is admitted to have one great rival, or as one of the members classed it, one great enemy, namely, the Jones Company. I will say nothing against the Jones Company because I know very little about them, but it is generally admitted that they are a company, who stand on the top of the tree so far as success is concerned, and no one, so far as I know, has ever been able to make any suggestion but that those connected with it are honourable men. On looking at their balance sheet to the end of December, 1917, I find they have a capital of over £600,000. That is the company which it will be seen from the file is considered to be a

rival, or the enemy of any company starting in Western Australia. If hon. members turn to the policy speech of the Premier of Queensland, they will find that the Government of that State approached this question in a sensible way from their point of view. The Premier (Mr. Ryan) in his policy speech delivered at Townsville said that, with a view of securing to the growers a fair return for their labours, and a ready market for their products, a fruit canning factory was to be established at a cost of £40,000. We come to Western Australia and what do we find? We find that the benefits of private enterprise are to be linked up with the benefits of State socialism, and the policy of the Government as announced is a pound for pound subsidy to any company who will put up the money.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): A pound for pound only.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: One wishes to be particularly civil to a young Minister of the Crown, and therefore I will not say anything with regard to the interjection. I will even accept his correction, but I think that when the hon. gentleman has a little more experience he will know that in this connection loans and subsidies and gifts are all alike and that things now are mixed up in such a tangle that even a chartered accountant cannot put them right. On going through this file we find that the Honorary Minister (Mr. Baxter) is one of the Ministers whose signature appears on it. "I concur" is what he writes. This file in itself should be sufficient to send that Minister out of the Cabinet and out of Parliament to-morrow. If what appears on the file had been allowed to occur in connection with a private institution, that institution would have found itself in the bankruptcy court, and if the hon. member had been carrying on business for anybody else and had done anything like that he would have been dismissed without a moment's hesitation.

Hon. E. M. Clarke: That is a bit rough.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It is a bit rough on us if we have to find the money to educate these junior Ministers. Of course they ought to have been guided by their colleagues. But let us go on with this file chronologically. It starts on the 16th August, 1916, and therefore it is comparatively easy to bear in mind what has taken place. If the events I am going to refer to were over a long period of years, and were involved, it might be tedious to follow them. There is a minute by the late Fruit Commissioner. Here again I want to protect myself, so far as the civil service is concerned. Looking at this file, and knowing nothing whatever about the civil service except what we find in the file, we would say, while possibly one or two of the civil servants were somewhat enthusiastic, we would also say that the only sound guidance given right through the piece was given by the civil servants who contributed to the file, particularly the officers of the Treasury Department. The minute starts in August and says—

About £5,000 will be required to establish the company. I suggest that the Government find £2,500 and the growers and the merchants £2,500.

I ask hon. members to bear in mind that the merchants are asked to contribute. That was and is the policy of the Government, namely, a subsidy of pound for pound. Then we have a deputation waiting on Mr. Lefroy who was then Minister for Lands and one member of the deputation said—

We represent 80 per cent. of the growers and we ask for £500.

That gives me an opportunity of referring to a matter which I consider to be of some little importance, though other people may not. It is with regard to the accuracy that should appear in files of accounts. I asked a question of the leader of the House the other day with regard to certain repayments by this company. I had not an opportunity then of going into the matter, and anyone unacquainted with the circumstances would say to me, "You seem to have made a foolish blunder." On page 184 of the file there will be found a minute which justified me in asking the question I put to the Colonial Secretary, because it states there that the first of the repayments was to be made on the 31st December, 1917. Now I am told, and I can quite credit it, that that ought to have been the 31st December, 1919. Similarly, with a statement about the £500, that probably should have been £5,000. I would be the last person to take hypocritical notice of any of these things, but at the same time, dealing with figures and trust funds, one cannot be too careful about seeing that the most scrupulous accuracy is observed. At the deputation which waited on Mr. Lefroy in September, one of the members said all that was required was assistance from the Government. The Minister queried, "Have you done anything in the matter yourselves?" and the answer was, "We have made inquiries of the fruit growers and they are going to support us; they are unanimous in their desire to have a factory established." Speaking for a moment as a fruitgrower, I can quite understand the deputation being somewhat carried away and using language which possibly was not strictly accurate. But does that justify the Minister in accepting a statement of that kind and acting on it, because unquestionably we find, on going through the file, that the Minister took the statement for granted that the fruit-growers were going to give their support and that they were unanimous in their desire to have the factory established. I propose now to refer to a circular issued by the fruitgrowers and the date on this circular is important. The statement of the deputation which I have quoted was made in September, 1916. The circular which is issued by the fruitgrowers is dated February, 1917, says, "The support given by the fruitgrowers has so far been very limited, in fact the amount subscribed by them totals only £350. There are between 3,000 and 4,000 fruitgrowers in the State, but only about 60 have thought it worth while to take up shares in the concern." The deputation went on and the Minister incidentally remarked that things were slightly mixed, and that this matter might come under the Minister for Industries. At any rate another member of the deputation said, "This is a business

proposition." The Minister obtains the approval of Cabinet, on the 3rd October, for an advance of £2,500. They had asked for a pound for pound subsidy.

The Colonial Secretary: Not a subsidy, a loan at the current rate of interest.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I do not know the difference between a loan and a subsidy in this affair.

The Colonial Secretary: The hon. member keeps on saying a subsidy, this is a loan at the current rate of interest, not a subsidy.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The Minister says I do not know the difference between a loan and a subsidy. We will wait for the report that I am asking should be placed on the table of the House, and see what the Auditor General says on the transaction. I do not wish to bandy words with the leader of the House or his colleague in connection with the matter.

Hon. J. M. Drew: Was the repayment guaranteed?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: There are a great many ways of raising money in Western Australia, but I do not wish to be drawn from the motion I am moving, that an independent report should be made on the matter. I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of this. I do not wish to find a mare's nest, but as a fruitgrower and taxpayer, I want to see that this is put on sound lines. We come to the 3rd October, and we have got the approval of Cabinet for an advance of £2,500.

Hon. G. J. G. Miles: Was the advance made?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I am rather frightened to answer any questions in the presence of the Honorary Minister. I am asking for a report. The Minister obtains the approval of Cabinet for an advance of £2,500. What that approval is worth I do not know. Three days after in the "West Australian" an adverse comment appears. "It is certain," says one of the importers, "the project is doomed to failure." Then the Commissioner's report on that was this: "This I should say was put up, not by the merchants but by one of the rival preserving companies." This is what the Minister is told by his Fruit Commissioner. "The Government security is to a large extent the success of the venture." That is pretty candid. "It will be most difficult to establish the canning and drying industry in this State without strong Government support because of the opposition of already strongly established and organised trades of the Eastern States." I do not think it wise to discuss now the wisdom or folly of the question of establishing this industry. I have no intention of doing so, nor to discuss the question of how the Minister is raising capital, because the Government are going to raise capital by a forced loan from the insurance companies. They are obtaining £5,000 from each of the insurance companies. I am not discussing that at all. I assume for a moment that this is a sound business proposition of a pound for pound subsidy and that the Government are going to establish this industry. Here the Minister is warned

that it is difficult to establish this industry because of the rivalry of the firms in the Eastern States. That can only refer to the Jones Company with a capital, mark you, of £600,000, an old established firm and masters of their business. We have also to recognise that in Queensland the Labour Government think similarly to the Nationalist Government here of establishing a fruit and canning industry and they are going to put up £40,000. Here is the Minister warned on these points. I say any Minister who understands his responsibilities must say we have to be particularly careful about this matter. If this is a serious venture we should see first of all that the company to whom we are going to lend the money to is a sound company, and we must also see that they provide sufficient capital to go into the matter successfully so that we do not fling £5,000 away. That reminds me of the question of the loan and the subsidy. If this was a subsidy there might be some justification for it. That is to say, to give them the £5,000 and let them, that is the fruit canning company, be entirely responsible for everything, whereas as a loan I have no hesitation in saying any bank manager in Western Australia would be dismissed at once if he lent £5,000 or £2,500, which was the original proposition, to the fruit company in such circumstances. Now we come to the 17th October, and members will remember, turning back for a moment, it was said the merchants were to be asked to come into the venture. That was in August. In October in a memo. from the Fruit Commissioner, he says the parties had met, that is the Under Secretary and the gentlemen connected with the company, and they had stated that the wholesale people had finally refused to join the company and the Jones company were exercising influence in this direction. Any Minister who knows his business, and with a sense of responsibility would see, if there is any truth in this, this was a warning. He would say, "We must find out what is going on because it looks as if we are going to fritter away £5,000 which we can ill afford to spare, and damage the fruit industry—if we are going to have a failure—if it is true the wholesale people refuse to join that is the evidence that the Jones company are exerting influence in this direction. On the 7th October we have this from the Fruit Commissioner to the Minister. "I ask that the A.F.L. be given definite terms and conditions as early as possible during this week and suggest that the loan of £2,500 be secured by debentures." The money is to be used to form a preserving and drying company. That is October 7. On October 24 the company writes: "As the proposed company (which is to be formed) is not in actual existence, please pay to the A.F.L. (that is the parent company) £500 in trust for the new company to pay for machinery and cans already ordered." That is a curious method of doing business. I should imagine it is the method not of highly trained business men but of a junior Minister of a Country party. I am going to miss out a little here. It is important but it is not necessary to go into details, and that is the Federal Treasurer's permission

to float the company. I leave that out, although all these details lead to an interesting question to me, it is an old friend, the Federal Government operations in Western Australia. We come to the 6th November and the Under Secretary writes, "The Government have pledged themselves to advance the sum of £2,500." That is on the 6th November, and we have a letter from Sydney and it shows that the people there are following our movements over here, although we say that we are neglected and ignored. On the 3rd November, that is three days before that, a letter is received from T. M. Goodall & Co. of Sydney, "We notice the W.A. Government contemplate installing canning works in Perth; we ask leave to submit a quotation." On the 27th November the Government replied, "Up to the present the Government have not definitely decided to erect canning works." We get on now to the next month, the 5th December. The £500 is advanced; they got their £500.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Who got it?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The company got it in trust for the canning company. On the 8th December there is a minute that the A.F.L. is particularly anxious to get further supplies. It was just about this time that I asked the Government, from my place in Parliament, if the Government would place on the Table of the House the papers in connection with this matter, and the answer was that the A.F.L. were engaged in delicate negotiations and it was not expedient to lay the papers on the Table. To be fair to the leader of the House, I was told that if I liked to go down to the department I could see the file, but I did not do that because I think it is a most objectionable course to pursue, to go down and get information that is not available to everyone else in connection with public affairs, if negotiations are not intended for the public to see. We come to December 16. There is a lot of interesting financial statements, details of which I do not wish to worry the House with, but they are well worth members perusing. I will give one illustration. This is in connection with the Under Secretary for Agriculture asking for a further £500 immediately. This was on the 2nd February. The dates are most important, and I am stating this chronologically. We have on the 2nd February, 1917, an application for a further £500 immediately with the statement, "we have disposed of sufficient shares to justify the company going to allotment." If that is the case on the 2nd February, how comes it about that on the 23rd February we have this circular to which I have already referred, saying—

The support of the fruit growers has so far been very limited. In fact, the total amount of capital subscribed to date by the fruit growers amounts to only £350. There are some 3,000 or 4,000 growers in the State. We are still in February, 1917, and here is another warning, from the Treasury. It is a protest from the Under Treasurer to the Treasurer—

This matter was never submitted to me. I am opposed to this method of financing. All matters of this nature should come through the Treasury, and your approval obtained

before any proposal to assist any outside concern is approved of.

There is an illustration of the valuable public servant we have, the public servant who is so often, as we know, subjected to severe criticism. The criticism should be directed at the heads of Ministers. They have had their subordinates right through the piece; or at any rate some of them have had subordinates who have served them uncommonly well, and given warning after warning, and told the Ministers what was going on. But here is the refrain—

I shall be glad to get another £750. This is from the manager of the company to the Under Secretary. There seems to me a sigh of relief on the part of the accountant of the Agricultural Department, because he makes the following note—

Seven hundred and fifty pounds has already been paid. This amount will complete their proposed loan.

But somebody else comes in here, some official whose name I cannot decipher. He got hold of this file and put this note on it—

Please discuss. I do not think we should pay the full amount until the whole of the capital of the company is put up.

Another warning. Then the Fruit Industries Commissioner says the company are hung up for funds. Mark that. They have had £2,500 with a protest from the accountant, and the Fruit Industries Commissioner then says that they "are hung up for funds" and that they "cannot buy sugar which is urgently required." This is the concern that is to fight the £600,000 combine in Tasmania and the State factory of Queensland. This is the enterprise of the Nationalist party. The Fruit Industries Commissioner continues—

I am afraid under existing circumstances the department must stand to the company to keep it going.

Now hon. members will see whether this is a loan or a subsidy. We have got in with these people, and our own officer says that we must stand to them now and keep them going. The negotiations, I was told, were too delicate to permit of the papers being laid on the Table of the House. They were most indelicate—not delicate. Now I come to March, 1917; and I promise to be as brief as I can. I do not often trespass on the time of the House with a motion like this.

Member: It is interesting.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It certainly is interesting. On the 9th March, 1917, I find some accounts and some figures which are of value. It is these accounts and figures that I wish considered by a trained, qualified, and independent party like the Auditor General. I only say that prima facie the matter calls for some inquiry. The final payment is now made on the 24th March, 1917.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: That makes £2,500 in all?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I can only say that I think so. But the Auditor General will be able to tell us that.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: What capital have the company subscribed?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The Auditor General will tell us that too.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Is the hon. member certain that this is the final payment?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I have said three times that I am dealing chronologically with this matter. I have come to the 24th March, 1917, and on the file appears the statement that the final payment has now been made. Surely that should satisfy the hon. member. I think he must have been looking at the file himself, because if he went on to the 30th March, six days afterwards, he must have found the following—

Owing to unforeseen circumstances it is necessary to apply for further financial assistance.

That is six days after the final payment has been made. The memo. continues—

Unless we are assisted we cannot carry on. The A.F.L. has strained its resources, and has advanced £1,000 to the canning company. We ask for a further amount of £3,000.

This seemed to have completely flummoxed the Fruit Industries Commissioner because he says—

I hardly know what to advise.

The statement is a long one, but it starts off by saying—

I hardly know what to advise. I recommended that the company should start with £5,000 capital, half growers' and half Government money. So far the growers have only put up £350 in cash, while we have advanced £2,500. Only strong Government support will enable canning and jamming to be successfully undertaken in this State, owing to outside competition.

That is the £600,000 Jones business. I am not sure whether I have the statement which the Treasurer made, but the other day he said—

There is one form of education I would like to see reduced in this State, and that is the method of educating people to see how much they can get the Government to give and how little they can pay in return.

I think these gentlemen have graduated past masters in the art of getting money from the Government. The Fruit Industries Commissioner continues—

The Jones combine has already cut prices twice since the local company started.

There is about the fifth warning. Anyone knows that the Jones combine, as they continue to be called—though I think we ought to be civil, and call them the Jones company—are a very powerful concern. The Nationalist party went out to fight the Jones combine, and they alleged that the Jones combine had already twice cut prices. If it is going to be a fight between the Jones company on the one hand, and the loan or debenture, or whatever it may be called, of two or three thousand pounds from our Government on the other hand, which party is going to lose its money? After that the affair becomes a little comical, because the damage has been done and the Nationalist party appear in sight. The Under Secretary for Agriculture minutes the Minister for Agriculture—

This does not look too good. They found that out at last, although they

had to go to a civil servant to find it out, because the present Premier asks—

What is the position?

Now we come to the 15th June, 1917, and on that date the A.F.L. make the following statement to the Under Secretary for Agriculture—

The total amount paid in cash by growers for shares is £660. This, with £2,500 from the Government, gives us £3,160 to work on.

“To work off,” I think it should have said. The statement continues—

This was used by March last, and we were then faced with either shutting down or temporarily assisting it ourselves. We did this, and advanced £2,700.

The company ask for early consideration—as, having got the factory going and getting its products on the market, it is very necessary it should be kept going.

Sometimes, I believe, people cut their losses; but that course did not seem to suggest itself to this company. This is the kind of thing one can safely look for when one comes to a governmental institution—probably a governmental institution of any kind, but certainly a governmental institution financed by a Government. Here, on the 22nd June, 1917, we find the Fruit Industries Commissioner writing to the Under Secretary for Agriculture—

I would suggest that the A.F.L. be asked if any steps are being taken to meet a considerable amount of dissatisfaction which exists among a large section of growers in connection with both the management of the A.F.L. and the A.F. Canning Company.

Next, on the 26th June, the interim balance sheet of the canning company is asked for—for the first time, so far as I can ascertain; but the Auditor General will tell us all about it. On the 28th June the Under Secretary for Agriculture writes a memo—

I am dissatisfied. There is not sufficient information. I know that many growers have not yet been paid. As the Government are assisting, it is most advisable that the growers should be paid. They are mostly small men who urgently need the money. The A.F.L. and the Producers' Markets have advanced £2,876, and we should have some understanding that if the £3,000 is advanced it will not be used to liquidate these advances, leaving the company financially just as it was before, but for a change of creditors.

Any business man will appreciate the importance of that suggestion. The memo. concludes—

It is necessary that the growers be induced to take shares.

I pass to July, when there are some more memoranda and more requests for information. In that month the Under Secretary suggests an advance—let hon. members mark this; this is Government finance—suggests an advance of £3,000 to “your company”—that is, the A.F.L., and not the canning company—“on the distinct understanding that it is to be used in developing

the operations of the company, and that efforts be made to induce more growers to become shareholders.” That is a very important matter from the fruitgrowers' point of view. To me it seems that from start to finish the whole thing was absolutely doomed. I do not know what the present position is, but that is how the thing strikes me—that it was absolutely doomed to failure, on the company's own showing, unless the Government put in more money. The company were to approach the fruitgrowers—possibly, except in some instances, the most unsophisticated class of the community—and ask them to put their hard-earned money into a thing like this. On the 14th July, 1917, there is a memo. that a cash statement up to the 30th June has been received. On the 26th July there is a memo.—

Matters brought forward. Some doubt whether articles of association will allow this.

This is rather in the Alfred Jingle style, but I think it shortens things.

The PRESIDENT: I must remind the hon. member that Standing Order 114 will interrupt this motion except by the consent of the House.

Resolved that motions be continued.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I thank you, Mr. President, and hon. members for permission to proceed. On the 26th July some doubt arises “whether the articles of association will allow this.” That is, the advance of the £3,000 to what may be called the parent company. I am not going into that, because it would take us too far afield; but it shows what an interesting affair this has become, when the fruitgrowers—let hon. members just imagine, the ordinary fruitgrowers—are being asked whether the articles of association of the company will permit this to be done. And when we find a Government official with the approval, apparently, of the Minister, suggesting that the fruitgrowers, who know nothing whatever about it, be induced to put their money into this affair, we are tempted to ask what there is left to anticipate. Now we come to August, 1917:—“It is essential that the jam factory should be kept going.” Heaven knows why. This is from the Fruit Industries Commissioner to the Under Secretary of Agriculture. He says—

They waited on me re the £3,000. They said it was essential that the jam factory should be kept going.

This is the Fruit Commissioner who says—

The jam factory must be kept going, and it is necessary the Government should help. There is no way of securing the money other than by advancing to the Associated Fruitgrowers, Limited, and not to the jam factory. Negotiations are pending between the West Australian Farmers, Limited, for taking over the Associated Fruitgrowers, Limited.

I deeply regret that it should be necessary to mention any of these companies at all, for

the reason that the whole of my attack is directed towards members of the Government. I make no attack whatever on either of these companies. The whole of my attack is directed at Ministers who are directly responsible, for not only this kind of thing, but for things involving millions of money. Their dealings in their finances are characterised by carelessness and ignorance of what they are dealing with. They are bringing the country to the verge of bankruptcy, indeed of fraudulent bankruptcy, and they have only been prevented from taking trust funds in London by the intervention of the Imperial Government. Now we come to the 21st August, 1917:—"The sales for six months do not show great chances of success." I should think not. It is really a very entertaining amusement, the reading of Government files, if they are anything like this. The Treasurer complains that Ministers have to spend most of their time reading files. I can imagine nothing more amusing than to light a big cigar and read files like this, while being paid hundreds of pounds a year for doing so. Here is a note by the Under Secretary of Agriculture dated 21st August, 1917:—"Keep this matter alive." On the 22nd August Mr. Willmott arrives on the scene and then things begin to move. Can anything be more ludicrous than this note of the conference between the Associated Fruitgrowers, Limited, and Mr. Willmott? This was after the change of Government came about. It is very obvious that these gentlemen wanted to get some more money. Usually at a conference there is some delicacy, a few preliminaries at any rate, but here the deputation burst out with:—"We are most anxious to get £3,000." And from the knowledge we have from this file, it is not surprising. Here, again, let us be fair in the matter. This is Mr. Willmott, an important representative of the Country party, who apparently has bolted with the Government and taken charge of the country. The Minister has seen the Treasurer and he adds, apparently rather timidly, "He is not very favourable." The Treasurer says that the fruit growers are not putting enough money into it, and Mr. Willmott agrees with him. One would have thought that even the rawest recruit to this Country party, the most bucolic person they could find in the outlying districts, would have had sufficient sense at this juncture to consult someone who knew what was what. It is discreditable and disgraceful that we should hand over the management of the affairs of this country to men like that. What else can we expect but bankruptcy? Heaven knows, it is difficult enough in any circumstances at the present moment to handle things in Western Australia. I have my scheme, other members may have theirs; but even my pet scheme of unification would be wrecked at once if entrusted to the care of hon. members like that to conduct negotiations either delicate or indelicate. Here is this Minister who agrees with the whole position, that is to say, that the growers are not putting enough money into it. Then he asks, "How do your prices compare with others?" The answer is, "The whole-

sale prices are the same as Jones's, but the retail prices are one penny per lb. higher all round." This is very interesting to the careful housewife. This is the company they are going to fight in Western Australia, and the retail price is one penny per lb. above Jones's. And not only that, but the Minister himself had seen a tin of jam opened and found it mildewed. I know a little, not much, about this. I have conducted a few experiments with this fruit preserving business, and I know that to a beginner it is a very easy thing to have the stuff mildew, whether it is in a tin or in a bottle. The great advantage with a bottle is that you can see the mildew, while the disadvantage with the tin is that you cannot see it. In putting a new brand on the market, a jam which is really a Government jam, we should be very careful not to have mildewed stuff get in. I am convinced that one could buy 1,000 dozen tins of Jones's jams in Western Australia and that Jones's company would be prepared to pay a pound for every tin that was mildewed. It is easy enough to avoid mildew if sufficient care is taken in the preparation of the stuff by those who know what they are doing. Here the Minister admits that the growers have not put enough money into the thing, and that the jam itself gives cause for complaint. I am not criticising the company. I sympathise with them to a certain extent and admire them in another regard. I sympathise with them in the difficulty they find in starting any new affair at the present time, and I must say I admire the way in which they have handled their loan account. Then we get this question, "How many growers are there in the company?" and the answer is "Seventy-six." Then we come to, "How much will the A.F.L. leave in?" The retort is, "Will it be sufficient if we leave in £2,000?" They want to see how far they dare go with the Minister. It is not necessary to explain to those who have followed this question, and it would be very difficult to explain to those who have not followed it, the particulars of the advance by the parent company to the subsidiary company, and the respective rights and positions of the two parties plus the Government's right and privileges. However, the Auditor General will tell us all about that. Here is a member of the deputation closing with the Minister, "Will it be sufficient if we leave in £2,000 and not withdraw except as we get in subscriptions from fruitgrowers?" "That will do," said the Minister. And so the business was fixed up. The Under Secretary for Agriculture says—

It will be necessary to augment the capital provided by the shareholders (£800) by £2,000 before the Government will give £3,000 on top of the £2,500 already given.

Then here is a long passage about the fire insurance premiums. I will leave it out, although it is an indication of the grossly careless way in which the business was conducted by the Government.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: You say the business was fixed up; is that the £3,000 granted by the Government?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It is very difficult to answer that.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Did they put the proceedings of the deputation on the file?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I cannot say, but if it should lead to the compilation of a file like this, I should say put them all on. Then we come to the 5th December, 1917. Here is the Minister—

I recommend that a further loan be made as shares sold have realised £2,000. Kindly treat this matter as urgent.

Then, on the 8th December, we have this from the Under Secretary of Agriculture—

It is necessary that a guarantee to leave £2,000 as capital in the A.F.L. Trading Concern should be approved by the Solicitor General and signed by individual members or some of them.

Now we come to the preliminaries before they got the cash advance. Judging by the file I think we ought to be proud of our qualified civil servants, and very much ashamed of our present Ministers. That is the impression left by a perusal of this file, because Ministers got warnings from all directions. Here is the Crown Law Department—

The guarantee given by the A.F.L. is of no value unless the company has power under its articles of association to give such guarantee.

That is not very remarkable coming from the Crown Law, but it is evidence that they conduct their business, as far as they can. The minute continues—

Further, a guarantee given by a limited company is of little value unless there is a reserve liability of shareholders.

That is very elementary, but possibly the Crown Law Department has found out the very scanty limitations of its Ministers. Therefore, the officers put an elementary notice like this on the papers in the vain hope that it would catch the eye of the Minister—

If it is the intention of the A.F.L. to issue second preference debentures of £2,000 as loan capital to the fruit and canning company it is necessary to safeguard the interests of the Government in providing that its liability shall not be discharged during the currency of the Government loan.

There is nothing very startling about this, but it shows in these different departments—the Agricultural Department, the Treasury Department, and the Crown Law Department—that the Ministers were protected by their civil servants.

And the provisions should be made strict. That is another note from the Crown Law Department. Now we come to the public Press. On the 9th December, 1917, the "Sunday Times" makes certain comments on this matter—

We are not quite cognisant of the details, but it is a fact that last week the Government advanced £2,500 to the W.A. Fruit-growers' Association. This is in addition to the subsidy or loan given by the State to the same organisation earlier in the year. The comment is not a very severe one, but they would like a little more information on the subject. This shows that the public are served fairly well by their watch dogs, the

public Press, and the theme of the whole criticism in regard to this matter is in connection with the present Ministry, and particularly the individuals who dealt with it, and to the effect that they should never have been permitted to deal with a matter of that kind, and that, as the Under Treasurer has it, it should have gone to his department. Here is the A.F.L. asking, "When will this advance be available?" That is the only thing which interests them. The Under Secretary writes to the Minister—

A balance sheet has been obtained. The fixed assets are not sufficient and are slightly over £800. It is unlikely that the directors and the shareholders will give a guarantee. At the same time I consider that we are bound to go on with this matter. The fruit industry must be assisted apart from the question of security. We cannot lose sight of the fact that the Agricultural Bank is interested in a large number of orchards.

If the department does not assist, the Agricultural Department will be a heavy loser.

That raises up an interesting vista. With a file like this, and a reference like this, I asked the officials of the House to get me the Agricultural Bank report. It is an old story now, and I am thankful to say that I have the Agricultural Bank report for 1917. I then said, "Will you please bring me the reports for 1914, 1915, and 1916" and the reply made to me was, "They are not here." I wanted to get hold of these reports for the special purpose of finding out how much of the enormous amount of money, £3,626,557, has been advanced by the Agricultural Bank between 1895 and 1917 to orchardists and upon orchard properties. I was a client of the bank myself near the beginning of its operations. I am speaking without the papers because they are not on the Table, as they should be, as provided by Act of Parliament. It is provided that these reports should be placed on the Table of the House every year. I cannot, therefore, find out how much money is invested in orchard properties by the Agricultural Bank, but, speaking without the papers, though knowing something of the subject, I should doubt very much whether the Agricultural Bank have lost one penny piece on their orchard properties. At any rate I will guarantee, that in the district in which I live, and where we have a number of small clients of the Agricultural Bank, that institution has not lost one penny of capital, and that these orchardists are neither a fortnight nor a month in arrears with their payments of interest. Yet we have it put on the file, as a reason for the advance of £3,000 more to this company, that we are going to protect the Agricultural Bank against possible loss. The file breaks off somewhat abruptly and I propose to do the same. I only ask this, that hon. members will agree that from this file there is a *prima facie* case made out for the adoption of my motion that a report should be made by an independent party. That, of course, will remain in the hands of the House. But right at the end of the chapter the Honorary Minister who sits in this House appears on the scene. He says, "I concur, (sgd) C. F. Baxter."

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): With what?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I do not know. The hon. gentleman asks me a question like that but I cannot answer him. The minute simply says, "I concur. (Sgd) C. F. Baxter."

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): Would you kindly explain to the House what it is I concurred in?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: How can I explain that? I have been almost an hour and a half speaking on this motion, and I have asked someone else to explain the whole position.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): You had access to the file.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Admittedly.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: And the hon. member has made good use of it.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I do not wish to be severe on anyone else except the Ministers, whom one can attack and who have the right of reply. This is not an exhaustive dealing with the subject. I simply say here that I have made out a *prima facie* case. But the interesting part of the whole thing is in respect of these Ministers. It is not in regard to this mere bagatelle of £5,000 and as to whether it is well invested or badly invested—the question at issue in this matter is the conduct of various gentlemen. As a great anatomist will reconstruct from the rib of a moa the whole bird, so, I say, members can reconstruct from this file the policy and the administration of the present Ministers. Do not let hon. members imagine that this is a thing which ought to be dropped because it is of no further interest, as we have lost the money, or because the venture is going to prove a successful one. Whether the matter is dropped or not, or whether the business is going to be a failure or a success, does not matter to me. But this means that we are involving Western Australia in State enterprises against which no words were too strong, comparatively a few days ago, on the part of the leader of the House, and because of which the Labour Government were thrown out of office. We are involved once more in State enterprises. The Premier came forward with £100,000 for certain works at Fremantle. I think I can fairly assume, knowing what I do of this and other affairs, that we shall go on in the same kind of way. No wonder that we are bankrupt and hard up! What else can we be under the most favourable circumstances, but here we are dealing with the most difficult situation we have ever faced? Further, with regard to the fruit-growing industry, I say that to set about it in that way is to do as much damage in 12 months as will take the fruitgrowers five years to put right. What will an outsider think of anything like that in connection with the fruit-growing industry of the country? I guarantee that Jones & Co. and Queensland will know something about the affair over here and will, at all events, find out what is going on. Suppose you, Sir, or I, or anyone else, came forward with a genuine scheme, and asked the Government for £5,000 or £50,000 under an agreement specially drawn up, and the money was granted, what chance would we have of getting it? I do not care whether the motion

is adopted or rejected, or whether the Auditor General reports favourably or unfavourably on the matter. I do say that there is a *prima facie* case made out and it will be an interesting matter to see what we can get in the way of a report. Apart from that, there is the injury which is being done to the country by Government socialistic enterprises, of which those who occupy the Government benches now seem to be as great masters as the members of the Labour party were. From the very beginning the Labour party packed these things, but they were straightforward about it. What are the present Government doing? We put them in office in order to stop State enterprises, but at the first opportunity, apparently, they get their finances into a worse condition than the Labour Treasurer did and bring along stuff like this. The Country party, too, plays a curious part in this little comedy. If the Government think that, at a crisis like this, they should permit anyone to handle the public funds in that way, it is a deplorable outlook for Western Australia. So far as I am personally concerned my fixed determination is to fight for unification, and my fixed belief of months and years standing is that this is the only sound policy for us to adopt. I almost rejoice at these performances of the Government, because I see that it is not a question of discussing unification, for unification will be brought about by force of circumstances. One of the circumstances which will contribute to the total abolition and destruction of this State Government will be the performance which I have only touched upon this afternoon.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES (North) [5.58]: I second the motion.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister), debate adjourned.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and passed.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day; Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair, the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 42—Amendment of Section 242c:

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on the previous day on Clause 42, to which an amendment had been moved by the Hon. J. E. Dodd to strike out the concluding words of the clause as follows:—"and every such person shall follow as far as possible the advice given by such practitioner."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: These words are already in the principal Act, and I hope the Committee will not strike them out. It is rather futile to compel a person to seek medical attention and place upon him no obligation to carry out the advice of the practitioner.

Hon. J. E. DODD: If I had known at the time I moved the amendment that the words in question were in the principal Act I would

not have drawn attention to the matter. It is not my purpose to seek to delete anything that is in the original Act. We are not altogether sure, though, that the treatment is uniform. I might give hon. members my own experience in the past seven years. The clause stipulates that the advice of a medical practitioner shall be followed. What position would I have been in if I had followed the advice given me by various practitioners? I can better explain my meaning by relating an experience I had on a steamer on which I was once travelling, and Mr. Lynn was also on the same vessel. There was on board a medical practitioner, a man of high standing in the Eastern States. Speaking on diseases generally and on rheumatism, my complaint, in particular, he said that whatever I did I was to have nothing to do with drugs, and that there was only one treatment, the knife. I replied that if I underwent that treatment all my joints would be removed. What is to be done in a case like that? The Bill provides that if the advice of a medical practitioner is not followed a penalty of £20 will be imposed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If a patient does not care for the advice of one practitioner, he is at liberty to call in another. It seems to me that if we adopt the principle embodied in the existing Act that all sufferers from this disease must submit to treatment, it stands to reason that they must be required to carry out the treatment provided for.

Hon. J. E. DODD: With the permission of the Committee I will withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 43—agreed to.

Clause 44—Amendment of section 242f:

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I move an amendment—

“That the proposed subsection be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—(2) If such practitioner has reason to believe that a patient who is suffering from venereal disease intends, notwithstanding such warning, to contract marriage, he shall forthwith notify such belief to the Commissioner, who may thereupon inform any person whom, on reasonable grounds, he believes to be the other party to the proposed marriage, that the patient is suffering from such disease, and may give the like information to any parent or guardian of such party. The Commissioner may also take such further action as he deems necessary in accordance with the provisions of this Act. No action for libel or slander shall lie against any medical practitioner for making such notification to the Commissioner in good faith and without malice.”

It will readily be granted that this is one of the contentious clauses of the Bill. In place of what appears in the Bill the Select Committee recommend the insertion of the proposed new section which I have read. The select committee arrived at their decision principally upon the evidence tendered by one of the leading practitioners of Perth, Dr. Trethowan, who stated that

he once had occasion to make it known to a person who was about to contract marriage, that he was suffering from a certain disease, and that if he intended to persist in his intention, the doctor would advise the other party. It will be seen that the duty which devolves upon a private practitioner is anything but enviable, and it was considered by the Select Committee that the proper authority to convey this information should be the Commissioner of Health.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The amendment is inserted on the recommendation of the Federal Council of the British Medical Association. The amendment preserves the principle and if what the Select Committee propose in the amendment is the more desirable way of bringing it about, I have no objection to the alteration.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I would like to see the report of that Federal Council. It seems to me that this interferes with our marriage laws.

Hon. C. SOMMERS: And a good thing too.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Yes, but not in an effective manner. My opinion is that this matter has not been given sufficient consideration. If the Commissioner believes a man to be suffering from venereal disease in Western Australia and that man is going to be married in Queensland, what will the position be then? I merely wish to sound a warning and having done that I shall have performed some service.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is no interference whatever with the marriage laws. The Act as it at present reads, enables a medical man to call attention to the contagious character of the disease and he may warn the patient against contracting marriage until he is certified as cured. All that the amendment does is that where the patient suffering from a contagious disease is likely to infect another by contracting matrimony, he will be warned by the Commissioner of Health, but if he persists in getting married, the Commissioner has performed his duty by having warned the other party. If after such warning, the people concerned choose to get married, there is no further interference. The object of the amendment is to protect a clean and innocent female who may unknowingly be about to enter into a matrimonial alliance with a person suffering from a contagious disease.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: It will be interesting to Mr. Sanderson to know that the evidence which was tendered to the Select Committee and upon which this amendment was framed was the evidence of the representative of the West Australian branch of the British Medical Association, Dr. Trethowan.

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

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Clauses 45, 46—agreed to.

Clause 47—Amendment of Section 242j:

Hon. J. DUFFELL: To all intents and purposes this is the most important clause in the Bill. Certainly it is around this clause that con-

trovery has ranged, and certain members of the community have expressed themselves very freely. The select committee in no way hastily arrived at a decision in regard to this clause. It was after the examination of representatives of all the leading bodies of thought in the State, comprising representatives of the Council of Churches, the Vigilance Committee, the British Medical Association, the chemists and pharmacists, the Children's Court, and all who had taken an interest in this important question. The committee realised the importance of the work in which these people were engaged, so much so that it was after full and mature consideration of the evidence that the committee came to the conclusion in the form of the amendment on the Notice Paper. The committee realised that although there was opposition in certain directions, which was voiced in no uncertain way, their responsibility was grave and far-reaching. There was a duty to perform not only to the present generation, but to generations yet unborn. One of the greatest evils of the present day is the scourge of venereal disease. It was placed before the committee by some of the representatives that the amendment was nothing more than the old C.D. Act couched in a new dress. The committee pointed out the difference between the C.D. Act and the present Bill. The C.D. Act was administered by the police authorities. It brought into operation the guarantee of professional prostitutes and to all intents and purposes freed from contagion those who cohabited with them. The main thing under the C.D. Act was that it was administered by the Police Department, whereas the Act in question and the proposed amendments were not connected with the Police Department at all. They are to be administered solely by the Health Department. It was also pointed out to the committee that to vest such enormous powers in one man was a very serious thing. Not that any of those who appeared before the committee had any doubt as to the integrity or standing of the Commissioner of Health, but the Commissioner could delegate his powers, which they thought was a serious matter. Still, the proposed amendments were not like the laws of the Medes and Persians; they could be altered. They were subject to alteration, deletion, or amendment as the times justified. The committee, after due consideration, and bearing in mind the evidence submitted, decided on the amendment which is now before the Committee. It was realised that an advisory board as suggested would obviate to a great extent, probably altogether, any danger such as was suggested by those opposing the amendment. Reference was made to certain cases—very few indeed—which had come under notice. One case in particular, in which a young woman on one occasion was brought up for compulsory examination, and who upon investigation was found to be absolutely clean and above suspicion. But this case occurred in England a considerable time ago, and was brought forward under the C.D. Act, which was very different from the Bill which we are now considering, and the Act which it is proposed to amend. The Health Act of 1915 has been found to be practically inoperative so far as sheeting home or bringing to justice members of the community who were

infected with this scourge. A case was cited wherein a certain woman was known to be suffering from venereal disease and was reported by men who had been infected by this woman. No less than six instances were cited before the committee, principally soldiers, but when the woman was approached in regard to the matter she defied the authorities to take any action.

Hon. J. E. DODD: Why did they not get a signed certificate?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Not one of the men who gave information was prepared to give a signed statement. The Act provides that information must be given to the Commissioner of Health, and he is the only person who can take action, and that only when he has a signed statement to act upon. The Commissioner was absolutely certain that the woman was suffering from disease, but he was powerless. It has been stated that the woman was of weak mind, but there was not a jot or tittle of evidence before the committee to lead them to that conclusion. Unfortunately that was not the only case which came under notice. Another case was reported wherein a woman supposed to be highly respectable was suffering from disease and had infected others. A case was brought under the notice of the committee of a young girl, not yet 14 years of age, who was in a very advanced state of syphilis. In that case, of course, the girl, being of tender years, was brought before the Children's Court, though not until after moral suasion had been brought to bear upon her by one or two who are performing a magnificent work in the city of Perth to-day—I refer to the women police. The existing Act provides not so much for the professional prostitute. It is not the professional prostitute who causes so much worry and anxiety. If she sees any signs of disease she is ready and willing to report herself for treatment. The greatest scourge here to-day is that which is being spread—I grieve to say it—by the amateurs, by young girls engaged in business, young girls without homes and living in rooms. They infest the Esplanade, the parks, and the public streets. I consider it is absolutely necessary that the powers which we ask for should be granted so as to enable the measure to become a workable Act. What the select committee propose in this connection by way of amendment, is, I learned this afternoon, already in force in Victoria. That State practically based its Venereal Disease Act on the Health Bill of Western Australia. I feel it my duty to use all my power of moral suasion to induce hon. members to accept the amendments proposed. I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the clause:—“(iii.) By the deletion of the proviso in Subsection (1), and by inserting at the end the following new sections, to stand as 242jj and 242jjj:—242jj. (1) In the case of females the Commissioner shall, before taking any action under Section 242j, submit to an advisory committee, constituted as hereinafter mentioned, the evidence on which he proposes to take such action, and the said committee shall decide on the action, if any, to be taken by him. (2) The

advisory committee shall be appointed by the Governor, and shall consist of four members. The Commissioner shall be chairman of the committee, but shall not be entitled to vote on any matter submitted to the committee. The remaining three shall consist of two females (one of whom shall be a duly qualified medical practitioner) and one male. The committee shall meet from time to time when summoned by the Commissioner, and may make rules and regulations for the proper conduct of its business. All proceedings of the advisory committee shall be held in camera. 242jjj. It shall be lawful for a court established under the State Children Act, 1907, at any time either before or after committal of any child, to order an examination to be made of such child by a duly qualified medical practitioner, either male or female, if there is reason to suspect that such child is suffering from venereal disease. In the event of the medical practitioner reporting that any child is so suffering, the court shall forthwith notify the Commissioner in writing, who may thereupon deal with such child as provided in subsections two to eight, inclusive, of Section 242j.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have no objection to the amendment. The Commissioner of Public Health has in certain quarters been quite wrongly represented as an individual grasping out for power to do all sorts of things of his own initiative. The Commissioner would, in fact, be only too glad to be relieved of some of the responsibility which necessarily attaches to action of this kind. One objection which has been raised to the proposal of the select committee is that it might have the effect of bringing the names of persons before more people than is absolutely necessary. I think there may possibly be something in that objection; and, so far as I can see, that board would have to depend on the evidence of the Commissioner. The board should be quite competent to decide upon that evidence if submitted without any names at all. Therefore, I move an amendment on the amendment—

“That after ‘action’ at the end of the fifth line of the proposed Section 242 j.j., there be inserted: ‘but without revealing the name of the person against whom action is contemplated.’”

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I have heard you, Mr. Chairman, on at least two occasions recommend to members of the Committee that amendments should be placed on the Notice Paper, as a great assistance not only to yourself, Sir, but principally, I take it, to members of the Committee. This amendment is not on the Notice Paper, and no one is more anxious than I am to discuss strictly the precise amendment which is before the Committee. You, Sir, at any rate, will appreciate how difficult sometimes, and how impossible occasionally, it is to grasp the full meaning of an amendment in its bearings on other clauses connected with the particular clause under discussion, unless there has been ample opportunity to consider the amendment. It might be contended that the particular amendment which we are now discussing—and no

other—is quite easy to discuss. My own statement of the position is that on a matter of this most grave importance I refuse to discuss an amendment which does not appear on the Notice Paper. I have no desire whatever to offer any factious opposition, or to indulge in any illegitimate means to thwart the proper conduct of business in this Chamber; but, bearing in mind the warning which you yourself, Mr. Chairman, have given, to my certain knowledge, twice—and I believe on much less important matters—I protest against the discussion of the Colonial Secretary’s amendment until it has been put on the Notice Paper and we have had full time to consider it.

Hon. J. EWING: For reasons other than those given by Mr. Sanderson, I desire to say that I am not prepared to discuss these amendments. I have not had the time, and I do not think any other member has had the time, to read the evidence given before the select committee. I started to read it last night after getting home, but I have not got through half of it yet. I think members should have the opportunity of reading the evidence before deciding on this important Bill. Therefore, after other hon. members who may desire to speak to-night have spoken, I shall move that progress be reported.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If the only objection of hon. members is that the words of my amendment on the amendment have not been placed on the Notice Paper, I shall be happy to withdraw it and place it on the Notice Paper with a view to recommitment of the Bill. If that course will enable hon. members to proceed with the consideration of amendments which are on the Notice Paper, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment on the amendment.

Amendment on amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. E. DODD: The select committee have recommended the amendments which are now before the Chair. I understand that the proviso which it is now proposed to delete from the Bill provides for a signed statement. Let me say that I appreciate to the full the position of the Government, of the Public Health Commissioner, and also of the select committee. In regard to the Public Health Commissioner I had fairly close association with him during my term of office, and I cannot associate myself with any attack that has been made, or is likely to be made, upon him; because I believe him to be a thoroughly capable officer and, in addition, to be honest, sincere and conscientious in his desires and objects. But I think we are going too far with this legislation. In reading up the debates of 1915 I was struck with the remarks made by various members and with the extent to which they have since changed their minds in the short space of 18 months. I cannot blame them for this, because I realise that some of the evidence given before the select committee is sufficient justification for a change of mind. But I do think it is proposed that we should go too

far, and that we will be leaving open an avenue for malicious people to make statements before the Commissioner of Public Health. It is claimed that in the interests of a girl against whom a statement may be made, we are to appoint a court of appeal. Personally, I believe that any girl would rather face the Commissioner himself than appear before a court of appeal.

Hon. J. Duffell: Then there would be no necessity for her to appear before the court of appeal.

Hon. J. E. DODD: The court of appeal would be a farce. Not only girls, but youths and young men will be arraigned, and many of them will be made the butts of spiteful and malicious statements. Seeing that the Act has been in force only 18 months, and that not one-third of the public know of its existence, surely we could afford to allow it to continue for a little longer. We have had some good work done under the Act. If the Commissioner would issue a leaflet to every individual upon the Assembly roll, pointing out the dangers of venereal disease, and where and how the victims can obtain treatment, it would be very much better than the step proposed to be taken. Only a fortnight ago reference was made in the "Daily News" to the activities of an anonymous letter writer at Bunbury, whose delight, it appears, was to select soldiers' wives and others for malicious attack. This is only a sample of what we may expect if these proposals are allowed to go through. In regard to the girl mentioned by Mr. Duffell, I admit it is a very difficult case, but surely in a case such as that the inspector has a right to give the necessary signed statement. I prefer anything to opening an avenue to the anonymous letter writer. Mrs. Dugdale, in answer to the chairman of the select committee, said that some people were very malicious and that she thought that if we got the girls to give a signed statement of their own accord, it would be very much better. In answer to another question, Mrs. Dugdale said that there was not a great deal of difficulty in getting girls to give signed statements. To be quite fair, I must admit that Mrs. Dugdale also said that she thought the Commissioner should have the proposed power. We are going too far in the direction of regulating everybody. The Labour Government went quite far enough in this direction.

The Colonial Secretary: Your Bill was much more stringent than this one.

Hon. J. E. DODD: In a recent Bill we provided for the taking of children from their homes, and now we are asked to give power to detain prisoners until they are cured. Syphilis has been known to take five years in its cure. Are we going to detain prisoners five years beyond the terms of their sentences? We attempt to regulate almost every act of every individual from birth till death. Even before we are born, so to speak, we are compelled to have a doctor and a midwife. Then we are compelled to take a name, although it

be a name that we afterwards regard with aversion throughout life. After that we are compelled to be registered, compelled to be vaccinated, compelled to go to school, and just when we are beginning to learn how to enjoy ourselves we are compelled to give up our Saturday afternoons to drill. Later in life, at 21 years of age, we are compelled to put our names on the electoral roll, and when we vote we are largely compelled to give our votes to a man in whom we do not believe. Last of all when we die, we are compelled to be buried on a week-day and not on Sunday. Presently we shall leave off being human beings and become mere machines. As I have said, I appreciate the difficulties of the Government and the Commissioner of Public Health, and the select committee, but I hope this Committee will pay some attention to the danger of malicious individuals coming along with their anonymous letters and attacking someone against whom they may have some vendetta. Personally, I prefer the Government's proposal to that of the select committee.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Dodd at the outset said he did not propose to utter a word against the Commissioner of Public Health. To my mind it is an insult to the Commissioner to suggest that he would take action on the strength of an anonymous letter. As the Bill stands, the Commissioner is supposed to satisfy himself beyond any reasonable doubt. To say that a man upon whom so serious an obligation is cast would act on the strength of an anonymous letter is to say that he is totally unfit for the responsibility with which he is entrusted. The Commissioner will have to satisfy himself beyond any reasonable doubt that some person is not only suffering from this disease but is a menace to the community, in that he is spreading the disease. Having satisfied himself to this extent the Commissioner will be called upon to submit the facts—I suggest without the name—to a committee consisting of one lady doctor, one other lady and another man, appointed by the Governor-in-Council. To these he must submit the facts on which he has satisfied himself that some person is not only suffering from the disease but is spreading it, and he will have to satisfy the committee that his evidence on that point is sound. Mr. Dodd declared that anyone against whom such action might be contemplated would rather face the Commissioner than the committee. But it is not contemplated that the girl will have to face either the Commissioner or the committee. The Commissioner will satisfy himself that the suspected person is infecting others and refuses to be treated. He will then submit to the committee the evidence on which he has satisfied himself of those facts; and if the committee be also satisfied, the Commissioner will then write confidentially to the person concerned, calling upon that person to consult his or her doctor.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: Suppose he does not.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If they refuse to consult a doctor then action is taken as laid down in the Bill to compel them to do so.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: So they should be compelled.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Ultimately there is compulsion if the party concerned refuses to submit. Mr. Dodd has said that this Bill, which has been in operation for 18 months, has done good work. That is so. Even in its amended form and without the protection put in by the Committee it is not nearly so drastic as the Bill introduced by the Government of which Mr. Dodd was a member. Although the Bill has done good work its imperfections have been revealed and particularly in this one case, the difficulty of obtaining signed statements and the impossibility of compelling people to submit themselves for treatment. These people are the most dangerous and doing the most harm. When the Bill was before the House in 1915 I supported the attitude taken up by Dr. Saw. Although Dr. Saw's opinions have been freely quoted during the last week or two, I remember that he was one of those who recognised the great necessity for legislation along these lines. I am not at all sure if he were here to-night, and had the evidence which was placed before the Committee in his hands, and knew how this Act had operated during the last 18 months, that he would not see the reason for modifying his views as I have done.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I was under the impression that the majority of the members of the Council were in favour of the recommendations of the Committee, and was going to make a dignified and brief protest against the procedure and resume my seat. The discussion, however, has revealed a different state of affairs. At the same time I do wish that progress could be reported. I have read some of the report of the select committee and wish to examine it further. It supports my views on the question in general. May I be permitted here to pay a tribute to the work of the select committee for having collected so much valuable evidence. It is quite possible that in other circumstances I might have supported the committee without any further consideration of this Bill. Unfortunately at present I am not prepared to do that. If it had been the opinion of the Committee sitting here to-night that the recommendations of the select committee were to go through, I would have contented myself with a very brief protest against the whole thing, lock, stock, and barrel. What has happened to Mr. Dodd after 30 years spent in the ranks of the Labour party? He is throwing off the yoke. I congratulate him warmly. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to sit side by side with him and continue to make these protests. I support everything he says. With regard to the remarks of the Commissioner, on page 4 it will be found that he says:—

Why don't we demand a certificate of freedom from venereal disease from men or women who marry?

That is the genesis of this Bill. The report goes on to refer to the washing of fruit before eating it, and other matters of that kind. This is the position of affairs that everything we have sound and wise should

be on the Statute book, and made compulsory. I sympathise with the Colonial Secretary. This is not a matter of public finance or of party politics. There is no doubt that as head of the department he must feel and realise that he occupies a very responsible position, just as the Commissioner for Public Health also realises it. There is no question that these gentlemen are anxious to do the wisest thing with regard to every particular case which comes up. I have to deal with the circumstances which have arisen and if anyone moves to report progress in order that we may understand the measure more fully, I will support him. I have tried to comfort those people who have interviewed me on this subject, as well as to comfort myself, by saying that it does not matter what is on the Statute book of this country, because no one takes the slightest notice of it. To justify that statement I would turn to the report of the Commissioner for Public Health wherein he says, "during the year under review the medical inspection of school children has been a dead letter."

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the hon. member to confine himself to the discussion of the clause.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: This Bill will be a dead letter. I deeply regret that my colleague Dr. Saw is not here. Reference has been made to his attitude on the Bill and I would ask hon. members to read what he said when that Bill was introduced. I wish to wash my hands of the whole business. I refuse to take any further responsibility under the conditions which now exist. We should report progress in order that we may familiarise ourselves with the valuable evidence which the committee have collected.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: With regard to the remarks just made by Mr. Dodd, I would point out that in all cases where infected persons are willing to report themselves, either to their own family doctor or to the Commissioner for Public Health himself, there will be no necessity whatever to bring the name or the subject in any shape or form before the Advisory Committee.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: Suppose it is someone who is not infected?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: There is no doubt in my mind but that the Commissioner for Public Health would thoroughly satisfy himself that the person accused was one suffering from the disease, before bringing him or her under the notice of the Advisory Committee. Only one case came before the select committee in connection with which it was found after examination that the person concerned was absolutely free and without infection. That was a case which occurred under the old Contagious Diseases Act of England and Wales. We can be confident that there will not be the slightest ground to lead us to believe that any person would, as a result of malice, be brought before the Commissioner under the compulsory clauses. It is necessary that all persons suffering from venereal disease should be segregated from the rest of the population. I am quite satisfied from the

evidence which has been placed before the select committee that these unfortunates who would be infected will be only too willing to avail themselves of these provisions.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I rise with reluctance to address myself to such an unsavoury and indelicate subject, and regret that necessity exists for speaking upon it. I desire to read a portion of the evidence given by the Commissioner for Public Health in which he states—

For the year ended 30th June, 1917, we have received 2,147 notifications of venereal disease, and the new cases, so far as we can judge, numbered 1,536.

I do not think any apology is needed to address oneself to such a state of affairs as exists. I would like at this stage to add my thanks to the select committee for the very comprehensive and first class report which they presented to us, a report expressed as it is in such well chosen English. We have before us a thorough exposition of the position from all points of view. In the figures I have given it must be patent that something is necessary to cure such a state of affairs. The figures which I have quoted are those of voluntarily reported cases. There are lots of others we hear nothing of. We know this disease, like smallpox, is contagious, and therefore under the circumstances the obvious necessity is to remove the source of contagion. When we hear protests made such as came from Mr. Doid, we must remember that the only people that the compulsory clauses are expected to deal with are those who will not do anything for themselves. The only object of the amendment is to give the Commissioner power to deal with those people. Fear is expressed as to the terrible results which will follow in dealing with innocent people, yet we have it in evidence that no fewer than six men who were infected by one person would not give the slightest evidence against that person. If a case like that exists, what class of man would he be who would make an accusation against an innocent girl? If anonymous letters reach the Commissioner, what sort of man will he be if he does not sift the matter to the very bottom? Let us place ourselves in the position of the Commissioner, and let us imagine a person whispering that someone is infected. We would say "Is there any foundation for it, and what is the motive?" Surely we can trust an officer like the Commissioner, and if we cannot we can employ someone whom we can trust. And then if the law is being carried out mischievously it can be altered. The question seems to be one of acting on the advice of practical experts, or on the advice of those who bring forward theories. There are certain members of the public who write to the Press, and there is a band of women who are taking an interest in this subject, and all credit to them for doing so. But, I venture to say, anything they can advance must be only theoretical. In my opinion the only people who can deal with this matter are those who are the sufferers or who have been sufferers, those who have been attending the sufferers, and medical men and nurses. All the theories advanced by well-intentioned people are not equal to the results of the expert who has gained experience. Theories are taken from

books and reports, and the practical expert can get these just as easily as those who advocate them. Moreover, in the present case the Commissioner has had twelve months' experience of the Act, and all he asks now is that the deficiencies shall be made up. We find that the people who are taking a lead in this matter know actually nothing about it, and in support of that I would like to quote some of the evidence which was given by Archbishop Riley. These are the questions and answers from the evidence—

Would you allow a woman or a man to continue to be a menace and danger to the community because no one would sign a statement concerning them?—I think I would if that is the only way they can be got at.

Would you sooner allow them to go at large?—Yes, rather than run the risk.

Just imagine that! Everyone knows the effect of a man or woman suffering from this disease being allowed to be at large, and yet here is a gentleman supposed to lead public opinion practically saying that these people should have every opportunity of spreading the disease.

Then you are not inclined to pay much attention to these cases which have been quoted?—I would rather have a few cases like this than interfere with the liberty of the people.

We have also been told that the greatest source of danger is not the prostitute but the amateur girl who has contracted the disease and who is afraid to say anything at all about it to her parents. A number of these cases have been brought to the notice of the Commissioner! What would you suggest in cases of that kind? What means would you adopt of having those girls treated?—There you have me. I have not thought it out. I do not know what you would do in such cases.

Here is a man attempting to lead public opinion against an expert who has studied the question from A to Z, and seen it in all its phases, read all the literature in connection with it, and having gained all that experience Archbishop Riley comes along and instead of helping him, tries to put obstacles in the way. The evidence goes on—

But it has been explained to those girls?—Then they are afraid their people will know.

They argue the point with the Commissioner?—Then they are abnormal. I do not know what I would do with them.

Do you mean to say that the health of the community is to be sacrificed because of the false delicacy of these girls?—I am not thinking of the girls who have gone wrong, but of the girls who have not gone wrong. I am hopeless, I am afraid.

I am trying to get at some way to deal with these very cases?—I have not thought out these cases. I admit it is a serious problem.

What is the use of evidence like that? It shows that Archbishop Riley has never thought the matter out. He admits he knows nothing about it, and yet he makes speeches and throws

obstacles in the way of those who are trying their best to get rid of this scourge. If the alterations proposed are not satisfactory it will not be long before Parliament meets again, and further amendments can be introduced. But the great point is to deal with this matter efficaciously. It is no use surrounding it with sentiment. If it were any other disease such as smallpox, there would be no trouble.

Progress reported.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 6th March, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented," see "Votes and Proceedings."]

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Message received notifying that the Assembly had disagreed with the amendment made by the Council.

BILL—CURATOR OF INTESTATE ESTATES.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 27th February; Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair, the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 20, 21—agreed to.

Clause 22—Curator to keep accounts:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: This is a legal Bill which I have not read. It seems a matter of some importance, but I will accept unreservedly the assurance of the Minister that it is all right, and that there are no contentious clauses in it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I explained the provisions of the Bill three weeks ago. It has been on the Notice Paper ever since. It was discussed in Committee up to a certain stage and a point was raised in connection with one clause, and the debate adjourned to enable a member to look into it. The Bill is now under discussion in Committee for the second time.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 23 to 30—agreed to.

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

Recommittal.

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, Bill recommitted for the further consideration of Clause 3.

Clause 3—Interpretation:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

"That in line 1 of the interpretation of 'Distribute' after 'pay' the word 'deliver' be inserted."

This amendment is made at the suggestion of the Crown Solicitor, who points out that when there is only one person, the estate cannot be divided. It is therefore necessary that the word "deliver" should be inserted.

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

Bill again reported with an amendment.

House adjourned at 8.54 p.m.

BILLS (6)—FIRST READING.

1, Land Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Premier.

2, Dividend Duties Act Amendment.

3, General Loan and Inscribed Stock Amendment.

4, Stamp Act Amendment.

5, Totalisator Duty Act Amendment.

6, Treasury Bonds Deficiency Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Colonial Treasurer.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT. Council's Amendment.

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

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

New Clause—Add the following clause, to stand as No. 6:—

Disorderly behaviour at meeting. (See Com.,

No. 17 of 1911, Section 182e.)

6. A section is inserted in the principal Act as follows:—

188b. (1.) Any person who, at any public meeting to which this section applies, acts in a disorderly manner for the purpose of preventing the transaction of the business for which the meeting is held shall be guilty of an offence against this Act. Penalty—Five pounds or one month's imprisonment. (2.) This section applies to any lawful public political meeting held in relation to any election of members of Parliament between the date of the issue of the writ for the election and the date of the return of the writ.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: At present we have no provision precisely on the lines of the proposed new clause, which has been taken from the Commonwealth Act. Under our existing law, if any disorderly conduct takes place at a public meeting redress can only be had under the Police Act. The proposed new clause would bring our law into line with the Commonwealth law. I do not know that there is any particular need for it, because within my recollection there have been one or two prosecutions for disorderly conduct at public political meetings. In one case arising at Guildford the magistrate sent the offender to gaol for seven days. Our Police Act deals with disorderly conduct in a public place, whereas the proposed new clause narrows down the offence to disorderly behaviour at a lawful public political meeting. I do not know that I would suggest the clause if I had to redraft the Bill again,