

British Minister referred to the position of farming in Canada as follows:—

In 1938 Canadian Prairie farmers had debts amounting to £85,000,000 and assets totalling £25,000,000.

He referred also to Australian farmers—

In Australia the average price of wheat over nine years to 1938 was 25 per cent. less than the cost of production.

Obviously it is impossible to expect farmers to carry out, under those conditions, obligations which they contracted in past years under totally different conditions. Again, we have the statement of Senator Cameron, Minister for Aircraft Production, criticising an arbitration court judge by stating that evidently the judge was not aware what the purchasing power of the Australian pound was a few years ago as compared with its purchasing power of only 8s. today. If that is correct—I shall not dispute the statement though I do not think the Australian pound has gone back so far—then the purchasing power of wheat today, at 4s. per bushel, amounts to only 1s. 7d. People can hardly be expected to meet today, when wheat is 1s. 7d. per bushel, obligations contracted at a time when wheat brought 5s. per bushel. There is a very strong case for a partial form of moratorium in the farming industry. Personally I regret that Western Australia has not been allowed to take a larger part in the war effort. We lead in war enlistments and in war savings, and apparently we lead in economical administration as well. If allowed to do so we could, I believe, play a much larger part in the war effort.

Apparently some people do not realise what we have at stake today, because they are using what might be termed the war agony to gain advantages which they could not secure under ordinary conditions. I regret also that we have people defying the law. The parties in the Perth baking industry are today defying the law and resorting to force. That is the Hitler method—you give, or I take. We hope after the war to establish a rule of law in international affairs. Before we can establish that law, we have to effect a change in the hearts of men. How can we hope to establish the rule of law in international affairs when we cannot establish it in our own petty lives? What appears to be forgotten is that today we are fighting not for better conditions after the war but for the mere right to live,

absolutely fighting for survival. We have still a long way to go before we shall achieve that unity of purpose which is so desirable today.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 14th October, 1942.

	PAGE
Motion: Industries Assistance Act, to disallow drought relief regulation	780
Bills: Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment, 1R.	781
Perth Dental Hospital Land, 1R.	791
Albany Reserve Allotments, 1R.	791
Water Boards Act Amendment, 3R., passed	791
Justices Act Amendment, 3R.	791
Criminal Code Amendment (No. 1), 3R.	791
Public Authorities (Postponement of Elections), 2R.	794

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

MOTION—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT.

To Disallow Drought Relief Regulation.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by Hon. A. Thomson:—

That Regulation 9, as shown in the schedule of regulations made under the Industries Assistance Act, 1915-1940, as published in the "Government Gazette" on the 5th June, 1942, and laid on the Table of the House on the 4th August, 1942, be and is hereby disallowed.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [2.20]: Notwithstanding the very strong and, in my opinion, unwarranted terms used by Mr. Thomson when he moved the motion, I feel sure I can show the House that there is no ground whatever for the arguments employed by him and that consequently the regulation should not be disallowed. In the first place, the hon. member told the House that his motion could be termed the third attempt made by this Chamber to induce the State Government to carry out the terms under which the drought relief money was provided by the Commonwealth Government. He referred to the money as a grant. On previous occasions I have emphasised the fact that it is not a grant; it is a loan for which the State is responsible and which the State will have to repay under the terms

of the Commonwealth Act governing the advance. The hon. member also consistently referred to a sum of £570,000 as having been made available by the Commonwealth Government for this purpose.

I have previously informed the House—and I think the hon. member ought to know—that a sum of £570,000 was not advanced to the State Government for this purpose. The actual amount advanced was £497,000, and there is a large difference between that sum and £570,000. Then the hon. member proceeded to say that the attitude of the State Government was that the money was not advanced for the purpose of drought relief. Here I desire to emphasise that the money has been used for no other purpose, and that the State Government has carried out its undertaking with regard to drought relief granted to farmers. Members must bear in mind that the money was provided by the Commonwealth Government for a specific purpose, namely, that relief might be given to those farmers who were suffering as a result of drought conditions. That is the only purpose to which the money was applied. It was available for no other purpose. Very briefly, I might reply to the hon. member by saying that in no case where an application was made for relief from this fund was it turned down if it came within the scope of the fund. It is, of course, admitted that after the money was advanced the State Government requested farmers, if they could do so, to re-pay the advance in the first year.

Hon. J. Cornell: That was not made known to the farmers when it was handed out to them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It was made known to the farmers when it was handed out to them.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is the first I have heard of it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Numbers of farmers who received advances from this fund did repay them. All the money was advanced in the one year.

Hon. J. Cornell: They had no option; it was taken out of their proceeds.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not agree with the hon. member. The money repaid within the first year was employed in making further advances from the fund. Members will recall that, in discussing this matter last session, I stressed the desirableness of making available, for further ad-

vances where necessary, the moneys so repaid. That has been done. The number of applications for relief during the past year has naturally been less than in the first year, and there are several reasons for that. Although Mr. Thomson mentioned certain sums as having been advanced during the past year, I understand that the amount he quoted is not all that will be advanced this year. Numbers of applications are still being dealt with. So, while he mentioned that particular sum of money because it appears in the report of the Agricultural Bank Commissioners, it does not necessarily follow that that is the full amount to be advanced.

Hon. A. Thomson: Those are the only figures available to me as a private member.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member has taken these figures from the report of the Agricultural Bank Commissioners, and that report is made out to a certain date, and the figures are absolutely correct. It cannot be said, and Mr. Thomson has no proof to the contrary, that these moneys have been used for any other purposes. The fact of the matter is that all advances which have been repaid by the farmers have been received, in the first place, by the Agricultural Bank and have then been paid into a trust account created at the Treasury in connection with this matter, and that money is still available. If it is required by the Agricultural Bank for further advances to clients, it will be made available.

Hon. H. L. Roche: At the same rate of interest?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Certainly. If it is not required it will remain there until it is paid back to the Commonwealth Government in accordance with the Commonwealth Act. We cannot do business in any other way. The one suggestion underlying Mr. Thomson's remarks yesterday was that this money should be made available to all farmers.

Hon. A. Thomson: No.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If the hon. member will read his remarks he will see that that is the construction that can be placed upon them. He then went on in his speech to urge the disallowance of the particular regulation mentioned on the ground that 5 per cent. interest might be demanded on the money advanced. I have been wonder-

ing whether he has read these regulations, because the one which he desires to disallow has nothing whatever to do with the payment of 5 per cent. interest.

Hon. A. Thomson: Except that it is joined up with the other regulations and can be assumed to be used for that purpose.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member can assume anything at all. I have already told him that this money is received in the first place by the Agricultural Bank and then paid into a trust fund at the Treasury, and is not available for any other purposes whatsoever. The regulation providing for 5 per cent. interest is one dealing with advances made by the Agricultural Bank under the Industries Assistance Act to farmers who are not necessarily affected by drought conditions at all. As a matter of fact, there has been only a comparatively small amount of money advanced in that way. In the majority of cases where that money has been made available, it has been advanced to primary producers, such as tobacco growers—which has nothing whatever to do with drought relief.

There have been other instances where certain farmers have received advances under the Industries Assistance Act—only a few, I am advised—and the amount of money involved is comparatively small. It has been advanced for the purpose of buying stock and, in some cases, I believe, for the purchase of super or something of that sort, but not because of drought conditions. It is unfair for the hon. member to suggest that this drought relief money is being used for the ordinary purposes of the Agricultural Bank, or the Industries Assistance Board. It has not been used for those purposes and will not be.

Hon. A. Thomson: Is it lying in a trust fund and not being used at all by the Government?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is in a trust fund at the Treasury, along with other trust funds.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Are you going to hold it there for another four years?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It will be held there in accordance with the Commonwealth Act. I do not see any point in the suggestion that this money should be advanced to certain farmers just because it happens to be there. From experience it

would appear that the farmers do not want it, unless it is necessary for them to carry on.

Hon. J. Cornell: What machinery is being used for drought relief payments?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Agricultural Bank.

Hon. J. Cornell: But there are no regulations empowering it to collect.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know what the hon. member refers to, but surely he does not suggest that the Agricultural Bank has not authority to collect.

Hon. J. Cornell: Why did it ask to have the regulation passed?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The regulations are here, and I take it they are absolutely necessary. If there is any point in the hon. member's interjection it is that there should be no regulations.

Hon. J. Cornell: It collected money without them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not able to reply to that remark, but I do know that the regulations in existence at the present time have been formulated for providing that effect shall be given to the conditions under which the State Government has received this money from the Commonwealth Government. Any member who reads these regulations must admit that that is so. Because I believe that a number of members have not perhaps had the opportunity to read these regulations, I propose to quote the relevant one. That which Mr. Thomson bases his argument for disallowance on, reads as follows:—

This regulation is made for the purposes of Subsection (6) of Section 14 of the Industries Assistance Act, 1915-40, and shall apply only in respect of advances made or commodities supplied after the commencement of the Industries Assistance Act Amendment Act, 1940 (No. 42 of 1940), and only in respect of such advances or commodities when the same are made out of or supplied with moneys in the hands of the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank of Western Australia other than moneys loaned to the State for purposes of drought relief under the Commonwealth of Australia Loan (Drought Relief) Act, 1940 (No. 71 of 1940).

The reason he states is that further on in the regulation it provides that the rate of interest shall be 5 per cent. Regulation 8 (5) reads as follows:—

The rate of interest payable in respect of such advances shall be five pounds per centum per annum, or such other rate as may from

time to time be fixed by the Board and notified in the "Government Gazette."

Regulation 9 is the one which deals particularly with the drought relief, and it is interesting to note that it lays down in very specific terms just how and under what conditions this money shall be dealt with. It reads—

(1) This regulation is made for the purposes of Subsection (6) of Section 14 of the Industries Assistance Act, 1915-40, and shall apply in respect of advances made out of or commodities supplied with moneys in the hands of the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank of Western Australia which have been loaned to the State by the Commonwealth for purposes of drought relief under the Commonwealth of Australia Loan (Drought Relief) Act, 1940 (No. 71 of 1940), after the commencement of the Industries Assistance Act Amendment Act, 1940 (No. 42 of 1940).

(2) Where applications are made under this regulation the advances shall be made or the commodities shall be supplied under the provisions of the Industries Assistance Act, 1915-1940, by the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank of Western Australia for the purposes of drought relief out of the moneys referred to in paragraph (1) of this regulation.

(3) Every application for an advance under this regulation shall be addressed to the said Commissioners, and shall be lodged with the manager of the local branch of the Agricultural Bank.

(4) The provisions of Regulations 2, 4, 5 and 6 of these regulations, with such adaptations as may be necessary, shall apply and be deemed to be incorporated in and form part of this regulation.

Then the regulation proceeds to provide for circumstances that will probably prevail in different cases—

(5) The advance made or the moneys owing for the commodities supplied shall be repayable to the Commissioners in the following manner:—

(a) Where the Commissioners are of the opinion that the financial position of the borrower is satisfactory, and provided advances made from Commonwealth loan funds are repaid in full, the Commissioners may redvance the sum collected in respect of the advances made during the 1942-43 season, either wholly or in part, and spread repayments over the balance of the loan period, or may fund such debt under the Act and spread repayments over a period of years, or over the last three years of the Commonwealth loan period.

(b) In other cases the Commissioners may redvance the sum collected each year, together with further advances, where necessary, and such arrangement to continue until the borrower's financial position is such that moneys may be redvanced to the borrower and re-

payments in respect of such advances spread over a period or funded, under conditions as set out in the preceding paragraph.

Hon. J. Cornell: What happened in the years 1941 and 1942?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The same thing would apply there.

Hon. J. Cornell: Under what regulations?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Under the Industries Assistance Act regulations.

Hon. J. Cornell: Those regulations have been disallowed twice.

Hon. A. Thomson: Disallowed and again promulgated.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member surely would not expect this money to be advanced without any conditions for its repayment?

Hon. A. Thomson: No one suggested that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member suggested that the money be given as a grant.

Hon. A. Thomson: I have not suggested that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is what lies behind the hon. member's argument. The argument is that because there is no particular regulation, there is no authority, according to the ideas of some members, to collect this money.

Hon. A. Thomson: We are asking that it should be granted to the farmers under the same conditions as the money was made available to the State by the Commonwealth Government.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: And it is being granted under those conditions.

Hon. A. Thomson: No, it is not.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The next condition in the regulation reads—

(c) On application, the Commissioners may make advances to liquidate indebtedness due by a settler in respect of sheep to the bill-of-sale holder or licence, and/or for the purpose of restocking with sheep, and to spread the repayment of such advance over the balance of the Commonwealth loan period, or may fund such advance under the Act and spread repayments over a period of years or over the last three years of the Commonwealth loan period.

I have analysed that portion of the regulation so that members may realise that the State Government, through the Agricultural Bank, is carrying out in their entirety the conditions under which this money was advanced by the Commonwealth Government

for drought relief purposes. Paragraph (6) of the regulation reads—

The rate of interest payable in respect of advances made under this regulation shall be the same as that payable by the State in respect of the moneys loaned to the State by the Commonwealth as aforesaid.

Surely there is nothing wrong with that? The next paragraph is as follows:—

(7) Interest in respect of advances made under this regulation shall be calculated as from the date when the advance is made, and shall be payable on the date when the advance or any part thereof is repaid: Provided that, insofar as any such advance was made prior to the 1st day of April, 1942, no interest thereon shall be assessed in respect of the period prior to the said date.

In the first year when the money was made available, the Commonwealth Government provided the whole of the interest charges, but after that date the Commonwealth Government was responsible for only half the interest, the other half being a liability of the State Government, together with liability to repay in full at the expiration of seven years the whole of the amount advanced. The final paragraph reads—

(8) Where in the opinion of the Commissioners it is desirable to do so, the Commissioners may at any time agree in writing with any applicant, or with any creditor of an applicant, for the waiver or postponement of any charge arising under the Act, either wholly or in part, or to any basis or method of application or division of the proceeds of the realisation of any property the subject of any such charge.

I think I have covered the points raised by Mr. Thomson, but I would again refer to the fact that this motion provides for the disallowance of Regulation 9.

Hon. J. Cornell: Is it not Regulation 5? Regulation 9 is the one you have just read.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Regulation 9 is the one the hon. member is anxious to have disallowed.

Hon. J. Cornell: He has not moved to that effect.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes he has; that is contained in the motion. As I have pointed out, the hon. member commenced his argument in favour of the motion by stating that this was the third time an attempt had been made to compel the State Government to do something, and then he proceeded to use arguments about interest and so forth contained in Regulation 8, not in Regulation 9, which has to do with money quite apart from funds for drought relief.

Hon. H. Thomson: Regulation 9 is contained in the motion, and that is what I dealt with.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I know what the hon. member dealt with and what is on the notice paper. A large percentage of the farmers who have received relief from these funds repaid the total amount of the loan in the first year. I am very pleased to know it was possible for them to do so. Many of them had extraordinarily good years; better than they have had for a long period. They realised that if this money was repaid as early as possible, it would then be available for further advances if required, either for them or for other people who had not been quite so fortunate. There were other reasons why it was possible for some of these farmers to repay the money in full, and why there were not so many applications for relief during last year as in the previous year.

First of all there is the point that many farmers experienced a particularly good season in 1941-42. We had a record wheat yield amounting to an average of 14.5 bushels per acre. Then again it was found that the private banks did not require the provision of further moneys for their clients, except in a few cases. This fund was not only for the use of clients of the Agricultural Bank, but the money was loaned for the purpose of meeting the requirements of all farmers suffering from drought conditions. The clients in the marginal areas were provided with money from the Commonwealth marginal area fund to enable them to carry on ordinary farming activities during the 1942-43 season.

Hon. T. Moore: Have the private banks paid up for their clients already?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think so; that is, in cases where the returns from the operations during the year allowed them to do so. Another thing that has perhaps operated in favour of not so many farmers requiring relief from this particular fund was the limitation of area that has been applied to Western Australia, where there has been an acreage restriction. Many of the farmers concerned did not require the same amount of money to enable them successfully to carry on during the season.

Hon. A. Thomson: The average works out at less than £200 per settler.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know what the average is, but I know that every application has been treated on its merits. Apparently it was possible for farmers to use the money, successfully because in many instances they were able to repay the full amount advanced. In cases where they were not able to do so, further money was advanced, and will continue to be advanced if necessary from the same source.

Hon. H. Tuckey: And no application has been refused.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No application that comes within the scope of the fund has been refused. Every case is dealt with on its merits. In some instances the actual amount asked for may not have been granted.

Hon. J. Cornell: Some applicants have been refused money.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If farmers were in the position to carry on, and had not been too severely hit by the drought conditions, there was no reason why money should be made available to them when it was so urgently needed by others who had nothing with which to carry on. I am advised by the bank that, so far as it has any knowledge of possible losses that would accrue from advances from the fund, already the bad and doubtful debts amount to £13,155. This sum will be increased from time to time as a result of abandonments and enlistments. I point out that the State Government is responsible for the advances made. The £13,155 will have to be found by the State, and repaid to the Commonwealth Government by the State when the time arrives.

Members may be interested to know that at present there are approximately 8,000 farmers in the wheat and sheep districts of the State, and that of these some 2,600 applied for assistance through the Federal Drought Relief Fund. I think I have made clear that the State Government is carrying out its arrangements in this connection, and that the money which has been made available has not been used for any other purpose and is not likely to be used for any other purpose. I have also made it clear that, so far as the 5 per cent. to which Mr. Thomson took exception is concerned, that applies only to advances that are quite separate and distinct from drought relief money. It applies only to funds advanced by the Agricultural

Bank in the ordinary course of business and has nothing to do with drought relief. That money for the most part has been advanced to such people as tobacco growers and a few isolated wheat and sheep farmers. There is no ground for the arguments that have been used by Mr. Thomson in moving his motion, and I hope that the case I have put forward is sufficient to convince the House of the necessity of opposing the motion.

HCN. J. CORNELL (South): I am concerned mainly with the repayment of the drought relief advances. In 1940 I strongly supported the passing of a Bill then before the House. The proposal at that time was to amend the Industries Assistance Act so that the drought relief money could be dealt with under the machinery provided in that Act. A strong attempt was made to defeat the Bill, mainly on the part of members of the Country Party. They wanted to insert in the measure the method by which repayment should be made. Other members and I argued that it was almost impossible at such short notice to do that. Consequently, the machinery whereby it would be possible to frame regulations governing the method of repayment was put into the Bill. That provision gave the necessary power for the framing and promulgation of regulations. That was round No. 1.

In round No. 2, prior to the 1941-42 harvest, regulations were promulgated setting out the method for re-collecting the advances. On your casting vote, Mr. President, they were disallowed. I voted to uphold the regulations on that occasion. Early this year round No. 3 was fought, and practically the same regulation as that to which particular exception had been taken was re-introduced, laid on the Table of the House, and disallowed again. I voted for its disallowance. The reason I voted in that direction was that it was futile for this House to disallow a regulation if, say, next week precisely the same regulation was shoved under our noses again.

Hon. A. Thomson: That amounted to flouting Parliament.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Parliament possesses the power to disallow any regulation. When it does so it expects, in the promulgation of a new regulation, to have something more than an alteration in punctuation or the dotting of an "i" or two. The disallowance of a regulation calls for an alteration in

principle. This money was loaned to farmers without any agreement; no farmer signed such a document. I am speaking only of Agricultural Bank clients at the moment. Machinery was provided to empower the Government to make the necessary regulations. Both sets of regulations were disallowed by this House, but the collections went on just the same, on exactly the same basis as was set forth in the disallowed regulations. It now seems from the Chief Secretary's statement that practically the same regulations are going to be put up again for the 1942-43 harvest. I do not know what has become of the funds collected on account of the 1941-42 harvest. A great deal of that money has been repaid. I know of many instances in which the money was collected without the farmer being given any option about repayment. The money was taken from the proceeds of the farm.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: From the proceeds of the previous wheat return.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Agricultural Bank, in effect, said, "You shall render unto Caesar the goods which are Caesar's," and then in some instances took the lot. It then said, "Go back to Caesar and he will reconsider the case"—after having taken everything. I know of innumerable instances of the kind.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What happened to the £13,000?

Hon. J. CORNELL: The farmers walked off and joined the Army, and I advised many of them to do so. One has only to go into the outer wheatbelt and see how men and their families have lived in the last 15 years, the children having had no education, to realise what they have had to contend with. When they ask a member of Parliament his opinion, as they have asked me, what else can be said but, "You had better walk off your holding and join the Army." That is how the shortage has come about. Farmers have walked off their holdings and left the lot. I will vote to disallow the regulations again. If all the money that was advanced in 1941-42 has been finalised, and it was advanced without any regulation, why the necessity for a regulation now? Why, when we rescind a regulation, is another exactly the same in principle re-submitted to Parliament without any alteration?

Hon. A. Thomson: That is a very important point.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I want to know whether we are here as Aunt Sallies, or whether we are here to do what we are asked to do.

Hon. C. B. Williams: To safeguard the State's money.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am not prepared to say whether we are here to safeguard the funds of the Agricultural Bank or State funds generally, but so long as we have the power to disallow a regulation I am going to adhere to the principle I have always upheld, namely, that the object of disallowing a regulation is to ensure that it shall be amended in principle.

The Chief Secretary: What is wrong with the regulation as it is at present?

Hon. J. CORNELL: It will be brought in again for the next harvest. If the Minister will take the two regulations which have been disallowed and compare them with this one, he will find that they practically square with each other. There is no easement for the farmers, who have no say as to whether or not their proceeds shall be taken. The position has not been altered. The whole of their proceeds are taken. Then they can return and ask for some more money. I know a number of men—

Hon. A. Thomson: So do I, unfortunately, who walked off.

Hon. J. CORNELL: —who said "No more of this for me!" Recently I had the honour of presiding over a soldier settlers' conference and I had to report that the land committee had had no more than about four meetings. I pointed out that there were one or two fundamental reasons for that. At one time the committee used to meet every fortnight. One reason for the change is that soldier settlers under the Agricultural Bank are tired of going to the bank. There is no question whether or not they are satisfied with the bank.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I would say they are satisfied.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The yell that was raised when I so much as suggested to the conference that some might be satisfied, nearly cracked the walls!

Hon. C. B. Williams: Yet the manager of the bank received a good hearing at the conference.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Of course he did! He always does. The hon. member would receive a good hearing.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The manager told the truth.

Hon. J. CORNELL: He told his own story. The hon. member cannot get up and speak for his constituents affected by drought relief. He never visits them; but I happen to get amongst them.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I lived for 32 years in my electorate and you have lived in it for only six years.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am putting up a case for the settlers in the agricultural portion of the South Province and I repeat that the hon. member has not been there for years.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is wrong; it is useless talking to you!

Hon. J. CORNELL: If the hon. member will interject, he must expect something in return.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The question whether hon. members visit their constituencies often or not has nothing to do with the motion. I must ask the hon. member to proceed without personalities.

Hon. C. B. Williams interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member must keep quiet.

Hon. J. CORNELL: All I was saying was that it is by personal contact with the electors of the agricultural portion of the South Province that I am able to speak as I am speaking today. The hon. member—

The PRESIDENT: Now, now, now!

Hon. J. CORNELL: I may refer to my colleague!

The PRESIDENT: I hope personalities will cease.

Hon. J. CORNELL: This is not a personality. The hon. member interjected that the settlers were satisfied with the bank. I told him he had not seen them. There is no personality in that.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You do not know whether or not I have.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am not much perturbed, because I do not think the men I am pleading for will add considerably to the debt, at the end of another year as others did in 1941-42.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East): This money was never advanced by the Commonwealth Government on the conditions that the State has imposed on the borrowers. Some of us come into personal contact with

farmers who have received drought relief advances. Their operations are still governed by the Industries Assistance Act regulations, and that is a sore point. When I spoke last year on this matter I quoted the case of a man who refused to ask for any further money. I saw that man a few weeks ago and he told me that the wheat certificates he had coming to him from the previous year were taken by the Agricultural Bank under the same conditions. There is no argument about it. All the regulations submitted here from time to time have empowered the bank to take that money from the farmers' proceeds. Although the Chief Secretary says the money will be re-advanced, the farmers will not ask for another advance under this Act. I support the motion.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East): I support the motion. There has been no change in regard to the regulations and their effect on the people concerned. This money was borrowed from the Commonwealth Government under certain specific conditions. When the amendment to the Industries Assistance Act was before Parliament, specific undertakings were given that the money would be advanced to the people in need of it under exactly the same conditions as those on which it was being borrowed from the Commonwealth authorities, but that has not been done. On two occasions, as Mr. Cornell has pointed out, the House disallowed this regulation, largely, I think, on that account. The regulation it is now sought to disallow maintains the same improper procedure by the Government as before, and for that reason I hope the motion will be carried.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan): This is the third occasion on which the House has been asked to disallow this regulation and I am given to understand that if the motion is carried, it is more than probable the Government will re-enact the regulation. I have been given a statement of the position as it affects the Treasury. I voted on each of the previous occasions in favour of this allowance, but there may be something in this statement that will help me and other members to decide what is the correct course to adopt on this occasion. For that reason I propose to read it. Ever since I have been in this House I have found Mr. Thomson most fair in

his outlook and quite as willing to listen to arguments against his opinion as he is to pay attention to arguments in his favour. If I read this statement he may be able to answer some of the points made in it and other members who may not be familiar with the statement will be afforded an opportunity to become acquainted with its contents and to view the question from the Treasury angle. The statement is as follows:—

Re Commonwealth Drought Relief Scheme.

The Commonwealth made available to this State the sum of approximately £500,000 arising out of the drought in the year 1940.

The Commonwealth conditions in relation to the State are that the money is loaned for a period of seven years. For the first year no interest is charged and for the remaining six years half interest only is charged. No repayments are required for the first three years, the amount being repayable in equal annual instalments over four years.

The Government advances the money under the Industries Assistance Act and prescribed regulations for the advances. The regulations provide that the settler shall have the money free of interest for the first year and at half interest rates while the advance is unrepaid. The actual rate charged is 1½ per cent. The money is advanced by way of lien on crop proceeds and if the proceeds are sufficient a settler is expected to make repayment in the first year. If the proceeds are insufficient he is expected to make as big a repayment as possible, the balance of the advance being re-advanced as a charge against next year's crop.

In many cases the assisted settlers are indebted to the Associated Banks, who hold security by way of mortgage over the property. The Government could not come to any reasonable understanding with the Associated Banks to give the Government either prior security or equal security with them. It was finally agreed with the banks that the money should be advanced by way of crop proceeds and that the repayment should be made as quickly as possible. Where the crop proceeds are insufficient the bank and the Minister for Lands together agree as to the amount to be re-advanced as a charge against next year's crop proceeds.

A motion is before the Legislative Council to disallow the regulations and to grant the settlers the same terms of repayment as have been granted by the Commonwealth to the State. If this motion succeeds, every settler will have seven years in which to repay his drought relief advance. It would be quite possible then for a farmer to be in a position to repay the advance in the first two or three years but not be in a position to make repayment at the end of the seventh year. The State would then be left with the total burden of debt—which would be a charge on the general taxpayer—and with very little security.

The season 1941-42, which was the one immediately following the advances, was one of

the best on record from a production point of view and most farmers were in a position to repay their drought relief advance.

Where a settler is indebted to the Agricultural Bank by way of mortgage, the Agricultural Bank is precluded by the Agricultural Bank Act from taking more than one year's interest out of the crop proceeds. In many cases the clients owe the Bank more than their property is worth, and it would be quite possible, following a good season, for a settler to walk off his property with the bulk of his proceeds.

The Agricultural Bank could advance Commonwealth drought relief money under the ordinary regulations governing industries assistance, but a settler could not then get the benefit of the cheap interest, because the Industries Assistance Act provides that interest shall be charged at the rate of 5 per cent.

It is unfortunate that the Commonwealth made the conditions it did, because obviously the State cannot grant the same conditions when advancing the money to the settler. If the Commonwealth undertook to shoulder any loss at the end of seven years, the State would be quite free to advance the money on the conditions upon which the Commonwealth granted the money to the State, but as the loss must fall on the State the State is under an obligation to see that the money is repaid as quickly as possible.

I think that it will be agreed there is no member more sympathetic towards the farmers than I.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Who is the author of that statement?

Hon. J. Cornell: There is nothing new in that statement.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I do not suggest there is, but all members may not have had the benefit of seeing it and my having read it will have served to refresh the memory of those who were acquainted with it. I am very sympathetic towards the farmers in every possible way. If the Government is not doing the right thing by the farmers it should be put in its place, but I feel that if we are going to disallow this regulation again and then it is to be re-enacted once more, we shall simply be playing the fool and we should say once and for all whether we feel the Government is doing right or otherwise. I propose to reserve my vote on this occasion until Mr. Thomson has replied.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East—in reply): The Chief Secretary has put up a very skilful reply on behalf of the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank. I draw the attention of members to the statement that has been submitted to Mr.

Bolton by the Treasury. The statement contains the definite assertion that the Commonwealth Government in making the money available had laid down conditions regarding repayment that obviously the State could not grant to the farmers when it advanced money from the fund.

Hon. V. Hamersley: The Government said it would.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I emphasise the fact that when farmers applied for relief under the provisions of the Industries Assistance Act, they were told that they would receive the money under the same conditions as those under which the Commonwealth had advanced the money to the State. That was made clear to them by means of a slip that was attached to the application form that had to be filled in by the farmers. The authorities did not have time to print amended forms or to frame the requisite regulations, and therefore the slips were attached as I have indicated. At the time the explanation was advanced that the authorities had a large number of forms in hand and wished to avoid additional expense in re-printing them with the extra condition included. No one can refute that statement. It is on record in "Hansard" that the same terms and conditions were to apply to the farmers as the Commonwealth applied to the State.

I agree entirely with Mr. Cornell's remark that if Parliament is to be flouted as it has been regarding these regulations, what on earth is the use of giving us the right to disallow regulations when they can be re-gazetted in practically the same terms and with the same conditions as formerly? As Mr. Piesse mentioned and others did by way of interjection, the whole of the farmers' proceeds are taken over by the Agricultural Bank, which is in absolute control. The bank decides how much it will dole out. The regulations leave room for further explanation and certainly call for additional interpretation. The Chief Secretary carefully read the regulations. Regulation 8 sets out that the provisions of Regulations 2, 4, 5 and 6, with such adaptations as may be necessary, shall apply and be deemed to be incorporated in, and form part of the regulation. If members look at the schedule they will see that those regulations are—

(2) Every application for an advance under the Act shall be addressed to the Industries Assistance Board and shall be lodged with the

manager of the local branch of the Agricultural Bank.

(3) The provisions of Regulations 2, 4, 5 and 6 of these regulations shall apply and be deemed to be incorporated in and form part of this regulation.

(4) Advances to which this regulation applies shall be repayable on demand or by such periodical instalments and at such periods as the board may from time to time determine.

I have quoted the conditions under which the money was granted and my contention has been borne out by Mr. Bolton who read a statement showing that the money was lent for seven years.

The Chief Secretary: The regulations you are quoting have nothing to do with it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The hon. member knows it is so.

The Chief Secretary: Your argument deals with Regulation 8.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I hope members will bear what I say in mind. Regulation 5 reads—

(5) The rate of interest payable in respect of such advances shall be £5 per centum per annum or such other rate as may from time to time be fixed by the board and notified in the "Government Gazette."

Now I come to Regulation 9 to which the Minister says I am taking exception. I have read some of the regulations including Regulation 5 which fixes the rate of interest at 5 per cent. per annum. Surely that gives me reason to ask why Regulations 8 and 9 should be brought together in the manner indicated. We have been told definitely in Regulation 9 that Regulations 2, 4, 5 and 6 are to be applicable. That gives me the impression that the Agricultural Bank, should the regulations be not disallowed, will be able to charge 5 per cent. interest.

The Chief Secretary: Mr. President—

The PRESIDENT: Will Mr. Thomson resume his seat?

The Chief Secretary: On a point of explanation. Regulations 2, 4, 5 and 6 referred to by the hon. member are not what he has quoted there. Regulations 2, 4, 5 and 6 are not paragraphs (2), (4), (5) and (6) of this regulation.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I consider they are. It is a matter of opinion.

The Chief Secretary: It is not a matter of opinion; it is a matter of fact.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The object of the advances was to assist settlers who had suffered from the effects of drought. Details given to us show that in 1940-41, 2,619 farmers made application for assistance,

and £439,110 was advanced to them. This year—I can only deal with the details made available to Parliament—there has been a decline in applications to 1,447 and apparently because last year was an extraordinarily good season many settlers required no further assistance at all. To those of us who represent agricultural districts it is amazing to find that so many settlers were in such a happy position that they voluntarily dispensed with financial assistance.

Hon. J. Cornell: The hon. member is hardly stating the position correctly. He said that over 1,000 settlers did not require assistance. Many of them applied for assistance but did not receive any.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Well, we can put it that way. This is the third time we have asked the Government to do what we consider is proper. We ask the Government to fulfil the contract that it entered into with the settlers who applied for drought relief assistance. We want the Government to carry out the contract in the terms of the arrangement with the Commonwealth Government. I did not know I would have to reply to the debate this afternoon, and perhaps I should have asked for an adjournment so as to be better prepared. When the Premier introduced the legislation necessary to amend the Industries Assistance Act to enable drought relief assistance to be provided, he definitely assured the country that the State Government would extend to the farmers the terms it received from the Commonwealth. As Mr. Cornell pointed out, the strongest exception possible was taken to farmers who required assistance being brought under the provisions of the Industries Assistance Act.

Those who have represented country constituencies know the difficulties under which farmers have laboured for many years. I know of many—good worthy citizens who have worked for many years in their respective districts—who absolutely refuse to carry on under conditions imposed by the Industries Assistance Board. Very few members of this House would care to carry on under such conditions. I hope Mr. Bolton will not decide to reverse his vote on this occasion merely because of any possible loss to the State. All I ask is that the Government shall honour its promises to the settlers and advance money for drought relief without

the restrictions that have been imposed by the Agricultural Bank. I can assure the Chief Secretary that if the effect of these regulations had been known, there would have been much greater opposition to the passage of legislation amending the Industries Assistance Act. I would have been prepared to keep the House in session night after night before agreeing to conditions such as those sought to be imposed under the regulations.

The Chief Secretary: Do you suggest that money should be advanced without security?

Hon. A. THOMSON: No, not at all. The Minister knows that under the provisions of the Industries Assistance Act the authorities own everything that a farmer possesses—except his wife and children. Even so, the farmer is darned lucky if he can keep them from the clutches of the Industries Assistance Board or the Agricultural Bank. His wife is not allowed to sell a tin of cream or a pound of butter from the farm. She cannot sell any poultry or eggs.

Hon. J. Cornell: It does not affect fowls or eggs.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Well, that is so.

Hon. T. Moore: You are stretching it a bit.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am not. The farmers have no freedom at all. The Agricultural Bank controls everything. I sincerely hope that the House will again indicate to the Government that we expect effect to be given to our wishes. We have intimated twice what those wishes are, and I trust that we shall on this occasion intimate again the conditions we require for the farmer.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	12
Noes	..	..	..	12
				—
A Tie	..	..	..	0
				—

AYES

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. V. Hameraley
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. H. V. Plessa
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. W. J. Mann

(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. R. Cornish	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. F. H. Gray	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. C. B. Williams

(Teller.)

The PRESIDENT: I give my casting vote with the "Ayes."

Question thus passed.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1. Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment.
 2. Perth Dental Hospital Land.
 3. Albany Reserve Allotments.
- Received from the Assembly.

BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Third Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER [3.35]:

I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East): I have on the notice paper an amendment which, upon further consideration and advice, I do not propose to move, so I shall not seek to recommit the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time, and *passed*.

BILL—JUSTICES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Third Reading.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [3.37]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan): I am taking what appears to be the unusual course of speaking to the third reading of a Bill. I have reasons, which I desire to make clear to the House, for doing so. I for one, and possibly other members of the Chamber, voted for the second reading of this Bill because we were informed that an effort was to be made to refer the measure to a Select Committee, with a view to obtaining further evidence before completing the passage of the measure through this House. I maintain, therefore, that the Bill has not been considered as it stands, but has been considered by me, and possibly by other members, on the basis that it represented purely a means towards the appointment of a Select Committee. I personally would not have voted for the second reading if the question

had been merely as to the Bill in the form as presented to us, mainly as a means by which starting-price betting and gambling could be suppressed or at all events diminished. Therefore I suggest that the Bill be not passed, or that members at least be given, at this stage, an opportunity for serious consideration of the measure as it stands.

I am not at all certain that I know exactly what we are amending when dealing with the words "owner" and "occupier." I have not had sufficient time, since I realised what was happening to the measure, to read thoroughly the Criminal Code, so as to ascertain whether the proposed amendment would amend the words "occupier" and "owner" purely insofar as they relate to gambling. I am not at all certain that we are not leaving ourselves open to some further difficulties if the amendment in question is inserted in the Criminal Code without the definitions of the words being restricted entirely to gambling or starting-price betting, which we are attempting to control. Therefore I ask members to vote against the third reading. I believe that the Bill was passed through its earlier stages merely as a means of enabling the House to obtain further evidence and attack the real problem. Not for a moment do I believe that by nibbling at a wrong we shall ever produce a right. I would like to be sure in my own mind that by passing the Bill we shall improve matters. I fear that what might happen, if the Bill passes now, is that whereas at present we have starting-price betting shops, we may have starting-price betting runners going all round the city collecting bets as agents and taking the bets to some underground establishment that will be much harder to control than are the betting shops now operating. For these reasons, I, for one, will vote against the third reading. I would prefer that the Bill be defeated, so that those intent upon having a Select Committee appointed can move in that matter again. If this House is to attempt to control racing, members should know exactly the means proposed to be adopted and the end to be attained. I ask that the Bill be thrown out and that a Select Committee be appointed to undertake the inquiry which was proposed.

Hon. J. Cornell: A Select Committee could be appointed after the Bill is passed.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: In my opinion, it would be bad policy on the part of this

House to pass a measure feeling that it might be thrown out by another place. We should pass legislation that will benefit the community, not legislation that will make the law still more difficult to administer. I would like an exhaustive inquiry to be made into this evil with which we are faced. No one wishes more than I do to have this wrong righted, and nobody is less interested in betting, as a sport, than I am. Still, I do not wish part of a wrong to be corrected by a doubtful piece of legislation, of the implications of which I at least am not fully aware.

I sincerely applaud the effort of the hon. member to control S.P. betting, but I ask the House to go further and make available to members such information as will enable us to legislate sanely. For instance, I am told that the cost of travelling to attend a racecourse is greater than to travel on the railways the same distance in any other direction. If that is so, we are simply making racing available to those men who have more money in their pockets than has the ordinary person. I understand that one other State has already made racing a sport at which the average man can spend his afternoon. I am told that in Queensland the cost of admission to a racecourse and the cost of railway transport have been made so cheap as to make the sport appeal to the working man. Attendances have increased very considerably on the courses in that State and the evil of S.P. betting has been to some extent controlled.

Hon. J. Cornell: Have you read the Queensland legislation controlling S.P. betting?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: No. That is why I ask that a Select Committee be appointed to find out these things and report to the House. I suggest there are many other avenues that should be explored and investigated. I do not think we shall control gambling by altering two words in an Act or amending it by making extensive definitions. I am opposing the third reading, firstly, because when the second reading was passed it was considered we could get the advice we needed and, secondly, because I do not think that picking out small points will alter a large wrong. This House should be perfectly satisfied, before it passes a Bill, that the measure will do exactly what members expect it to do.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan): In view of Dr. Hislop's remarks, I desire to make it quite clear that when I asked leave to withdraw the motion for the appointment of a Select Committee, particularly in view of the statement made by the Leader of the House, I had no idea whatever that any obstacle would be placed in the way of the immediate appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate this and other allied matters. It seemed to me—and I think members will agree with me—that a Select Committee to inquire into a matter which would be at the same time investigated by a Royal Commission would not be at all necessary. I understand that some obstacle has arisen in the way of appointing a Royal Commission and I hope it will be quickly overcome. If not, it will be quite competent for this House to appoint a Select Committee or to invite another place to unite in the appointment of a joint Select Committee. In any case, I am quite sure it is the Government's desire and the firm intention of the majority of members of both Houses that this matter should be subjected to complete investigation without delay.

HON. T. MOORE (Central): I am thinking along the same lines as Dr. Hislop. I have had a fair amount of experience of the world and am convinced that we cannot suppress gambling today by legislation. I am one of those who believe that S.P. betting, as an industry, is dying.

Hon. J. Cornell: It looked like it last Saturday!

Hon. T. MOORE: It does not matter what it looked like last Saturday. The authority that can establish an effectual control over S.P. betting is the Commonwealth Government. That Government can do so by banning the use to the industry of the telephone and the wireless. Mr. Cornell will remember well the S.P. betting on the goldfields in the early days. There is no doubt that the present trouble has arisen because of the use of the telephone and the radio. Members should make no mistake about that. As soon as it was possible to introduce punters to the racecourse by hearing instead of seeing, they were content. So the S.P. industry was built up. That has been the cause of the whole position getting out of hand. I do not think the alteration of a few words in an existing Act will have the slightest

effect in preventing S.P. betting. When I was a mere youngster in Melbourne, we had what Dr. Hislop referred to, namely, runners. In the days when Jack Wren conducted his tote, that was the system he adopted.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It got to be pretty flagrant too. Did you ever try to beat Jack Wren?

Hon. T. MOORE: No. His runners came to where I and other men were working in Melbourne. They collected the bets and distributed the winnings the following night. I remember that well. I also recall that a special Act was passed in Victoria to suppress Wren's tote. It was a one-man Act. Did it suppress S.P. betting? Not at all. Betting is just as rife in Melbourne today as ever it was. People will bet. That has been made clear to us over the years. Victoria made a whole-hearted attempt to wipe it out, but still it grew. Unfortunately, it was forced underground and, as members know, that is worse than betting above ground. I have been particularly alarmed at the number of people betting today, and I trust that the Commonwealth Government will use its utmost endeavours to control and stamp out the evil. We do not want our people to be going into S.P. shops and sitting there all day, as that is both demoralising and degrading. An attempt was made in another place to legalise betting and place it under control. The Government attempted to control it. Some two or three sessions ago a Bill was introduced in another place to control or legalise gambling, so as to avoid what is happening today. Some such legislation is extremely desirable when we consider the number of persons convicted every Monday morning. That is not stopping the evil. As I have said, the Commonwealth Government could suppress it by stopping the means of communication. It was not an evil on the goldfields in my day and Mr. Cornell's. There was Bill Reeves and Jack Cosson. Members will recall where those two good fellows went. They lost their lives on Gallipoli.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Bill Reeves did not lose his life on Gallipoli. Jack Cosson lost his at Pozieres.

Hon. T. MOORE: But they were the kind of men we had in those days. The fact remains that the men with whom we are dealing today are at present thoroughly reliable, but if we drive them under-

ground they will not be so reliable. We will then have a worse class of men to deal with. I am with Dr. Hislop in maintaining that the Bill will get us nowhere; we are simply wasting the time of Parliament in trying to pass it. I shall vote against the third reading.

HON. J. CORNELL (South—in reply): Up to this stage, I have taken the reception of the Bill as granted. I thought it would pass the third reading without discussion. Two members who spoke to the third reading do not understand the measure. It is practically the same as the Bill that was passed on the voices last year.

Hon. T. Moore: It got nowhere.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It was slaughtered in another place, indecently, too. But on this occasion the Bill has the approval of the Minister himself. What is its purpose? I have never claimed that the Bill would, if it became law, solve the problem of S.P. betting. Then what is the object of the Bill? What is the position today? It is that landlords are getting 100 per cent. more for their premises than the legitimate rent they could otherwise claim for them. They let premises to an S.P. bookmaker, who becomes the occupier but puts a dummy in possession. Only the dummy is fined. That is the position. I want to see the guilty punished. The law as it stands enables the owner or occupier to avoid a prosecution. All I desire is that they shall be prosecuted. On the authority of the Minister and of the Commissioner of Police, I am given to understand that, as the law stands today, those people cannot be prosecuted. Do members want that state of affairs to continue? We should at least prosecute those people. I do not know that I have more to say in answer to Dr. Hislop. Even if the Bill passes this and another place the way is still open for the appointment of a Select Committee of members of this House or of a joint Select Committee or for the Government to appoint a Royal Commission off its own bat to ascertain how existing legislation might further tighten up the position. I can assure Dr. Hislop that these definitions of "owner" and "occupier" were framed by Mr. Boylson in 1939, when I introduced a Bill on all-fours with the Queensland Act which he referred to as being so wonderful. I introduced it here and it did not get beyond this House.

The Chief Secretary: It only applied to gaming.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That is so, and I will admit that, as the Chief Secretary said last session, it was a very wily gentleman who could get away from the definitions of "owner" and "occupier." They are put in this Bill to rope them in. If the matter can be further improved by a Select Committee, it is within the hon. member's province to move in that direction.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—PUBLIC AUTHORITIES (POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS).

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER [41] in moving the second reading said: This Bill proposes that authority be granted for the postponement of public authority elections for such period during a time of war as shall be specified by proclamation, and also to postpone the preparation of the rolls. In Committee it is my intention to move an amendment to Clause 3, Sub-clause (1) paragraph (a) to the effect that the period of any postponement shall not exceed 12 calendar months.

It will be recalled that road board elections, which in ordinary circumstances would have been held last April, were postponed until 1943, representations to this end having been made by the Road Board Association and various road boards. The Premier, in the exercise of delegated powers under the National Security Regulations, took the required action for the postponement of these elections. Three only of the 127 road boards concerned have so far indicated their desire for an election next year. Representations have now been made by the Country Municipal Councils' Association, which embraces a majority of the municipal councils and several local authorities, for the postponement of elections, chiefly on the general grounds of the advisability of eliminating the unnecessary use of manpower, material and money, and of the inadvisability of diverting the citizens' attention from the one and all-important subject of the achievement of a maximum war effort.

It was at first proposed that the matter be dealt with under the National Security Regulations in a manner similar to the

action taken in connection with the road board elections, but it was ascertained that the Premier did not have the required authority under the regulations to postpone the preparation of electoral lists and electoral rolls, which, as members are aware, involves the major municipalities in considerable expense and absorption of manpower. Another difficulty presented itself in connection with the election of members of the Fremantle Tramway Board. The Fremantle Tramways and Electricity Act provides that four members of the board shall retire every two years and that an election be held at the same time as the municipal elections, using the same rolls. The election was due to be held in November next. The Crown Law authorities advise that the Fremantle Tramway Board is not a "local governing body" within the meaning of the National Security Regulations, and that this election could only be postponed by State legislative action or by the issue of a new National Security Regulation. In these circumstances it has been decided to submit this Bill. It is considered preferable that a new comprehensive Act be sought rather than to amend the large number of the Acts affected.

Under the Bill "public authority" includes—

- (a) a municipal council;
- (b) a road board;
- (c) a local board of health;
- (d) a water board;
- (e) a drainage board;
- (f) a vermin board;
- (g) The Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Board; and
- (h) any other board, trust, committee, or association of persons (whether corporate or not) constituted by or under any Act, the members or some of the members of which are required to be elected, and which the Governor by Order in Council on the recommendation of the Minister declares shall be a public authority for the purposes of this Act.

The Bill provides that before any postponement proclamation is issued, the Minister shall give 30 days' notice of his intention in the "Government Gazette" and a newspaper, and that if before the expiration of that period a petition of objection is received, containing the signatures of at least 10 per cent. of the electors of the authority concerned, the proposed election shall not be postponed. It is also provided that it shall not be necessary for the public authority whose

election is postponed to prepare an annual or other electoral list or electoral roll, which ordinarily would have to be prepared if no postponement had been proclaimed.

Clause 5 makes the necessary provision for the holding of elections to fill extraordinary vacancies when they occur during the currency of a proclamation. In such an event it is provided that the last prepared electoral roll of the authority concerned shall be the electoral roll for and shall be used in connection with the election, subject to the proviso that amendments may be made to the roll by adding the names of any persons who it is satisfied are qualified to be electors and by deleting therefrom the names of any persons who it is satisfied have ceased to be qualified.

That is a brief explanation of the Bill, and furthermore the Minister has announced that not only will he wait for 10 per cent. of the ratepayers to ask for an election, but that in the event of any municipality or local authority requiring, by resolution, an election to be held, the request will be granted. In consequence of the Government's promise to submit to Parliament a Bill seeking to give the Governor power to postpone elections, only two municipal councils, so far as the Department is aware, have proceeded with the preparation of the rolls this year, and I understand in those instances that preparation has not been as thorough as in former years. As a matter of fact, the shortage of manpower was the chief reason why these rolls were not proceeded with, particularly in the cases of the Perth and Fremantle City Councils. It is a tremendous job to prepare the annual rolls for the Perth City Council, and that is one of the reasons why the local authorities desired the postponement of the elections. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. A. Dinmilt, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 1.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 14th October, 1942.

	PAGE
Questions: State civil requirements, as to essential foodstuffs	795
Citrus fruits industry, as to price	795
Rural Relief Fund Act, as to repayment of advances	796
Electricity supply, as to economies from daylight saving	796
Rubber, as to production from Russian dandelion	796
Grasshopper menace, as to measures for combating	796
Farmers' and pastoralists' debts, as to proposed legislation	797
Wool, railway freights	797
Leave of absence	797
Motions: Want of confidence, living standard, administration, war effort, civil defence, State rights, lapsed	797
State civil requirements, to inquire by Select Committee	819
Bills: Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment, 3R.	797
Perth Dental Hospital Land, 3R.	797
Albany Reserve Allotments, 3R.	797
Supreme Court Act Amendment, 2R.	814
Water Boards Act Amendment, returned	818
Justices Act Amendment, 1R.	819
Criminal Code Amendment (No. 1) 1R.	819

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

QUESTIONS (8).

STATE CIVIL REQUIREMENTS.

As to Essential Foodstuffs.

Mr. NOLTH asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, In order to preserve 100 per cent. distribution of essential foodstuffs during the war, will he consider pegging the price of milk by obtaining a subsidy from the Commonwealth Government to meet increased producer's costs? 2, To what essential foodstuffs is this principle being applied in Britain? 3, Is the subsidy of £1,500,000 already voted to the dairying industry available for this purpose?

The MINISTER replied: 1, To preserve 100 per cent. distribution of essential foodstuffs there are very wide implications to be considered in connection with many commodities. 2, I have very little advice on this matter. 3, We have no final word as to the method of distribution of the subsidy mentioned.

CITRUS FRUITS INDUSTRY.

As to Price.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Industrial Development: Required manpower to enable those engaged in the manufacture of lemon and other citrus products having been provided, will the local price