

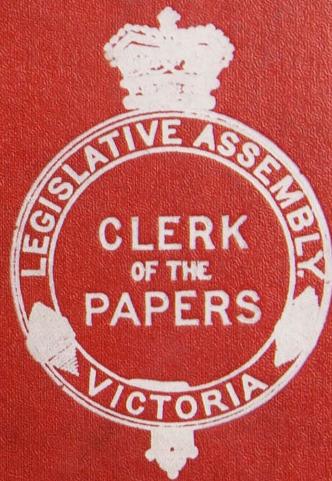


VICTORIA.
PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES.

SESSION, 1917.

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VICTORIA.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

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1917.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister).—The Government are prepared to have valuations completed, where a valuation has already been made at the expense of the State, provided municipalities are prepared to pay the costs incurred.

WHEAT BOARD.

The Hon. A. HICKS (by leave) asked the Hon. F. W. Hagelthorn (Minister of Agriculture)—

If Mr. Clement Giles, the farmers' representative, has yet taken his seat on the Australian Wheat Board; and, if not, when is he likely to do so?

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN (Minister of Agriculture).—Mr. Clement Giles has been formally installed, and is now doing the work he was elected to carry out.

WILLS (SOLDIERS') BILL.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister) moved for leave to introduce a Bill relating to the disposition of the estates of persons engaged on war service.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was then brought in, and read a first time.

EVIDENCE BILL.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister) moved for leave to introduce a Bill to amend the law of evidence.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was then brought in, and read a first time.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN moved the second reading of this Bill. He said— This Bill, which I hope will meet with the approval of honorable members, is to make it certain that returned soldiers shall have first preference, not only in the temporary, but in the permanent, employ of the Government. In 1915 we passed an Act giving to returned soldiers certain rights of employment. In paragraph (a) of section 8, it is provided that soldiers desiring employment may have their names put upon a register for temporary employment, and be considered for employment in priority to any other person who

has not been absent from Victoria. This is subject, of course, to regulations to be made by the Governor in Council. Paragraph (b) of the section I have quoted provides that, subject to these regulations, a returned soldier can be appointed to a position in the Public Service in preference to all other persons, except those already in the Service. The regulations which have been made under that Act are not quite what Parliament expected. The object the Government had in view when the Act was introduced in 1915 was set out in speeches made by the Chief Secretary in introducing the Bill in another place, and by Mr. Robinson in submitting the Bill to this House. I should like to remind honorable members what Ministers said. The Chief Secretary, when dealing with clause 8 in another place, said—

This clause provides that a person appointed will have to fulfil the requirements as to examination and insurance for persons entering the Public Service. We recognise that it is not fair to require them to go through the Public Service examination, and possibly they may be wounded in such a way as not to be eligible for insurance. The amendment will provide that these persons will be dealt with under regulations made by the Governor in Council, so that they will not be under any disability provided they are of good character and able to perform the duties.

When speaking in this House, Mr. Robinson said—

There were many cases in which people from outside had to be taken into the Service, and in all such cases priority was to be given to returned soldiers, irrespective of age. Returned soldiers would, of course, have to show their competence; but they would not have to pass an examination in elementary subjects dealing with matters that were forgotten when school had been left for many years. The examination would be on common-sense lines. That was to say, a man would have to show that he was capable of carrying out the duties of the position he was applying for in an intelligent manner. If a returned soldier could show that, he would be appointed if employment could be found for him in the Public Service.

Ministers took up a reasonable stand in this matter, but the Governor in Council has passed regulations which are nothing like so liberally worded as one would have expected from the statements made by Ministers. For example, in regard to the examination for the Clerical Division, returned soldiers who are candidates for employment must get half, and in some

cases two-thirds, of the total pass marks. That does not seem to me to be proceeding on common-sense lines. It is rather proceeding on the old lines of examination, in which we know that boys undergo special study in order to submit themselves. To pass this examination, the returned soldier would have to go to some business college for, perhaps, four or five months, and the knowledge he would acquire in the course of his special studies would not be of great value to him afterwards. As the Minister said, many of the things that we learnt in our school days are forgotten, and some of the knowledge acquired in school days is not of much assistance in the particular positions in the Public Service. I think I am right in saying that very few, if any, returned soldiers have been appointed permanently to the Public Service. Some of them have been appointed temporarily. As far as they are able to do the work, returned soldiers should have preference over applicants who have not gone to the war. Of course a good many men enlisted while they were employed in the Service of the State. On the 31st December last, there were 440 permanent officers at the war, not including State school teachers, of whom I believe 488 offered their services. A very clear promise was made to public servants that their positions would be open to them when they returned. It is rather disappointing to find that from 1st September, 1914, to 31st December last, the Commissioner has made 552 new permanent appointments. That means closing the door to 552 returned soldiers.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—You will find that that pack of cards will not stand up in that way when an answer is given to your statement.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—According to the Public Service Commissioner's last report that was the number of new permanent appointments. I do not know how many have been made since the 31st December last, but an examination was held in March, and I think it was stated that there were 60 vacant positions open for competition. However, the number of new appointments since the 31st December last will not be available until the Commissioner's next report is published. There are a large number of vacancies every year, and my object is to see that

every one is kept for a returned soldier, provided a returned soldier who is able to do the work applies for the position. During the ten years, commencing in 1907 and ending in 1916, 3,943 permanent appointments were made in the Public Service. In the Professional Division, which, I think, includes teachers, there were 664 permanent appointments; in the Clerical Division 687, and in the General Division 2,592. During those ten years 8,542 temporary appointments were made. The highest number of appointments made in one year was 1,179 in 1911. During the last three years the average has been about 550 per annum, the total number of appointments being 1,667. Lately about 250 vacancies have occurred annually in the Service, owing to deaths, resignations, and other causes. That is an average of about five a week. During the ten years I have mentioned there were 2,134 vacancies in the Public Service. If places in the Public Service are reserved for returned soldiers, there will in the course of a few years be a considerable number of them obtaining fair and reasonable salaries in the Service. As I have mentioned, there were 552 permanent appointments from 1st September, 1914, to the end of last December. Of course, the large majority of those are juniors. That is unfortunate, because it may mean competition with recruiting, many of those appointed being over eighteen years of age. It would have been wiser if there had not been a single permanent appointment made. If it were necessary to get more hands into the Departments, the appointments should have been temporary, so that returned soldiers formerly in the Service might have had an opportunity of getting the permanent positions. I do not think I need trouble the House by reading the regulations to which I have already referred. A returned soldier has to obtain half of the required number of marks, and in that respect no concession is made to the soldier at all. Then an ordinary applicant who is not a soldier can put his name on the list of applicants for temporary appointments, and his name will be kept there for six months. The regulation provides that a returned soldier's name shall be on the list for one month after his return. I do not know why that was provided. It does not seem quite

fair. We know that when a soldier returns he has fourteen days' leave of absence, for the purpose, no doubt, of enabling him to visit his relatives. After that he has to undergo his medical examination, and by the time he really gets on his feet a month has passed. His name should be kept on the list for six months, the same as in the case of an ordinary civilian. At the outset, the Bill defines what a returned soldier is. It also proposes the appointment of a Board for the purpose of making appointments, and setting examinations. I propose that the Board should consist of six persons. I consider that one of them should be the president of the Returned Soldiers Association. I have included him with the object of keeping the returned soldiers in close touch with the appointing body. I take it that he will be a man of some position, and a suitable man to confer with the other members in regard to appointments. The other gentlemen I suggest as members are the Public Service Commissioner, the Director of Education, the Inspector-General of Insane, one of the Railways Commissioners, and the Chief Commissioner of Police. Each one of those officers is the employer of a large number of public servants. The Inspector-General of the Insane has the control of his staff. As a matter of fact, I think that the Public Service Commissioner has no control at all over it. The Director of Education has also a large staff. Then, of course, the Railways Commissioners are large employers of labour, and have many appointments to make. The Chief Commissioner of Police also makes appointments independently, I believe, of the Public Service Commissioner. It occurred to me that all those gentlemen should have a say, not only in the examination, but in the appointment of returned soldiers. Their duty will be to direct the examination into the condition of the returned soldiers, decide on the class of other examinations which they must pass, and say what positions they are to hold. The regulations provide that a returned soldier must not suffer from any physical disability that would prevent him from doing duty in an office. That opens the door for the appointment of a large number of men who have been disabled. For instance, if a man had lost a leg, it would not prevent him carrying out office

duties. In clause 4 of the Bill I provide for the constitution of the Board, and in clause 5 it is stated how any vacancy in the membership of the Board shall be filled. Then in clause 6 there is power to make regulations. The Board will include, as I have shown, the responsible officers, who have the appointment and control of the great mass of public servants. As a matter of fact, I do not know any one else who makes appointments in the Service. There is no examination for the Professional Division. Men who are appointed doctors, and selected to fill other professional positions, are chosen on their special qualifications. I want the Board to make regulations "for the determination of the conditions for the admission of returned soldiers to the Professional Division." Also the Board will make regulations "for determining the nature or character and standard of examinations or tests which returned soldier candidates for employment in the Clerical Division shall undergo." They must undergo some examination, because you cannot put into a public Department men who are not qualified by education to discharge the duties of their office. Then I provide for the making of regulations for the examination of returned soldier candidates, and the granting of certificates to them. That is a wise thing, because it is quite obvious that the Public Service cannot employ a tithe of the men who return, and I think it would be valuable for the soldiers to have certificates that they have passed the examinations and tests. A good many men are employed in the General Division. They must be subject to some examination. I provide that the Board may make regulations for that. The Board will also draw up regulations for determining who are fit and proper returned soldiers to be employed in temporary work. We know that there is a great deal of temporary work. Perhaps there is not so much now, but the times will improve, and there will be more avenues open in that direction. In order that the returned soldier shall prove his case I provide that—

Every returned soldier desirous of appointment or desirous of employment in any temporary work in any Department shall forward to the Board an application, in his own handwriting, stating his full name and address, the date of his birth, his military rank, a copy of his military discharge, a description of the

work to which he was accustomed before enlisting, and, if possible, copies of testimonials from former employers.

I am desirous that men who submit themselves for employment shall have had a clean discharge. I am anxious that they shall be men who have behaved themselves during the course of the war.

The PRESIDENT.—The honorable member is going rather too much into detail.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—Honorable members will find on perusing the Bill that, as far as possible, I have provided for every contingency likely to arise. The Bill makes no provision for admitting into the Public Service any returned soldier until, by test of examination and by character, he has shown himself to be worthy of the position. Once he gets into the Service he receives no preference whatever. His future career is in his own hands. The privileges of the Civil Service are, therefore, safeguarded, and not given away. I need not enlarge any further on the Bill. It speaks for itself. I hope that it will have a good effect on recruiting. I believe it will show those men whom we induced to enlist that the promise made to them, that when they came back we would look after them, is being kept. The only way the Government can assist these men is by seeing that every public position a returned soldier is capable of filling shall be kept open for the returned soldier as against those who have not been to the war. I hope that Victoria will lead the way, and that the other States will follow, and see that public positions are filled as far as possible by those young men who have risked their lives in defence of our liberty. I think that the soldiers will come back better men. Their outlook on life will have broadened, and they will make better officers than would have been the case if they had stopped at home. I believe that every man who comes back from the war able to work at all will be a better man in every way because of the experiences he has gone through.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister).—I have listened with interest to the lucid and informative speech by Mr. Brown, and I do not think there is much difference in our points of view. Unfortunately, I have not been able to get together all the information I desire, and I therefore propose that the debate be adjourned until this day week.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—The Bill has been in circulation for four or five weeks, and I think that the Government should know all about the measure. If the debate is adjourned until next Wednesday it may be that the House will not sit on that day.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister).—If Mr. Brown would prefer it, I am willing that the debate should be adjourned until Tuesday next.

On the motion of the Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, September 4.

RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN moved the second reading of this Bill. He said—This is a Bill on the same lines as the preceding one—the Public Service Acts Amendment Bill. It provides that returned soldiers shall be appointed to the Victorian Railways, provided they are fit and competent to do the work. It is not a lengthy Bill, because in it I make use of the Board proposed to be appointed by the measure that has already been under consideration. I leave the Railways Commissioners absolutely free and unfettered in their selection of the men, always provided they are returned soldiers, if returned soldiers are available and are applying for work. I want to give these men preference over young men who have not gone to the war.

On the motion of the Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, September 4.

POLICE REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN moved the second reading of this Bill. He said—This is a Bill drawn on exactly the same lines as the Public Service Acts Amendment Bill and the Railways Act Amendment Bill. It provides that any returned soldier shall be considered for appointment to the police force in priority to any other person except a member of the police force, provided the returned soldier is qualified to do the work. The Bill does not interfere in any way with the duties of the police.

On the motion of the Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister), the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, September 4.

THE CONSTITUTION ACT
AMENDMENT ACT AMENDMENT
BILL.

The Hon. D. L. McNAMARA moved the second reading of this Bill. He said—I desire at the outset to be quite frank with honorable members when I speak on the first important clause, clause 2, of the Bill, which deals with the reduction of the property qualification of members of the Legislative Council. On general principles, I do not believe in property qualifications at all. It is, of course, known to honorable members that I hold other views about the forms of local government. However, that is by the way. I think the time is ripe for some amendment to be made to the Constitution Act in respect of the qualification required by members. The Bill deals with two important issues—reducing the property qualification of members of this House, and, secondly, making soldiers and discharged soldiers eligible to vote for the election of members of the Legislative Council without a property qualification. The reason why I fixed on £20 annual valuation for the property qualification is largely because Sir Alexander Peacock, in delivering his policy speech at Creswick, promised that that should be the amount, and I want to give the Government an opportunity of fulfilling one of their pledges. Sir Alexander Peacock, when delivering his policy speech at Creswick, on the 9th of November, 1914, said, according to the report which appeared in the *Argus*—

It is proposed to reform the Legislative Council by liberalizing the franchise by bringing it down to the ratepayers' roll. The Council would then be in touch with a large proportion of the people. The property qualification of candidates will be reduced from £50 to £20 annual value.

In looking through the qualifications required by members of second Chambers in all the States of the Commonwealth and the Dominion of New Zealand, and in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain, I find that the following operate:—

New South Wales.—Male adult natural-born or naturalized British subjects.

Victoria.—Male natural-born or naturalized British subjects of the age of thirty years or upwards—(a) if possessed of a freehold property of an annual value of, at least, £50 over and above any encumbrances, &c., for one year previous to election; and (b) in the case of

naturalized subjects, if a resident of the State for ten years.

Queensland.—Male adult natural-born or naturalized British subjects.

South Australia.—Male natural-born or naturalized British subjects if—(a) of the age of thirty years or upwards; and (b) if resident in the State for three years.

Tasmania.—Male British subjects, either natural-born or for at least five years naturalized, of not less than thirty years of age, qualified to vote at the election for the Legislative Council, and who has resided in Tasmania for a continuous period of five years, or for a period of two years immediately preceding the election.

Note.—The qualifications for voters are—

Adult British subjects of either sex who have resided in the State for twelve months, if either—(a) possessing freehold to the annual value of £10, or leasehold to the value of £30; or (b) graduates of a British university, qualified legal or medical practitioners, officiating ministers of religion, or retired naval or military officers.

Western Australia.—Male natural-born or naturalized British subjects of the age of thirty years or upwards, if (a) in the case of natural-born subjects resident in the State for two years, and (b) in the case of naturalized subjects, if naturalized for five years previous to the election, and resident in the State during that period.

New Zealand.—No property qualification.

Canada.—The Senate—Member to be thirty years of age, holding property worth 4,000 dollars over and above encumbrances, &c.

United States.—Senate—Thirty years of age, nine years' residence.

Great Britain.—House of Lords—No property qualification.

In Great Britain, for the House of Lords, which is supposed to be the acme of what a second Chamber should be, a property qualification is not laid down. Certain individuals, by inheritance, are members of the House of Lords, while the Government may appoint others to the House of Lords for special reasons; but, so far as I can find out, there is no property qualification. When the Constitution Reform Bill was before this House in 1903, some honorable members, who are still members of this House, made some observations which it may be pertinent to quote. The first quotation I wish to make is from a speech by the present President, who was leading the Government in this House at that time. Speaking in this House on the 22nd of January, 1903, he said—

This Bill proposes to repeal this qualification altogether, so that any ratepaying elector will be qualified as a member. I think that honorable members generally are willing to

reduce the qualification; but I understand, from what I have heard, that there is a great objection to abolishing it altogether. What is there in a property qualification? How many are there who would be fitted to be members of this House who have no property in funds or in other investments. It is a safeguard, no doubt, to the sitting member, as it prevents opposition; and, therefore, looking at it from a selfish point of view, it is better to retain the property qualification, because it does prevent opposition, and especially factious opposition. But what virtue is there in a man having a certain amount of freehold property being qualified? Many of our best men in the Assembly have no property qualification, and men as good as those in the Council.

The Bill, as sent up from the Assembly, provided for the elimination of the property qualification altogether. It was proposed that the ratepayers' roll should be used.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON.—That would be a qualification of £10.

The Hon. D. L. McNAMARA.—Not necessarily; because the ratepayers' roll would mean the roll of the municipalities, and a valuation lower than £10 would qualify a man to vote in connexion with municipal elections. In 1903, Mr. Sternberg was in favour of the Bill that was introduced. He said—

I desire to say I am not in favour of a property qualification. That may seem strange to honorable members.

The next quotation I shall make is from the speech of an honorable member who was then a new member of the Council—Mr. W. L. Baillieu.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—I may tell the honorable member that my opinion is just the same now.

The Hon. D. L. McNAMARA.—The honorable member spoke on the 29th January, 1903.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—I can tell you what I said without your reading it.

The Hon. D. L. McNAMARA.—But other honorable members may not know. The honorable gentleman stated—

As to the franchise for the electors, namely, the ratepayers' roll, I have already stated my views in this House on that question, but I do think that some provision should be made to secure that it should be an honest ratepayers' roll, and, for that reason, I would favour a definite sum being stated, even though it be a £10 qualification all round. I have already stated in the House—and I have not been long enough in politics yet to change my views—that I thought the man who was

qualified to elect was also qualified to stand; so, in that respect, I am in accord with the Bill.

There is a quotation I cannot put my hand on just at the moment. It is from a speech by Mr. (now Sir William) Irvine, who was sponsor for the Bill in another place. He said, in effect, that he saw no merit at all in a property qualification. He thought that the ability of a man should count. Those are not his exact words, but I give the effect of his speech. There is another important phase of this question. The Constitution Act provides that the franchise shall be extended to very many people in addition to those on the ratepayers' roll, because of their educational qualifications. That is to say, the franchise is extended to graduates of the University, medical practitioners, barristers and solicitors, school teachers who have passed a certain examination, and retired Army and Navy officers.

While it is provided that these people, on account of their educational qualifications, are eligible as voters for the Legislative Council, the Constitution Act specially debars them from becoming members of the Legislative Council, unless they have the property qualification provided for in the Act. That seems to be rather a stupid thing. There is another aspect of the matter. We might have in this State a great statesman, or a number of great statesmen, possessing the ability to do much good for the government of their country, and yet they might not have the qualifications which are at the present time laid down in the Act for members of this House. Take the Prime Minister, to whom every one is alluding as the one man in Australia, or in the world, who can save the Empire. If recent reports are correct, he would not be qualified to sit as a member of the Legislative Council. I have simply made reference to the Prime Minister because he is in the public eye at the moment. He could not become a member of this House, yet some other person, who has the necessary property qualification, could be elected. The latter person might have done all sorts of things within the law that might be considered undesirable, yet, unless he had been convicted on indictment for an infraction of the law, he would be qualified to sit because of his property. There is another injustice done under the property qualifi-

fication. The test at the present time is the annual value at which some property is rated by some municipality, or municipalities. I have had some experience in this regard, as honorable members know, and I want to point out how the systems of valuation adopted by municipalities differ. If a man owned a property worth £600 in the municipality of St. Kilda on one side of Hotham-street, that property, by being rated at £50 annual value under the system in operation in that municipality, would qualify him to be elected to this House. On the other hand, a man owning a freehold property worth £980 on the opposite side of the street in the municipality of Caulfield would not be qualified, because of the different system of rating in that municipality. There is one other illustration I wish to make. A man may have property worth £5,000, the annual value of which at 5 per cent. would be £250—that is assuming that it was rated on a 20 years' purchase system. If that property was mortgaged for £3,400, it would leave £1,600 clear. There is a difference of £1,600 between the amount of the mortgage and the value of the property, and he would not be qualified under our present Constitution. I shall show exactly what I mean by reading a note I received from the Government Statist on the 4th instant, concerning the different systems of arriving at values in the municipalities. I asked that officer for a certain return, and he was good enough to add this note for my information:—

In estimating the total value of lands and improvements, the municipalities enumerated capitalize the net annual value as under—

Prahran and St. Kilda adopt 12 years' purchase; Port Melbourne, 12½ years; Coburg and Kew, 15 years; Richmond and Fitzroy, 18 years; and the remainder (except Collingwood, which capitalizes the net annual value on a 6 per cent. basis), 20 years' purchase, as the capital value.

The municipality of St. Kilda arrives at the annual value by capitalizing on twelve years' purchase, whereas in an adjoining municipality twenty years is the basis. A man might be qualified in St. Kilda, but would not be qualified in that adjoining municipality. I appeal to honorable members to give favorable consideration to the Bill, so that the qualification for this House may be liberalized. I have explained the qualification in all the other

Legislative Councils of the States of the Commonwealth, as well as in the United States, in Canada, and in the Dominion of New Zealand. Tasmania is the only State in the Commonwealth, except Victoria, where there is any property qualification for members of the Legislative Council. In the case of Tasmania, it is only a qualification of £10 freehold property, or £30 leasehold property, whilst those who have certain educational qualifications are also qualified. I appeal to honorable members to say that this Chamber should not stand out from all the second Chambers of the world as an extremely conservative one in the matter of the franchise. I indorse the remarks made by the present President when he spoke on this question in 1903. The other matter dealt with by the Bill requires very little argument to commend it. It provides that all our returned soldiers shall have a voice in the election of members of the Legislative Council. To my own knowledge, about 1,200 men went from the Mildura district, and I venture to say, from what I know of that locality, that not more than 10 per cent. of them are qualified to vote for this House, because they would not be rate-payers in the strict sense. Nothing that we can do for the soldiers is too good, and I hope that provision will be made by the Commonwealth Government and by the State Government for those men in other directions. It is important that they should have a voice in the election of the Parliament of their country. They are entitled to vote for members of the Assembly, but that does not constitute the Parliament of Victoria. No Bill can become law until it goes through this Chamber, as well as another place. I do not need to refer to the fact that, whilst there are over 800,000 voters for the Assembly, there are only about 300,000 for the Council. Consequently, a very large number of our adult population who are at the Front are not eligible. I desire, therefore to have the Act amended so that the returned soldiers may be able to vote at elections for this House. If the clause is agreed to it will be necessary for them to take out electors' rights. I commend the Bill to the House, and trust that it will meet with approval.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister).—The honorable member has given many reasons for extending the franchise of this House. Some of the reasons were stated by myself some fourteen

years ago. I thought then that if a man was competent to elect he should be competent to be elected, and I do not know that my view has altered in that regard. I think the honorable member has shown that the franchise of this House is more conservative than that of any similar chamber outside of this State. He has shown that the property qualification exists in only one other State, namely, Tasmania.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON.—The property qualification is higher in South Australia than here.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—The position I took up before was that the £10 qualification was one that I would adopt. I thought that any person who was qualified to vote for a member should be qualified for election. Of course, there is a good deal in the statement that we still cut out many men who have no property who would be well fitted to stand for this House.

The Hon. D. L. McNAMARA.—We can amend the Bill in Committee.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—The longer we live in politics the more we realize that a good deal of the foundation of our Constitutions has to be preserved and not unduly tampered with. We see a spectacle to-day that makes us think that, no matter how far we go, the question is whether our system of government will be accepted by one section of the community. That section thinks it should receive all that it wants. I am not speaking on behalf of the Government, but as a private member. I am prepared to vote for certain clauses of the Bill. I doubt very much if the honorable member is on sound ground when he says that the soldier should be qualified to vote as such. I do not think there is any one anxious to give more to the soldiers than I am. The honorable member is going to debar the men here who are physically unable to become soldiers. He is going to give preference to those who are physically able to act as soldiers.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—That is done with professional men.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—In that case you have the mental training, but the honorable member proposes to give the vote to the man who is physically fit to enlist. There may be two brothers, one of whom is strong enough to enlist, whilst the other is not, and the one who is not

strong enough will not be allowed to vote for this Chamber.

The Hon. D. L. McNAMARA.—I shall be glad to give the vote to him.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—Then the honorable member must give it to every one, and in that case this House would be like the other House. That would not do, and I can see no virtue in it. We should have nothing but war, because this Chamber would claim the same rights as another Chamber. In this Chamber we can hold up measures only until we are satisfied that the public has spoken quite plainly in regard to them. I am only saying what our late much-respected President said on more than one occasion. I always speak what I feel in that regard. This House should not indefinitely hold up legislation. We have a right to hold it up long enough to be satisfied that the public have reviewed it, and want it. I would much rather see this Chamber occupy that position than I would put it in the position of having the same franchise and the same powers and privileges as another place. I am prepared, in my private capacity, to vote for the second reading of this Bill, reserving to myself the right to seek to amend it in Committee as I may think desirable.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I rather sympathize with Mr. Baillieu in having to speak as he has done, and having opinions to which he gave utterance fourteen or fifteen years ago brought before him for confirmation. His hands have been tied, to some extent, by words that fell from the Premier when he made his policy speech.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—No.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—Well, perhaps not. I take a different view from that held by honorable members who have already spoken on this Bill. From the time our Constitution was framed, we have stuck to the bi-cameral system, one of the principal features of which is that there should be one House elected by the whole of the adults resident in the State, and that there should be no property qualification for either members or electors of that House. In saying that the electors for one Chamber should be the whole of the adult population, we are to take it that that includes what is known as the floating population. We have a number of electors for the Legislative Assembly who

may be here to-day, and in another State in a fortnight's time. They have no actual stake in the country at all. On the other hand, under the bi-cameral system, the second Chamber should, as far as possible, represent the fixed population, that is, the people who have an actual stake in the country. Although objections may be raised to insisting upon a qualification in land, still, that is a rough generalization of the fact that people who are interested in land, either as freeholders or leaseholders, are much more likely to be a fixed part of the population than a man who may be only a bird of passage. If it is desirable, in order that the bi-cameral system may be given proper effect, that there should be a property qualification for the electors, it naturally follows that there should be a property qualification for candidates for election to the second Chamber. This qualification now stands at property of the annual value of £50, clear of all encumbrances, except parliamentary or municipal taxes. Mr. McNamara wants to reduce this qualification to rather a nebulous state. Honorable members know that a piece of land might be mortgaged for far more than its value; and it would not do, therefore, to remove the provision that it must be free of all encumbrances. It would have been very much better for Mr. McNamara to have come out into the open, and have tried to secure what I understand is a plank in the platform of his party, the abolition of the second Chamber. If the Bill we are now considering is adopted, it will weaken this Chamber very much. It certainly would not strengthen it in the slightest degree. I have no doubt it is the desire of that party to weaken this Chamber, but that intention is not expressed in this Bill. Mr. Baillieu has already pointed out the disastrous results which would follow if the second Chamber were elected in the same way as the Assembly; and if we adopted that system, it would supply a strong argument in favour of abolishing this House altogether. It is absolute foolishness to have two Houses elected on the same qualification. I shall vote against the Bill for what it contains in the first part. The franchise is quite low enough now; and to interfere in any way would be a breach of trust to our constituents, in view of the fact that there has been no desire for such an alteration. With regard to the second part of the Bill, which proposes to give

a vote to soldiers, the framers of the Constitution recognised that, although a property qualification is desirable for the electors of the second Chamber, yet there were a number of people who, by their educational attainments, were well qualified to give a discriminating vote in political matters. There are, I think, seven different classes of persons of this kind on whom the franchise has been conferred. Mr. McNamara seeks to give the right to vote to persons who may have little or no education at all; and the most extraordinary feature of this part of the Bill is that it passes over our own soldiers altogether. I suppose that is an error, but the Bill seeks to confer the franchise upon discharged soldiers and sailors of His Majesty's Forces.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Surely our soldiers are members of His Majesty's Forces?

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—No; the honorable member will find that in every Act of Parliament our boys are spoken of as members of the Australian Imperial Force.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—We can easily alter that.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I know that, but it shows that the Bill has been loosely drawn. I quite agree with Mr. Baillieu that it would be unwise to confer the franchise on our splendid young fellows simply because they have fought for us. The fact that they have fought for us has no bearing on this subject at all. I am not prepared to vote for the second reading of this Bill.

The Hon. T. BEGGS.—Without entering into the merits or demerits of the Bill, there is one outstanding reason why members of this House should vote against it—it has never been submitted to the electors. We should not vote in so grave a matter as this without our constituents having had an opportunity of considering the proposals. The honorable member who introduced the Bill could hardly have expected for one moment that this House would agree to an alteration of the Constitution without, first of all, submitting the proposals to the country.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister).—I want to make a few remarks on this Bill, and, like Mr. Baillieu, what I say will represent my own views, and not those of the Government. The speech made by Mr. McNamara in introducing

the Bill shows that he has not grasped the fundamental principle of the Constitution to which Mr. Manifold has referred. The honorable member has gone through a number of text-books and Constitutions to see where he could find the most democratic provisions. He has lost sight of the fact that a Constitution must grow. Those which are adopted by excitable gentlemen in times of crisis never last. If he will study the times in which certain Constitutions have been passed, he will see that they have never been of a permanent nature. During the French Revolution, a Constitution was prepared every week by the Abbé Sieyès; but such Constitutions never lasted. It is those which have grown up like the British Constitution, which has developed with the customs and manners of the people of the country, which stand. Those which are manufactured by means of snips from this, that and the other Constitution, may look very pretty, but they will inevitably break down in the test of working. What is behind the honorable member's mind is that there should be government by one House only. The honorable member has told us that there are, roughly, 800,000 electors for the Assembly, and only 300,000 for the Legislative Council. He seems to be fearfully alarmed at that discrepancy, but he could not have studied the Federal Constitution, in which both Houses are elected on the one qualification. This matter was the subject of a great deal of controversy, but eventually a majority agreed to the same franchise for both Houses of the Federal Parliament. The warnings of political students as to what would happen from such a course were completely disregarded. The position of the Federal Parliament reminds me of what the Caliph said of the Alexandrian Library—"If the books agree with the Koran, they are useless. If they disagree with it, they are pernicious. In any case, they should be destroyed." We have, at the present time, a Federal Senate which is a replica of the House of Representatives, and there is bound to be trouble so long as the present method of election is preserved. It must be recollect that the Constitution of this State has been altered bit by bit from that which was adopted in 1850. The idea of the framers was that householders should elect the body which is to have a restraining influence,

temporarily, at any rate, upon legislation. There can be no doubt that under all the forms of the British Constitution, whether in Great Britain itself or any of her Dependencies, the unmistakable wish of the electors of the more popular House must ultimately prevail. That is the underlying principle. The idea of the Upper House is to see that temporary gusts of passion are not mistaken for a fixed determination, and to protect the rights of minorities, a most important thing. Cromwell, who—I suppose in the field of action—has been called by Dr. S. R. Gardiner the greatest Englishman of all time, tried to govern England with a single Chamber. He to some extent adopted the views held by the honorable member, and tried to govern with a single House. His words as to the arbitrariness of the single Chamber have been remembered for the 200 odd years since he lived, and they should not be forgotten for thousands of years. That must be the great defect of the Constitution which is composed of one Chamber, or of two Chambers which are in effect one. It is the great defect of our Federal Constitution, because the two Houses are in effect one. If one likes to check the figures in connexion with the last three or four Federal elections as I have done, it will be seen that, instead of there being any check or ballast on popular gusts of passion, none is provided, and one House is the echo of another. Lord Acton, in those splendid lectures on the French Revolution which he delivered to students at Cambridge, spoke of the French system as the best system of government, because it provided for the representation of the minority, and gave the minority some opportunity of being heard and having its views considered. He pointed out how in modern democratic days the tendency of the demagogue has been to suppress and stifle the views of the minority, and sometimes the views of the real majority. We know that in our midst today the views of large numbers are not being heard, because steps are taken to prevent a ballot on momentous questions. That is a danger which we must guard against in our Constitution. We must provide for a minority having some representation and for its views being considered. The Government which attempts to legislate solely for the uncontrolled wishes of a numerical majority will quickly bring the country, not only

to financial ruin, but to social chaos. In the Constitution for the Council we have as nearly as may be achieved the ideal of a householders' House, although I do not say that there are not some things which could be altered. The franchise of £15 a year lets in practically every householder. In my electorate, a portion of which is as democratic as any part of Australia, every man renting a house of any kind whatever is qualified. Fifteen pounds a year means that a man who pays 8s. a week in rent can vote for the Legislative Council. We hear those orators from a certain place declaiming against the fact that the humblest cottage cannot be rented under £1 a week. If that is so, every one of those who are householders can vote for the Council. I checked the matter with the town clerk of South Melbourne, and I found that the cottages rated at less than 8s. a week there were non-existent. That is the same, of course, right through the constituencies. As I have indicated, the foundation and basis of the Council is that it is a householders' House. In the third clause of the Bill the honorable member has made a suggestion to alter that. It does him a certain amount of credit to make that suggestion. The Premier of Western Australia once declared Labour politics to be 25 per cent. practical politics and 75 per cent. bird-lime. This proposal in the third clause is some of the bird-lime put out by the honorable member's party. It sounds well to say, "Here is a man who has fought for his country, yet he is denied a vote for the Legislative Council." At a gathering held not far from here one excitable individual declared that his constituents had not enlisted because they did not have a vote for the Legislative Council. Of course, next week there was another excuse made. If the honorable member in charge of this Bill thinks that every man who has enlisted should have a vote I presume that he is rigid in the application of his principles, as most Democrats of his type are, and would reduce the age qualification of all electors to eighteen years, because some men enlisted for service on their eighteenth birthday. If the fact that a man has offered to fight is in itself a reason why he should be an elector, it necessarily means that every man who has enlisted, whatever his age, should be allowed to vote. Those responsible for the Constitution of

this Chamber laid it down as a foundation that it should be a House where the householder shall be represented, where the man of more settled temperament shall be represented, and where, speaking generally, the man who is married and responsible shall be represented. I am aware that there are certain other qualifications mentioned in the section, but the honorable member will know that they are for all practical purposes useless. They are excrescences on the real fundamental basis of the Constitution. In my own electorate, when I examined the rolls, I found that there were not more than fifty-two persons on the general roll, although there were over 21,000 voters altogether. In the division of Malvern, where I have resided, I think, speaking from memory of an election in which I took a great deal of interest, there were only two persons on the general roll with the necessary qualifications. I only mention that as showing that the basis of the Council is that it shall be a place where the householder is represented. Until the honorable member appreciates those facts, that if your first House is a replica of the second House it is useless, and that the second House is absolutely essential to prevent the tyranny of the majority, to see that the minority have some say, and to insure that a temporary gust of public opinion is not mistaken for the permanent will of the people, I am afraid that he will hold wrong views on measures of this kind. He put his case for the reduction of the qualification of honorable members with great skill, and in a most temperate manner. I have always been in favour of reducing the qualification to such an amount as will allow any responsible man who is in a position to own a house to become a member. My main idea was that if a man owning a house worth £500 over and above any mortgages on it was qualified it would give every clerk, a great many artisans, and every trader and business man in the community an opportunity of being a member. I have always held that view. To the extent that the honorable member's Bill meets my desire, I am prepared to vote with him. I feel that the householders' qualification must be kept. It is desirable that a member should be a house-owner, and that he should represent those who are householders. We could widen the area from which men would be

selected without in any way impairing that fundamental principle on which this House rests. The amendment proposed by the honorable member goes very much further than that indicated by the Premier. I do not favour doing away with the provision that a member should have some house-owning qualification. With regard to the remarks of the Leader of the House about the fact that a man who is sufficiently skilled to elect should be sufficiently skilled to be elected, I would inform him that that is not always the law, and that if he looks at the Federal Constitution he will find that it is not so there. Notwithstanding that extremists got a great deal of their own way in connexion with that Constitution, the honorable gentleman will see that there is a restriction—I do not know whether it was the result of accident or design, but if it was an accident it was a very lucky one—a restriction which imposes a strong bar against aliens becoming members of the Federal House, although before the war an alien had only to be here a very short time to be naturalized and secure a vote. I think that the reasons for the qualification for members are sound and practical. The reasons why we should not impair the foundation of this House are so strong, and the circumstances of the times make them so potent, that I should be sorry if colour were lent to any proposal here to interfere with its Constitution.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—I propose to vote for the second reading of this Bill, but when it gets into Committee I will endeavour to make amendments in clauses 2 and 3. This question of revising the property qualification of a candidate for this House has been before the country for many years. When I was first seeking election to this House, this matter was referred to in many parts of the Province. I said that I believed an alteration would be wise, and that I was in favour of a reduction of the qualification. I was also a member of the Government whose policy was to reduce the property qualification. That policy was announced at Creswick on the 8th November, 1914. Since then I have seen no reason to change my views. Previous speakers seem to be under the impression that we have now a proposal before us to reduce the franchise so far as it refers to this House. All that is proposed is to reduce the property qualification of those who can be elected mem-

bers. It has always seemed to me anomalous that, while we allow professional gentlemen to vote for members of this House without a property qualification, the Constitution does not permit them to become candidates. It would be a great advantage to Parliament, and to this State, if we allowed them to become members. I propose to vote in accordance with the pledges I made to the electors, and also in accordance with the policy announced by the Premier in 1914.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN (Minister of Agriculture).—I may be permitted to say that Mr. McNamara, in moving the second reading of the Bill, made a speech which was moderate in tone and certainly persuasive. I am not quite certain what attitude a member of the Government ought to take up on this particular question, but I am inclined to disagree with the two of my colleagues who have already spoken. The Government, as a Government, have not considered this Bill, and whatever may be my personal views with regard to it, I cannot vote for it. It is a good thing to get a discussion, in an academic kind of way, on questions of this sort, both here and in another place, but it is not the way to secure constitutional reform. While a private member is entitled to bring in a Bill of this kind, honorable members generally are free to vote for or against it as they think fit; but in order to secure a reform of such a far-reaching nature, it is surely necessary to have the opinion of the electors before this House on the subject. Without such an opinion we should not be justified in carrying a measure of this kind. It cannot be carried without again consulting the electors. I know it will be said that a proposition was made by the present Leader of the Government three years ago to make a reform in the constitution of this House, but circumstances have changed in the interval, and have rendered it unnecessary to give effect to the promise which was then made. At this stage it would be extremely unwise for honorable members of this Chamber to vote in favour of the Bill. It is absolutely necessary that the question should be again submitted to the electors before any action is taken. It is too important a matter to be brought forward by a private member and passed by a deliberative Chamber in circumstances like those exist-

ing just now. Therefore, whatever may be my personal views, I must vote against the second reading of the Bill.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I desire to say a few words in support of this measure. The only fault I have to find with it is that it does not go nearly far enough. It appears to me not only reasonable, but just and equitable, that the qualification which suffices for the franchise to electors of this Chamber should be quite sufficient for the qualification of a member. Arguments have been used during the course of the debate in favour of voting against this Bill. Some of them are worthy of attention, but others are obviously specious. Mr. Beggs made a statement similar to that of the Minister of Agriculture, that the reform of the Constitution has never been before the people. We know, as a matter of fact, that the position is quite the opposite. This matter has been discussed on platform after platform, and it was definitely before the electors of this State in 1914, when the electors placed the Government in power fondly hoping they would endeavour to carry out at least a few of the pledges they made. It was expected that the Government would show that the various proposals in their policy were not merely window-dressing, and put forward to secure votes. I should like to take this opportunity of congratulating the Government upon having all their forces in the chamber just now to discuss such an important question as this. We have had the spectacle recently of the Government not being fully represented on important divisions. Some of their members were evidently absent from the firing line; they did not find it even necessary to go through the formality of securing a pair. Now that we have four members present it can be reasonably expected they will endeavour to carry out the promises made to the electors by their own leader. I cannot enter into the mind of the Minister of Agriculture when he speaks of this proposal as something the electors have never discussed. The fact that this Bill has been brought in by a private member shows the remissness of the Government in not making serious efforts to carry out the policy on which they were returned to power. We, however, know full well, from our knowledge of this particular Government, that they had no intention

of carrying out this proposal. Even if this Bill is not adopted, it will serve one useful purpose—it will show to the people of this country whether the Government are really genuine in their desire to carry out the policy on which they were elected. It has been stated by the Minister of Agriculture that circumstances have changed since the policy was declared. His idea is that under the present abnormal conditions we should not endeavour to make any change in our Constitution. Yet he well knows that practically every Government in the world has altered its Constitution to a certain extent since the outbreak of the war. On the general question of the Bill, surely it cannot be contended that the possession of real estate necessarily entails the possession of intelligence. That is apparently the argument used against this proposed alteration in the qualification of members. We often find that exactly the opposite is the case. The average elector, without this peculiar qualification, has a better intelligence in connexion with economic and political problems than the average man who possesses this particular property qualification. The true motive expressed in that Constitution is distinctly a class one. For that reason it should be condemned in this or any other democratic community. It is the usual argument that in every community there should be a privileged or ruling class. I venture to say that, owing to the abnormal times now prevailing, people are beginning to look at these questions from a different view-point. The large proportion of the people in this and every other country are at present opposed to the doctrine of the divine right to rule either on the part of an individual, or a group of individuals. The people cannot see why any minority in the community should arrogate to themselves a power to rule the community by virtue of the possession of a little more wealth. Broadly speaking, what is required is that this bricks-and-mortar and property franchise shall be swept away altogether, and that there shall be a true and genuine recognition of the rights of flesh and blood to rule the people of this country. I can readily believe, from what I know of the opinions held by honorable members, that the important principle embodied in the second clause of the Bill may not agree with the views of the majority, or the particular interests,

financial and otherwise, which they represent. For all that, I say that a majority in this Chamber should at least vote for the second reading of the Bill, and allow us to take one step in the march of progress by altering the constitution of the Council in a democratic manner. At the present time we do not express the desire to abolish this Chamber, but I agree that we are taking the first step by giving the House an opportunity to reform itself. If it does not take advantage of that opportunity the arguments used for continuing its existence will be entirely swept away. I recognised that when this Bill was brought forward, and its terms were discussed, it was more like the triumph of hope over experience to ever expect the majority of members here to support it in its entirety. As I said before, even if they totally disagree with the main clause, honorable members should in justice to themselves vote for the second reading, if only to embody in our Constitution the important principle contained in clause 3. If there is any patriotism in the House a clause such as that should meet with unanimous approval, because in the first place it gives us an opportunity of making good our professions of admiration and respect for the men who have been fighting for the liberty of the Empire. Honorable members who have been on the recruiting platform must well remember the arguments used to induce young men to enlist. We told them that their country needed them, and that a grateful public would never forget the sacrifices which they were called upon to make. Are we going to make good to any extent those professions? When they ask for bread are we going to give them a stone? Are we to have the same condition of affairs prevailing in future as has prevailed in the past? We know how men who have bled and suffered have been treated in days gone by. Every argument was used to induce them to leave their comfortable firesides and fight for their country, but when they came back we know how they were treated. Are we here to be false to the promises which we made to those who have gone away? Are we going to allow it to be said, as it has been said, that the only motive of members of this Chamber—myself among their number—in urging them to enlist, was the selfish,

Hon. W. J. Beckett.

cowardly desire to protect ourselves behind men who would fight for the defence of our wealth and possessions? Now is the opportunity to show that that statement is not correct, and that we recognise the sacrifice which the men have made, and the services which they have rendered to the country. It has been said on the public platform, as well as in this House—I think it was mentioned by Mr. Manifold—that for a man to have the franchise for this Chamber he should have a stake in the country. Who could have a greater stake in the country than a man who has suffered misery and hardship of the worst kind, and has offered to lay down his life for his country? Are we going to recognise that in any shape or form? I do not wish to be mistaken in this matter. I do not believe that we should have any class distinctions, military or otherwise. It is already recognised in the Constitution that a retired military officer has the right to the franchise for this Chamber. Nowadays all men are equal. Some of the best men have fought as privates.

The Hon. T. BEGGS.—Would you allow preference to soldiers to come before preference to unionists?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I do not want to go into that question now, but whatever position I have occupied, whether municipal or parliamentary, my vote and voice have been given in the direction of absolute preference to men who have done something over those who have only talked about it. I say that we recognise that justice and equity should prevail, and that every man and woman should have an equal share in making the laws which all are called upon to obey. I do not want to labour the question, but I wish the people to be shown that our recruiting talk was not all humbug.

The Hon. W. KENDELL.—What does this Bill do for the returned soldier?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It gives him the right to a vote in the country which he has taken such an active part in defending. It will give him a franchise, which all should possess. To my mind, the Bill should be passed. It is a step in the direction of giving every man a vote. I do not know what argument any man who opposes this measure can use when, from the public platform,

he urges men to enlist. Honorable members say that the men who are fighting our battles are noble, in the best sense of the word, and here is an opportunity for them to recognise in some small measure the sacrifices those men have made. As the House decides on this issue, so the public will decide whether our professions of gratitude to our brave soldiers were merely hypocrisy and humbug or not. He would be a brave man who would say at the present time what a Constitution in any part of the world will be in a few years to come. Wherever a Constitution exists at the present time it will in the near future be re-modelled. We look forward possibly to this Chamber being abolished in the near future. Honorable members will be driving a nail into its coffin if they do not recognise that there should be reform in some shape or other in connexion with the Council. If this Chamber does not adopt the course of assisting to reform its own Constitution, then the public will judge as to whether it should continue as a deliberative and representative House.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I do not wish to give a silent vote in connexion with this measure. As a candidate for a seat in this House, I said from the public platform, as well as in the circular which I issued to the electors, that I stood as a supporter of the Council as it then was. Until I am directed by my constituents to vote for an amendment of the Constitution, I am not prepared to support a Bill of this kind. I feel that property owners of this State require a certain amount of protection, because it is the property owners who will suffer most, and who have always suffered from bad legislation. Until the Senate is reformed, we are not going to have a Federal Parliament which will give satisfaction to the people of the Commonwealth. It has already been stated here that a grave mistake was made in providing the same electors for both the House of Representatives and the Senate. I hope that the day will not come when the Constitution of this House is altered in that direction. As far as clause 3 of this Bill is concerned, it seems to me to be a poor sop to the returned soldiers to say that they are to have a vote. I feel that the returned soldiers are looking for a great deal more than

that. To my mind, it is a very poor statement to make that if we vote against this measure we are voting against doing justice to returned soldiers. We have to realize that the position that has come about in connexion with recruiting, and the efforts made to send reinforcements to the Front, was caused by the very party who are now suggesting that this House should be reformed, the party that would abolish the Legislative Council. We also have to realize that the great bulk of the money that has been raised for repatriation comes from the property owners who are our constituents.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Is that a fact?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—That is a fact, without the slightest doubt.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I should say the general public.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—One has only to examine the subscription lists and see the names of those who are making an effort to raise these funds. Any one who would then state that it is not as I say must be blind and unable to recognise plain facts. The greater portion of the money that is being raised in connexion with these funds is coming from property-owners and large financial institutions, and is not being raised by the people who are supposed to be represented by the honorable member who has just interjected. The party represented by the mover of this Bill are doing all they possibly can against the proper representation of this country. For an honorable member to bring in a proposal such as one of those contained in this Bill is simply lip support, and I look to this House and to the right-thinking people of this State to give these men a great deal more than a paltry vote, as proposed in this Bill. We ought to do justice to the returned soldiers, and I am satisfied that justice will be done in this matter, not only in the State of Victoria, but in the Commonwealth. If this Bill is thrown out—and if the House is sensible it will throw it out—our action, no doubt, will be called attention to on the public platform. I hold that a reform of this House should not come from a body of men who are anxious to abolish this House altogether. I am perfectly satisfied that the great bulk of the right-thinking people of the State, and the people who have a

stake in the State, are behind the Legislative Council, and will say that this House is not to be abolished and not to be altered. When I stood for election I had a Labour man as my opponent, and at every polling place except one throughout the South-Western Province I had a huge majority. That was the case in the democratic divisions, such as Geelong West and the Barwon, where Labour have always had a majority. At that election I made it distinctly understood that I would enter the Council as a supporter of the House as it then existed.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Would the House be altered if the franchise was altered?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Yes.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—That is very doubtful.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I am perfectly satisfied, however, that, if the franchise was brought down to the municipal roll, there would still be a large majority against any alteration in the character of this House.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—That would put 100,000 more voters on the roll.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—If those 100,000 were added to the roll, I am perfectly satisfied that this House would be left as it is at present. I think we all realize that a second Chamber is necessary to protect the people who have the greatest stake in the country, and who are most concerned in the good government of Victoria. I feel that it would be a grave mistake for us to accept the advice of two members of the Government and vote for the second reading of this Bill. I can see no reason for doing that. We should only be wasting our time if we took this Bill into Committee. I think it is a matter of regret that we have to vote against the third provision. No doubt, it will be stated on the Yarra Bank and other platforms that the Legislative Council refused to give the vote for the Council to the returned soldiers. Our action will be made use of in that way. The provision in regard to that matter has been put in this Bill for no reason except that our rejection of it is to be used on the public platform during the coming election. Irrespective of that,

I am quite prepared to take my responsibility in the matter. If the question is raised on the public platform, I shall be quite prepared to show that we had no other way of dealing with the Bill than throwing it out.

The Hon. D. MELVILLE.—I feel it necessary to rise to defend the provision with regard to the £50 qualification, because I can claim to be to some extent the father of it. I have made many speeches on this subject, and I am surprised, when we look about and see what is going on, that an honorable member, whatever political belief he may have, should start a discussion at this period on the question of the alteration of the Constitution. It is to be remembered that we are in the throes of a desperate war, and do not know that we shall have any liberties at all if the enemy wins. I cannot understand people who know this standing up here and trying to make constitutional alterations, and also standing on the public platform and openly avowing their intention of abolishing the Legislative Council. In past days, when I first entered the House, it was only people who were rated up to £100 a year who had a vote. We have travelled along the road very far, and I would ask whether we have improved the position. I would remind honorable members of what is going on in our midst—what is being done by so many thousands of people who are practically in open rebellion. As a matter of fact, speaking candidly, we have simply been weakening the government of this State by some of the alterations we have made in the past. The result has been to weaken Parliament, and to allow the control of the Government to be handed over to the very men who are now educating and training the community to a condition of civil war. That is a strong thing to say, but I know it is correct, and I say it straight out. Our Governments have been too weak in being so ready to give way in these alterations of our Constitution for the sake of peace. "Anything for peace" has been the motto of our Governments, and I am sorry to have to say it. Since I came into this House we have not been slack in extending the franchise. There was a very fine House when I entered it many years ago, and we have preserved the good qualities that then

existed, so far as this House is concerned. When I was speaking on the Electoral Law Amendment Bill of 1910, I gave, as an illustration, what had happened in one of the South American Republics, which had been very progressive in this sort of constitutional changes. Here was the description of that country as given by a British newspaper which I quoted when speaking on the Bill of 1910—

Naturally a feeling of extreme nervousness and uncertainty prevails, with the consequence of putting an end for the time being to all new enterprises, and causing a stagnation in all classes of undertakings as complete as it is universal. While opinions may differ as to the state of the country at the time that the late President (General Zelaya) came into power some sixteen years ago, there can be no doubt at all as to the condition in which he has left it. The National Treasury is absolutely empty; public credit is destroyed, for not a single bank in the Republic will lend the Government a cent; and many of the officials, as well as Congressmen, the military and the police are not paid. In the meantime, the printing presses are turning out new notes by the hundreds of thousands, and depreciation being already some 900-1,000 per cent. of the face value. Amid all this, there is not a single ray of hope that things are likely to improve.

The *Hansard* report continues as follows:—

The Hon. T. H. PAYNE.—Where is this?

The Hon. D. MELVILLE said it was one of these free Republics. It was all very well to preach this kind of doctrine. It was all sweet at first. If he knew history, and he knew a little of the history of his school days, he had not forgotten the earlier Republics. He had not forgotten, and could not forget, that these countries that began with all these things finished up very badly. When the history of the Ballieu Government and the Attorney-General was written, there would not be a ratepayer in existence. The Minister of Public Works knew that it was all right to-night, but what would be the consequence of all this haste? The ratepayers were told that their names were to be wiped out. Whoever invented this but some ultra-democratic demon? He, of course, was an antiquated fossil. The first plank of the policy of those who desired such changes and wished to destroy thrift was to burst up, and the second plank was to burst up, and the third plank was to burst up all the results of industry.

It is the ratepayer who pays all our taxes. Since a certain party has been in power, look at the exemptions that have been adopted in the Commonwealth and in the State. Look at the source from which we are now obtaining the war taxes. Is it not a sorry thing to contemplate the fact that a certain party have set themselves to frightening those at the foundation of all

industries? If that party do away with all capital, the result will be that all industries will be wiped out gradually. I would ask honorable members to look over the provisions which were passed some ten years or more ago. I would also ask honorable members to look over the wall and see what is going on in New South Wales. They can also note what is going on amongst ourselves. Is it not a fact that the unions are pushing along, and that the people who want to abolish all these checks are raising this feeling we see of man against man? Industry is to be stamped out. I cannot see these notions prevailing without telling the House what I think on the subject. When speaking on the Constitution Reform Bill in 1903, I made some references to the Attorney-General of those times, but as the then Attorney-General is now in the Chair I do not want to allude to anything I said then. When the qualification for members was fixed at £50 there was a large House. Some very highly distinguished men were members of the Council at the time. The late President, Sir Henry Wrixon, Sir William Zeal, and others, foresaw what would happen in the future. They saw that a path was being opened up that would lead straight to destruction. I fought for the reduction to £50 for some years before that amount was agreed to. I have to admit that it is doubtful whether my views at that time were thoroughly sound. We know that Australia is a very happy country. During the gold period, our public life went along very smoothly. Trade was only occasionally disturbed. Does any honorable member know where, from 1853 onwards, working men's wages have risen, as they then did at Ballarat, to £2 a day? At that time, we were one of the proudest communities, and were working under the best conditions in the world. We are going on. There has been no arrestment of progress. Australia is politically the freest country in the world. Of course, we find men giving expression to extreme views. I once gave expression to such views myself. I used to sit in the corner and give expression to wild notions, though, perhaps, not so wild as the honorable members who now occupy the corner give expression to. However, their time will come. They will see differently later on. It is a

curious thing to reflect upon that some men of an exceedingly Conservative type, men who could not tolerate even the Radicalism contained in my speeches, have turned Radicals, whilst I am now more conservative. This little House of thirty-four members serves as a useful check; and if its powers are to be whittled away, I would say, "Abolish the House altogether; sweep away this last check on wild legislation. Do not let us make a sham of the Chamber." What an absurdity to wipe out a House like this containing a mere handful of men, and to allow the other House to remain. Why not wipe that out too?

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—That is what we want to do.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—Why wipe out the two Houses?

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—Because they are useless.

The Hon. D. MELVILLE.—The practical man would say, "Do not let us wipe out the Legislative Council. We are going to allow the Legislative Assembly to remain." Many attacks are made on this Chamber, but we rarely hear a suggestion to wipe out the other House.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—A lot of arguments can be used in favour of the abolition of all the State Parliaments.

The Hon. D. MELVILLE.—I doubt the sincerity of that argument.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—Were not the people promised something of that kind when the States federated?

The Hon. D. MELVILLE.—Many things were promised at that time that are not now acceptable. I think it would have been better had the debate on this Bill been adjourned, in order to allow honorable members time to prepare their speeches.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I may say that the members of the Government have not conferred upon this Bill. Personally, I did not regard it very seriously when I saw it on the notice-paper. Seeing that it was fathered by a member of the Labour party—one of whose planks is to destroy the Legislative Council—I anticipated, when the Leader of the House rose, that he would have taken the view that a matter of this sort should not be brought up by a private member, but should be a Government measure.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It is part of the Government's policy.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—I am aware that the Premier, in his policy speech some years ago, did say that one of the planks of the Government platform was reform of the franchise for the Legislative Council. The matter has not been discussed by Cabinet, and I do not know how far the Government intend going in that direction. I shall certainly vote against the second reading of the Bill. With regard to the third clause, I hope it is not inserted for the purpose mentioned by Mr. Richardson. I think it would be playing the game too low down altogether to use the returned soldier for electioneering purposes.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I wish the Government had taken that view some time ago.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—The returned soldier expects much better than that at the hands of the country. I hope that, as a result of the generous treatment they will receive, a large number of the soldiers will be placed in the position that they will have the qualification for this House. There are matters in connexion with the Constitution that I candidly admit are subjects for review. There is the matter of the franchise. But when it comes to be dealt with, it should be dealt with as a Government measure. I think the House would be ill-advised to allow this Bill to go beyond the second reading.

The Hon. J. McWHAE.—This is a win-the-war measure. I think the representatives of the Labour party are to be congratulated on doing something in their little way to win the war. But one would have thought that influential members of the Labour party, instead of endeavouring to put our House in order, would be doing something to put the country's house in order. We know that ships are lying idle in the Yarra, that work has ceased at our coal mines, that our meat and other produce are not allowed to leave the country; and we know, also, that the well-being of Australia, and of our mighty Empire, is at stake. However, the Labour party want to do something to win the war, and their idea is to reduce the franchise for this House. Apparently, the Labour party are willing that the soldiers should go hungry. They stop the implements of war, but they are will-

ing to give the soldiers a vote. That is their idea of winning the war. Instead of doing something calculated to appease the industrial storm that threatens to overwhelm the whole country, they introduce a Bill of this kind. When I was in the Fast a little while ago, the expression was frequently on men's lips that Australia was a quitter, that she was leaving the war. Who is to be thanked for that? How is it that no shipbuilding is going on, no implements of war being carried out, no munitions being made? Is it not because there is a wicked influence in the land? The Labour party have great influence, and surely the Labour members in this House could do something better in a short session like the present than waste our time over a Bill of this kind. They are asking us to flog a dead horse. There is no chance of the Bill being carried. I shall certainly vote against the second reading of the Bill.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—I desire to say a few words in support of the Bill. I am sorry I was not here during the earlier part of the discussion. I have no doubt that some very interesting speeches were made. After I had been a member of a municipal council for some little time, naturally I thought I should like to go one higher, and I looked around to see what were the qualifications necessary to become a member of this House. To my surprise I found the property qualification was pretty high, and at that particular time I was not qualified. I do not know that I acquired any more brains or ability while getting the qualification necessary to become a member of this House. It seems to me a remarkable thing that a man has to have a certain amount of property in order to become a member of this House. It does not matter how he gets the property; it may be left to him by a relative.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—He may win a Tattersall's sweep.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—It does not matter how a man becomes possessed of property—he may be the biggest noodle in the world—he is qualified to become a member of this Council. I know several gentlemen who, to my mind, would make excellent members of this House, but they do not possess the necessary qualification. They are wealthy men, but their money is invested in other ways. They do not care to invest in property.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—They may have it in the war loan.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—With all due respect to honorable members, in my opinion, some of these gentlemen are better qualified to sit here than we are. I think something should be done in the direction of reducing the qualification for members of this House, even if it is not made the same as the qualification for members of another place. I do not see why a man should have to have property before he can become a member of this House. Several honorable members have made capital out of the win-the-war business. I think a great majority of people will admit that the Labour party did more, when they were in power in the Commonwealth, to win the war than the new Government has done. In my own suburb, until recently, the office of mayor was held by members of the Labour party. Last year, whilst a Labour member was in power, over £4,000 was raised for patriotic purposes, and the same amount was raised in the previous year. During this year another gentleman has been in office, and they have not raised £1,000. The money that was raised by the Labour mayors mostly came out of the pockets of the labouring people.

The PRESIDENT.—That has nothing to do with the Bill.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—Several previous speakers did not mention the qualification of members at all. I am given to understand that at the present time, even while the war is going on, the question is being discussed in Great Britain of reducing the qualification of voters for the House of Commons. It is likely that the qualification will be reduced, and that 8,000,000 additional people in the Old Country will have votes.

The PRESIDENT.—The Bill does not propose to reduce the qualification of voters. It relates to the qualification of members and to putting soldiers on the roll.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—Other members were allowed to speak all round the subject without making any reference to the qualification at all. Since this House has been in existence there have been many reductions made in the qualifications with respect to voters and members. The Bill, if it does nothing else, will bring forth arguments, and will no doubt be a step in the direction of bringing honorable members to see at last the

necessity for reducing the qualification of members. The reason we who belong to the Labour party are so anxious to get the qualification reduced is, of course, that we desire to get more of our own members here, and there are not many members of our party who possess the qualification necessary for members of this House. If the qualification were reduced, no doubt more of our members would become candidates, and we think that they would be successful in winning some of the seats in this House. Mr. McWhae rather ridiculed the clause in the Bill providing that returned soldiers should have the right to vote for the election of members of this House. Surely that will be a step in the right direction, and surely the men who have gone away to fight for us are entitled to that privilege. I trust that, at any rate, the second reading of the Bill will be passed, and that honorable members will discuss the measure, and show that, at all events, they welcome a few Labour members here, because I think the speeches of those members add very great interest to the debates on some of the Bills that are brought forward.

The Hon. A. O. SACHSE.—I hesitated about speaking at an earlier stage on this matter, and many points I had desired to mention have been referred to by previous speakers. I have been sitting quietly trying to formulate some idea as to the reasons underlying the introduction of this Bill. One can hardly understand Mr. McNamara introducing the Bill after having given public utterance to the statement that he wants this House entirely abolished. One could quite understand it if he were to bring in a Bill providing for the abolition of this House, but he has not done so. We have an inconsistency at the very introduction of this measure. The honorable member first says, "I want to reduce the qualification for members of this Chamber. I say that there ought to be no qualification." According to one honorable member, "Flesh and blood should be represented, not bricks and mortar." Let us take the clothes off this skeleton, and what do we find inside? Certain people want to abolish this House. They know that if they were to introduce a Bill for that purpose, it would be thrown out with scorn and contumely. They say, "It is a big House, and a strong House. Let us peck at the foundation stones until we can pick out one stone. We may get enough members complacent

enough, or we may be able to affect their sentiments enough, to get them to assist us in pulling one little brick out." The next thing will be, "Let us pull out something else." They would pull out a little more, and a little more, until the whole thing came down with a crash. There is another inconsistency on the part of Mr. McNamara. He says, "No man has a right because of his property to be in the House." Why does he not come straight out, and say that there shall be no property vote? He approves of a property vote, but he says that the qualification must not be £50 worth, but must be £20 worth. There is the whole show given away at once.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—That is the Government proposal.

The Hon. A. O. SACHSE.—There is no Government proposal before this Chamber. Why do not the Government propose to do this if the people want it? Does not the honorable member know the very fundamental principle of the government of this country? It is the principle of one man one vote, and one woman one vote, for the so-called popular Chamber. If the men and women of Victoria wanted this Bill, would not the Government of the day have introduced it?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—They promised to introduce it.

The Hon. A. O. SACHSE.—It is quite evident to any casual student of politics that the Government know right well that the proposal would be thrown out with scorn and contumely. That is why they do not bring it in. But if a Premier wants to sit on a rail, and please Jack, and not offend Tom, then he will say to one section, "I think we ought to reduce the qualification for members of the Council," and to the other fellows he will say, "I am not going to bring in a Bill." That is the *impasse* we have arrived at. The honorable member who introduced the Bill should have been thorough, and have said that the property qualification should not apply at all. He should certainly not have said, "Instead of £50 worth we will require £20 worth." Honorable members will see the hollowness of the whole proposal. The requirement that a certain fixed income from property should be possessed by a man before he became a member of the Legislative Council was based on a very solid ground. It is the ground principle of taxation that property which enables a man to become a member of this House

is taxed. A man who votes under the one man one vote principle is not a taxable entity. It is the man who has the property who is taxed. If you take the income tax, you find that the income from property is taxed, and under the Land Tax Act, the land is taxed. The taxation is not based on the fact that a man has a vote. It is the man who has a vote for this House, by reason of the property he possesses, who is taxed. Therefore, if that particular property is to be taxed, that property has a right to representation. If a man is taxed on his income and land, he certainly should have some say in the adjustment of those forms of taxation. We come to another point. The honorable member says, with a great deal of kindness and generosity, which every true citizen of Australia should share with him, that he wants to see our returned soldiers have some advantage. He asks why we do not give them a vote for this House. One honorable member asked, "Why should we give one brother a vote, and not give another brother a vote?" But I am not going to touch on that. I have every confidence that when our returned soldiers are discharged, and the repatriation scheme has been applied to them, each of them will get more than the value of land that will entitle him to a vote for this House. I am confident that every returned man will get at least, under any of the schemes that have been put forward, sufficient to give him the 8s. a week worth of property that will entitle him to a vote for this House. Automatically these men when they come back—and God grant that they will come back soon—will become voters for this House. They need not fear about not getting a vote for this Chamber. Property is being cut up, and ready for them all over Victoria. The soldiers are not yet returned soldiers.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Some of them are.

The Hon. A. O. SACHSE.—We are not talking about the few who have returned. The Bill would apply to the whole of the soldiers who are away fighting for us. It would be a pity to give the men here a vote while the men on the other side of the world would not be able to exercise the vote. When they all come back at the end of the war, it will be a different matter. The honorable member who has introduced the Bill will then have another

opportunity to show how kindly disposed he is towards the returned soldiers. I think some words of wisdom have been said to-night, and Mr. McWhae put the case logically. He asked, "Why are not the men who are in authority in the unions and amongst the strikers attending to the wants of our Army abroad?" Our soldiers have dire wants. They want food, they want munitions, they want equipment, which are here, and which cannot be loaded into vessels to be taken to them. The same people who have dictated a Bill like this, giving a visionary benefit that can only be enjoyed by the soldiers when they return from the war, are, at the same time, allowing the soldiers to be starved of the utilities that are necessary for them to win the war.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Is that fair?

The Hon. A. O. SACHSE.—Cannot we see in our mind's eye any number of ships waiting to be loaded with food and equipment for the very men at the Front that this Bill is ostensibly going to give a benefit to? Our soldiers want food, equipment, and other things to help us to win the war. I absolve the honorable member because he is carrying out the principles of his party. That party want to break down this House. The thing most to be avoided is a strike, especially at this time, when we ought to be one great, happy family, standing shoulder to shoulder in promoting agriculture, helping the farmers to produce more grain, encouraging production in every way, cheapening living, and having every man working at his best. That is the policy that we should follow to enable us to win the war, instead of bringing in measures than can do nothing but bring about contention, disagreement, and discord.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It sounds very nice.

The Hon. A. O. SACHSE.—If the honorable member can sleep in the face of what is going on, I cannot. Mr. Disney said he did not want any qualification for members. If so, he ought not to vote for the Bill, for it provides for a £20 qualification. I intend to vote against the second reading of the measure. The man who owns property has something to lose, something to think about. He has some stake in the country, and something on which he has to pay taxation. He is, therefore, entitled to special consideration. While he is taxed more than some

others he should receive more political representation than those people. I deplore the introduction of any measure that is calculated to disturb our equilibrium when we should be doing all we can to win the war.

The Hon. A. BELL.—I think it is an anomaly that the qualification of a voter for this House does not entitle him to be a member. I was recently elected to this Chamber, and one of the questions that was discussed before the electors was the ratepayers roll. We heard an eloquent speech from the Honorary Minister, Mr. Robinson, and he referred to the percentage of voters on the general roll. Only 5 per cent. or 6 per cent. of the voters at Ballarat are entitled to stand for this House. It is a grievance, but it is a very small matter. There is nothing too good for our returned soldiers, and I think that is the unanimous view of the members of both Houses. I intend to do everything I can for our returned soldiers. We have more important measures than this to deal with, and I furthermore think that this is a subject for the Government to introduce in the proper way. It is no use dealing with the matter in a piecemeal fashion. No doubt, the Government will take the matter up in the future. At present there is no urgency for it. The Government, like all Governments in British-speaking communities, have great responsibility on their shoulders. Is there any demand by the people for this measure? When there is any demand the Government will bring down a Bill to liberalize the franchise. I shall then be able to cast my vote in that direction. At present there is only one course for me to follow, and that is to vote against the second reading of the Bill.

The Hon. W. KENDELL.—I wish to refer to one remark made by Mr. Disney which would induce me, if I had not intended to vote against the second reading, to do so. He said he made inquiries before he entered this House as to the qualifications necessary to become a member. He found that they were somewhat greater than he possessed, and he soon became a more influential man in the country. He qualified himself by becoming the owner of more property.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—He converted his wealth from war loans into real property.

The Hon. W. KENDELL.—He did not say that. He had an incentive to qualify himself. Any man who has the ambition to enter this Chamber should have the ambition to qualify himself to the extent of £50 a year, which is not a great deal. I do not claim that the man who has acquired property of that value has all the brains, but at any rate he has some good qualities. He has the quality of holding on to what he gets.

The Hon. D. L. McNAMARA.—What about the Prime Minister?

The Hon. W. KENDELL.—We do not know how much he possesses, and as he is not here to defend himself we should not bring him into the matter. I do not think Mr. Beckett was doing justice to himself when he made such a point of neglecting the returned soldiers. They will expect something better at our hands than votes for the Legislative Council. The Minister of Public Works put it very nicely when he said we proposed to do something for them that will soon place them on the roll, and give them the vote through the right of holding property. They will then have a stake in the country. That is the best thing we can do for them. If the honorable member went to a meeting of returned soldiers and said he was going to give them a vote, but that the Conservative members of the Council would not let him, the soldiers would receive him with very strong language.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—We do not say that this is all we are going to give them, but it is something that you will not give them.

The Hon. W. KENDELL.—The honorable member cannot say what we are going to do. We are simply flogging a dead dog by debating this thing any longer. It is impossible at present. I was very much impressed with the speech of Mr McWhae. We should be concerning ourselves about trying to do something to feed the poor beggars, instead of trying to fill them up with votes. If we sent munitions to them it would encourage them much more than this talk about giving them votes when they return.

The House divided on the motion for the second reading of the Bill—

Ayes	5
Noes	13
	—

Majority against the Bill.. 8

AYES.

Mr. Baillieu
" Brown
,, McNamara

Tellers:
Mr. W. J. Beckett
,, J. H. Disney.

NOES.

Mr. Adamson
" Beggs
" Bell
" Crooke
" Hagelthorn
" Kendell
" Manafort

Mr. McWhae
" Melville
" Richardson
" Sachse.
Tellers:
Mr. Aikman
" Merritt.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT
FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. D. MELVILLE moved the second reading of this Bill. He said—I introduced this Bill at the request of certain municipalities in the Province I represent. Since I did so, however, the Government have brought forward in another place a Bill to amend the Local Government Act in the direction I propose in this Bill. The Bill brought in by the Government is, however, more comprehensive than this one, and there consequently may be a greater difference of opinion in regard to it than to my Bill. In the circumstances, I ought to persevere with this measure.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I ask the honorable member not to proceed any further with this Bill. I now inform the House, as I have already informed the honorable member, that a Bill containing the identical clauses of this Bill has been introduced by the Chief Secretary in another place. That measure proposes to do all the honorable member wants done by his Bill, and it goes further. It includes the power to sell milk as well as fish. It will probably be before this Chamber in the course of a week or a fortnight, and it would only be a waste of time to go on with Mr. Melville's Bill now. The Government are not likely to give the honorable member's Bill precedence over their own measure. In the circumstances, I must ask honorable members to vote against the Bill, or I must request Mr. Melville to withdraw it.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—If the question before the House is that this Bill should be discharged from the notice-paper, I desire to say something.

The PRESIDENT.—The question before the House is that the Bill be read a second time.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister).—I should like to ask your ruling, Mr. President. If this House adopts the second reading of Mr. Melville's Bill, and a measure comes from another place dealing with the same subject, is it likely that that Bill will be ruled out of order because, in all respects, it is identical with this one?

The PRESIDENT.—The other Bill, I understand, contains additional provisions.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—This Bill contains some of the provisions that will be included in the one which we expect to get from another place. If there is to be any doubt upon the point, I must ask the House not to go on with the second reading, on the assurance that the other Bill is coming forward.

The Hon. D. MELVILLE.—The other Bill is more contentious, and it may be dropped.

The PRESIDENT.—I should like to see the other Bill before I give a ruling.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—In order that the position may be perfectly safe, I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—If this debate is adjourned now, it means that the Bill is going to be shelved.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—No.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—There is no other way out of it. If this measure is placed on the notice-paper in its ordinary position, it will not be reached this session.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—The Government Bill will take precedence.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Will this Bill be the first measure to be discussed under the heading of "Private members' business," next Wednesday, or will it be placed at the bottom of the list?

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—It will occupy the same position on Wednesday as it does now.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Wednesday, September 5.

The House adjourned at twenty-three minutes past nine o'clock p.m., until Tuesday, September 4.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, August 29, 1917.

The SPEAKER took the chair at twenty-five minutes to four o'clock p.m.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE.

Mr. PRENDERGAST (Chairman) brought up a report from the Committee of Public Accounts on the State Audit Office.

The report was ordered to be printed.

RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

RECEIPTS FROM SUBURBAN RAILWAYS:
VARIATIONS OF CONTRACTS.

Mr. McPHERSON (in the absence of Mr. MEMBREY) asked the Minister of Railways—

If there has been any loss during the last five years on the suburban railways in the area proposed to be included under the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Authority Bill?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Railways).—The reply is as follows:—

It is quite impracticable, owing to the manner in which the suburban and country passenger and goods train services are intermingled, to keep accounts in such a manner as to show the results of the suburban passenger train service separately from the remaining portions of the railway operations; but a careful estimate made seven years ago, after a long and exhaustive investigation, disclosed that the suburban passenger train service produced a loss during the year ending June, 1909, and, owing to the growth of traffic, it was subsequently estimated that the loss had been extinguished by the 30th June, 1911. A later estimate has not been prepared; but the Commissioners believe that since that date the suburban passenger train service, as a whole, has not shown a loss, although certain lines within the area proposed to come under the control of the Tramway Authority are consistently non-paying.

Mr. McPHERSON asked the Minister of Railways—

1. If it was with the knowledge and consent of the Government or the then Minister of Railways that the Railways Commissioners, on the outbreak of war, agreed to increase prices in connexion with contracts for the supply of stores owing to increased charges incurred by the war?

2. If the Government or the then Minister of Railways suggested to, and/or approved of, the Commissioners embodying such variations of contract in a legal document prepared by the Department's solicitors?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Railways).—The replies to the questions are—

1. Following the outbreak of war, the then Minister of Railways was informed by the Commissioners that, in view of the additional charges which contractors would be required to bear for freightage, war risk, &c., the basis on which any allowance on account of such additional charges should be granted would be considered in the light of the surrounding circumstances.

2. No. The Commissioners dealt with the whole matter as one within their administrative control.

UNIVERSITY COURSE IN SURVEYING.

Mr. BLACKBURN asked the Minister of Lands—

1. Whether the University course in surveying required to be taken by candidates for the degree of Bachelor of Civil Engineering is sufficient to equip a student with the theoretical and practical knowledge required of a surveyor who seeks a licence under the Land Surveyors Act 1915; if not, why?

2. If it is not sufficient, will he represent to the University Council the propriety of raising the requirements of the University course in surveying to the standard set by the Surveyors Board so as to remove the insufficiency?

3. If it is sufficient, will he recommend an amendment of the Land Surveyors Act 1915 so that Bachelors of Civil Engineering of the Melbourne University may become licensed surveyors without further examination or conditions?

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—The replies are—

1. The University course is not considered sufficient, as it does not afford the opportunity for obtaining the necessary practical field experience.

2. At a conference held on 14th November, 1910, between the committee appointed by the Council of the University and the committee of the Surveyors Board, it was decided to provide for practical training by allowing such students as desired to qualify as licensed surveyors to obtain the necessary field experience under one or more of the staff surveyors associated with the Lands Department, or other qualified surveyors, and, subject to this arrangement, it was agreed by the Surveyors Board to relieve such students of a large portion of the examination conducted by the Board.

3. Answered by 2.

CONFECTIONERY INDUSTRY.

PERMITS TO GIRL EMPLOYEES.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*) asked the Minister of Labour—

If he will inform the House how many permits have been granted to females under the age of fifteen years to work in the confectionery

industry during the years 1914, 1915, and 1916 respectively?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Minister of Labour).—The number of permits issued to girls under fifteen years of age to work in the confectionery industry during the year 1914 was 22; during 1915, 24 permits were issued; and during 1916, 36 were issued.

PRICE OF GLUCOSE.

Mr. PRENDERGAST asked the Premier—

1. If he is aware that the Maize Products Proprietary Company, of Footscray, has increased the price of glucose from £19 or £20 per ton to £30 per ton at a time when maize is cheaper than when the company sold the article at the lower rate?

2. If he knows that the excess profits of the increased price of glucose means about £50,000 a year?

3. As the high price means a heavy tax upon the confectionery and certain other industries, will he, in protection of State industries, take into consideration the establishment of a tribunal to deal with the profit-mongers?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—The whole question of price-fixing is now in the hands of the Federal Government.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—That has only been the case for a limited period. This Government escaped their responsibility in connexion with the matter.

SETTLEMENT OF SOLDIERS.

MALLEE LAND AVAILABLE.

Mr. CLOUGH asked the Minister of Lands—

1. If his attention has been drawn to a statement by Professor Mudd, appearing in the Bendigo press of 28th August instant, that there are 6,000,000 acres of Mallee land suitable for the settlement of soldiers; if so, is the statement true?

2. If Professor Mudd is an adviser of the Lands Department or a person recognised by the Government as possessing special knowledge of Victorian land and agricultural conditions?

3. Of what subject is Professor Mudd a professor, and at what university did he graduate?

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—The answer to the first question is that I have not seen the statement. In reply to the further question it would not be correct to say that there are 6,000,000 acres of Mallee land suitable for the settlement of soldiers. A great deal of the land is quite unsuitable. Of course, there are large areas that could be made

available by the opening up of railways and the supply of water, and the Government are now taking action in that direction. With regard to the third question, I may say that I have no knowledge of the matter.

METROPOLITAN HOSPITALS.

TREASURY GRANTS—PUPIL NURSES.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier), in compliance with an Order of the House (dated August 16, 1917), presented a return with respect to metropolitan hospitals receiving Treasury grants, and the hours and pay of pupil nurses employed in such hospitals.

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE.

Mr. PRENDERGAST moved—

That there be laid before this House a return showing—

1. The amount paid by the State to the endowment of the Melbourne University, specifying each year and each class of endowment separately.

2. The value placed upon direct services rendered to the State each year by the University, leaving out of account anything of only sentimental value, and indicating each service.

3. The value of the land, or any other gift of that kind, bestowed by the State upon the University.

4. The receipts each year from students' fees.

5. The receipts each year from bursaries, scholarships, or other private endowment.

6. Any other revenue, excluding such as indicated in State bestowals, students' fees, and paragraph 5.

7. The number of students each year.

8. The number of degrees conferred each year.

The motion was agreed to.

WHEAT STORAGE BILL.

This Bill was returned from the Legislative Council with a message intimating that they had agreed to the same, with amendments.

The amendments were ordered to be taken into consideration later in the day.

MIDWIVES BILL.

Mr. McLEOD (Chief Secretary) moved for leave to introduce a Bill to amend the Midwives Acts.

The motion was agreed to..

The Bill was then brought in, and read a first time.

**REGISTRAR-GENERAL'S FEES
BILL.**

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands) (in the absence of Mr. Lawson (Attorney-General)) moved for leave to introduce a Bill to amend the law relating to fees payable in the office of the Registrar-General.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was then brought in, and read a first time.

PRICE OF GLUCOSE.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—I desire to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of considering the question of profits made upon and prices charged for glucose by the Maize Products Proprietary Company.

Twelve honorable members having risen in their places (as required by the standing order) to support the motion,

Mr. PRENDERGAST said—The *Journal of Commerce* for this month, which cannot be considered to be the organ of the Democracy of this State, but is a journal representing the business people of this country, makes a very severe complaint in regard to the charges made by the Maize Products Proprietary Company, of Footscray. Before I read the article in question to the House, I desire to say that I do not think the Premier was justified in giving me the answer he did about this matter, for the simple reason that he knows as well as I do that the Commonwealth authorities do not take into consideration the question of fixing prices for local considerations or State considerations, but fix prices for the Commonwealth as a whole. The Commonwealth Government have no power to fix prices except that obtained under the War Precautions Act, and that power will automatically expire a very short time after the war ceases. The article in the *Journal of Commerce* states—

Glucose, or starch sugar, has become, owing to war conditions, a unique and absolute monopoly in the hands of one corporation, who can, and do, charge just what they choose for the article, irrespective of its cost of production. This the company can do simply because the restraining influence of American competition, which formerly regulated the price, has, for the time being, practically ceased owing to the war. Glucose syrup (made from maize in Australia) is chiefly used by manufacturers of confectionery, by brewers, and also by makers of jam, jelly, and marmalade. It

has certain qualities for these and other purposes which have led to its largely increased use as a substitute for cane sugar.

One reason for the use of glucose syrup is, of course, that it is very much cheaper than cane sugar.

Until the beginning of the year 1914, the whole of the glucose used in Australia was imported (chiefly from America); for, although the protective duty of 8s. per cwt. had appeared in the Tariff since Federation, the local manufacture had not been undertaken till the Maize Products Proprietary Limited began operations, and placed glucose of Australian manufacture on the market early that year. The imports had been 2,400 tons in 1908, and increased to 4,050 tons in 1913. The price which had ruled was the American price e.f.i.e., and handling charges, together about £12 per ton, which, with £8 import duty, made, say, £20 per ton of 2,240 lbs. When the Maize Products Proprietary began operations, they under-quoted the American by 5 per cent. to 10 per cent., their prices being £18 to £19 per ton, doubtless with the object of dislodging the Americans, who had theretofore held the business.

In November, 1914, the Maize Products Proprietary applied to the Inter-State Tariff Commission for an investigation, with a view to "the removal of the Excise duty of £1 per ton (which has been imposed by the Tariff of 1908 upon Australian-made glucose), and for an increase in the duty on American glucose from 8s. to 11s. per cwt."

The Inter-State Commission, in conformity with this request, took evidence in Sydney and Melbourne, and issued a report, together with the evidence, and statistical and other information, on 30th June, 1915. Extracts from this are appended at foot. Their decision was as follows:—"The present net protection of £7 per ton (i.e., Customs duty, £8 per ton, less Excise duty, £1 per ton) will, in the opinion of the Commission, be found sufficient to encourage the development of this industry under efficient conditions, and that any protection in excess of the above amount will not only be unnecessary, but will tend to the disadvantage of the sugar industry, and of brewers, and of makers of confectionery, other than those interested in the applicant company."

The great bulk of the shareholders are interested in other businesses, and are content to make their profit out of the glucose by charging an increased price for the confectionery and other articles manufactured from it—

It is to be noted that the protective duty on glucose is £8, as against £6 on cane sugar. Since the end of 1914, the imports of American glucose have declined rapidly, and, for the past twelve months, have practically ceased, concurrently with the forced withdrawal from the market of American glucose. The price for the Australian article has persistently gone up, till, to-day, the Maize Products Company

are charging 50 per cent. to 60 per cent. more for their glucose than before the war, without justification, so far as cost to the company is concerned.

The outcry by manufacturers of jam, &c., regarding the price of cane sugar would, in all probability, have extended to glucose, but for the fact alluded to in the last sentence of the Commission's decision, but more fully and significantly stated in the following passage in their report:—

"A particular feature, necessary for consideration in connexion with this application, is the advantage which the shareholders of the Maize Products Company, who are also users of glucose, will obtain over their competitors in the confectionery, jam, and other industries. An increase in the present duties will not only enable the company to control the local market, but it would exercise a very strong influence in favour of its own shareholders, and to the disadvantage of their manufacturing competitors."

Mr. D. Robertson, Chairman of Directors of the Maize Products Company, in his evidence, stated that the users of about two-thirds of the glucose consumed in the Commonwealth are shareholders in the company, and they, needless to say, may not object to pay to their own company high prices for what glucose they use, because they will hope to get returns from dividends, and possibly otherwise, by rebates, &c., which will compensate them; whilst they have the satisfaction of knowing that the high prices will have to be paid by non-shareholders, who are users of one-third of the output, and, consequently, are contributors to the profits of the shareholders. There exists, however, considerable dissatisfaction and latent irritation, for the company has for some time been charging £30 per ton for glucose, for which in 1914 (before the war) their price was £18 to £19 per ton, although their raw material (maize) is cheaper now than it was then, and there is no certainty that the company may not exploit the market still further. It will be observed that Mr. Robertson described the company's object, in proposing the increased import duty, was merely to enable his company to secure an output sufficiently large to employ to as full an extent as practicable the capacity of their works, and not to increase prices to consumers. All this appears to be forgotten in the presence of war developments. In 1914, pre-war, the company's maize cost 3s. 7d. per bushel, and their price for glucose was £18 and £19 per ton, imported being £20. To-day the price of maize is 3s. 3d. to 3s. 4d. (and the company will probably secure their year's supply at 3s.), but the price of glucose is £30. In 1915 and 1916 maize was high in Australia, and it is understood the company drew their supplies from Africa, Java, and elsewhere at a cost, say, of 4s. 3d. to 4s. 6d. per bushel. As about 56 bushels of maize are required to make one ton of glucose, every 1d. per bushel up or down makes 4s. 8d. difference in the price of the ton of glucose; therefore, for those years, the cost would be £2 to £2 10s. higher than in

1914. Assuming that in 1914 the fair price of glucose (with maize at 3s. 7d. per bushel) was £19, the price of glucose to-day (with maize at 3s. 3d. per bushel) should be £18 ls. 4d. per ton; whilst, as already said, the company is charging £30 per ton, which is about £12 per ton over a price which the director claimed, would place the business in a satisfactory position. Having failed in one direction, the company moved in another, and prevailed upon the Government to abolish the Excise duty, and the war has ended the American competition. So the company has the entire possession of the Australian and New Zealand markets. Surely the company ought to have fulfilled its promise by charging not over £19 per ton for its product, which, being the company's pre-war price, leaves, presumably, a satisfactory profit—for £19 to-day is the equivalent of £21 pre-war, owing to the lower price of maize and the removal of the Excise duty. The Prices Commissioner should take a hand, fix the price (as the company has not done so) at not over £19, and that without delay, for, with full output, the excess profit being charged by the company amounts to something like £1,000 per week, or £50,000 in a year.

This company is charging £12 per ton more for glucose than it should be allowed to charge, and through overcharging it is throwing a number of people out of work. Admitting that the Commonwealth Government ought to deal with the matter, does not the Premier think that he should officially call their attention to the subject? He should call the attention of the Commonwealth Government to the huge profits being made by this company through overcharging for glucose. It is sweet, but not as sweet as cane sugar, and enters largely into the manufacture of lollies. When the company asked for an increased duty to be imposed, they said they would not put up the price, and that all they wanted to do was to increase their output, and find work for people here. The cost of producing the article has not been increased by £1 a ton, from the labour point of view. The company can charge what it likes. Is it reasonable for the Premier to say that the Commonwealth Government can deal with the matter when we should compel this Government to take action? We appointed a Commission to consider the matter of prices when the war started, in 1914. Is it not wise, in the interests of production, to prevent this greedy crowd from overcharging the community? They have complete charge of the Australian and the New Zealand markets. American glucose, that could be imported into this State at £12 a ton, is not now coming in

owing to the war. What must be the position of people who are demanding £30 a ton for the article? I hope the Premier will draw the attention of the Commonwealth Government to the subject, in order to protect our industries, and to give employment to our people.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—I am sorry if the honorable member thought I was discourteous in my reply. He has shown by his speech that there was no other course open to me than the course I mentioned in replying to his question. In one of his questions, the honorable member asked whether I would take into consideration "the establishment of a tribunal to deal with profit-mongers." As I told him, this is a matter for the Federal Government. They have a price-fixing Commission in existence. Owing to the complaints made in the Federal Parliament and in the various State Parliaments, and generally throughout the community, about increased prices, the Prime Minister announced that the Inter-State Commission would take evidence in regard to prices, and that any one could go before the Commission to give evidence. Any one who wishes to do so can give evidence before the Commission, and, if he desires it, his name will not be published. The Commission is now sitting, and has invited witnesses to come forward. I have no doubt that the honorable member's statement is correct with regard to the increased price. He has asked me whether I shall officially bring the matter under the notice of the Federal Government. I have no hesitation whatever in readily complying with the request. The Government will be prepared to co-operate with the Federal Government to prevent employers from taking advantage of the abnormal conditions prevailing, just as they are co-operating with that Government to deal with another section of the community who are demanding improper concessions. Two representatives of the Federal Government and two representatives of our Government meet every day to deal with another question that is just as important as this. At such a time, no section of the community should take advantage of the needs of the community, whether they are manufacturers or members of organizations in this community. I can promise that the same co-operation as is given in the one case will be given in the other.

Mr. J. CAMERON (*Gippsland East*).—I do not wish to defend this company from the charge brought against it, though it could be defended to some extent. In 1914 the company started, and brought a new industry into existence. I am quite sure if this company had not started the manufacture of glucose in Victoria people would have had to pay £40 per ton, instead of £30 per ton. The honorable member for North Melbourne talked about the higher prices for the manufactured article prevailing now, when maize is cheaper than it was when the company first started. I know that maize from my own district has been sold at from 4s. to 4s. 8d. per bushel. I have myself sold maize at 4s. 8d.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—It is your own class that is complaining.

Mr. J. CAMERON (*Gippsland East*).—I do not care what class it is that is complaining.

Mr. SOLLY.—A strong case was made out by the honorable member for North Melbourne, and it has not been answered either by the Premier or by the honorable member who last spoke. No attempt has been made to refute the statements that profits are being made to the disadvantage of those people who use glucose in the manufacture of other articles. The Premier told us that it was a matter for the Commonwealth to deal with. He may try to put the whole responsibility on the Inter-State Commission, but that is not going far enough. If we have to depend upon the Inter-State Commission, the matter will be delayed so long that the war will be over—at least, I hope so—before this particular question can be inquired into.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I have been given to understand that the Inter-State Commission will shortly present a report in regard to some matters on which they have taken evidence.

Mr. SOLLY.—That may be, but there are a hundred and one things on which the Inter-State Commission must take evidence before it can arrive at a decision whether fair prices are being charged or not. According to the statement made by the honorable member for North Melbourne, this particular industry is established only in Victoria. In these circumstances it is purely a local matter, and ought to be dealt with by a locally-appointed Board. Such a Board could be appointed by the Government if it were

in earnest in protecting the people of this country against the robbery that is constantly taking place. By referring the matter to a local Board the whole question could be settled with very little delay. The Premier, however, proposes to do nothing, except suggest that the matter should be inquired into by the Inter-State Commission. The honorable member for North Melbourne deserves to be commended for the persistency with which he is dealing with the prices of foodstuffs. There is no doubt robbery is taking place from one end of Victoria to the other. Trusts and combines are being formed, not in the interests of the development of various industries, but for the purpose of securing increased profits. Every one will agree that it is quite right for those engaged in the industry to charge prices which will give them a reasonable profit and interest on their capital outlay. In this particular instance, however, the company was making a very handsome profit when it was charging £19 per ton. If the Premier would appoint a Board of Inquiry he would be following the example of New South Wales, where they have a Necessary Commodities Commission, which acts independently of the Inter-State Commission. I trust the Government will give this matter further consideration, and see if it is not possible to appoint a local Board in view of the fact that the company has no Inter-State or international competition.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Prices of many goods will be still further increased if this strike continues, because of the difficulty of transporting produce.

Mr. SALLY.—The matter now complained of has continued from the time the war commenced. The Government ought to recognise its responsibilities to protect the interests of the general consumer. It is owing to the increase in the price of goods that industrial strife prevails throughout Australia. If the interests of the people had been protected as they should have been by the various Governments throughout Australia, we would have had industrial peace. It is because of the want of protection of the ordinary working classes that industrial strife is now taking place. This strife will continue until such time as the Government take matters of this sort in hand. It is no use the Premier trying to convince me or the public that this matter can be dealt with by the Inter-State

Commission immediately. He knows it cannot be brought before that body without considerable delay, and I trust the House will insist upon the recommendations of the honorable member for North Melbourne being adopted.

Mr. MACKEY.—Of the merits of this particular matter I know nothing, except what we have been told in the House today. I presume that, if any steps are to be taken in the direction indicated, they would only be taken after full inquiry into all the circumstances of the case. The honorable member for North Melbourne told us that the company manufacturing this glucose, sold it not merely in Victoria, but in every State of the Commonwealth, and even exported it to New Zealand. It would appear, therefore, that the company are able to make this extra charge apply throughout the whole of the Commonwealth as well as New Zealand, whether they are justified in doing so or not. It is perfectly obvious that if, in these circumstances, the Government of Victoria took steps to regulate the price in Victoria, the action would be wholly insufficient. It would mean that the company would dispose of their products in other parts of the Commonwealth and New Zealand. It is only the Commonwealth Government that could effectively deal with this matter, even in the interests of Victoria.

Mr. SALLY.—The Necessary Commodities Commission deals with questions like this in New South Wales.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Soon such goods will not be taken over the railways.

Mr. MACKEY.—If, for instance, a price was fixed in Victoria lower than that which the company could get in other States, no glucose would be sold in Victoria. If any step is to be taken which will be effective, it must be by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. ELMSSLIE.—I would not have risen to take part in this debate had it not been for the remarks of the last speaker. He suggests that if the price for Victoria were fixed, and it were lower than could be obtained in other States, no glucose would be sold in this State, because the whole of the company's output would be sold elsewhere. If we carry out that line of argument, we would see that if the Commonwealth were to fix the price no glucose would be sold in Australia; it would all go to New Zealand.

Mr. MACKEY.—There may not be a market for all of it in New Zealand.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—We may not be able to send it to New Zealand at all if the present circumstances continue.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I hope the Premier will not continue on that line. We do not want to appeal to prejudices and passions in dealing with this particular matter.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—It is a very important factor.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Never mind whether it is or not; let us deal with what is being done in Victoria by this company. I was rather astonished at the reply of the Premier, because he attempted to dodge the question. By inference he implied that the State had no power to deal with this matter. I have yet to learn that that is the correct constitutional position we occupy. We know that we allow a number of things to be put on to Federation when it suits us. I think that the Premier has taken up a position which is not warranted by the reply which he has given. If we are to allow this thing to go on the even tenor of its way, without making some kind of protest against such exploitation and the making of profits by taking advantage of conditions brought about by the war, then we deserve all we get.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—They said before the Inter-State Commission that labour here costs five times more than in America; and the Commission stated that the assertion could not be verified, and was incorrect.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—It is so ridiculous that it does not warrant any reply. I am sorry that the Premier has not given a more satisfactory answer, and I would urge him to reconsider the matter, and see whether he has taken the proper conception of the duty of the Leader of this Parliament at the present time. As the honorable member for Carlton has truly said, prices are going up in every direction. Whether in the case of food or anything else, a gradual "steal" is being perpetrated, and those to whom the community have a right to look for protection have a false conception of what their duty is.

The motion for the adjournment of the House was then put, and negatived.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL (No. 2).

Mr. MCLEOD (Chief Secretary).—I move—

That the following Order of the Day—Government business—be read and discharged:—
Local Government Bill (No. 2)—Second reading.

It is found that the title of this Bill is not sufficiently wide, and I intend to give notice of the introduction of another measure, with a title which will cover the whole ground dealt with.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was withdrawn.

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT BILL.

The House went into Committee for the further consideration of this Bill.

Discussion was resumed on clause 9—

(1) In considering applications by discharged soldiers for land under this Act the Board shall take into consideration the advisability of assisting applicants with respect to any of the following matters (whether such assistance has been requested or not):—

(a) the clearing fencing supplying with water draining grading preparing for irrigation and general improvement of the land in respect of which the application is made;

(b) the erection of buildings on any such land; and

(c) the purchase of implements live stock (including pigs and poultry) seeds plants trees and such other things as are deemed necessary for the successful occupation and cultivation of the land.

(2) If in the opinion of the Board it is advisable that any such assistance should be given to any applicant the Board may take such action thereon as it thinks fit in accordance with this Act and the regulations.

Mr. J. CAMERON (*Gippsland East*).—There has been a great deal of talk on this clause. To my mind it covers all that should be in the Bill. It deals with everything in connexion with farming, and provides all that is really wanted. It is a well thought out provision, and meets the case. The trouble will come when we are dealing with clause 11, which relates to the financial aspect of the scheme. I cannot understand the idea of some honorable members who wish to throw this Bill under the table and say that it is a Federal matter. We have our obligations to the returned soldiers, and it is our business to make the Bill what we want it and then ask the Federal Government

to ratify it. Why should we sit down like a parcel of caildren and say that we will wait until the Commonwealth Government prepare a measure to suit us? As I say, we should pass this Bill in the form in which we want it, and then submit the matter to the Federal Government, and make them take it up.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—The honorable member for Eaglehawk gave notice of his intention to move an amendment in this clause. He has been called away for a little while, and has asked me to submit it. With your consent, Mr. Chairman, I therefore move—

That all the words after "may," in sub-clause (2), be omitted, and that the following words be inserted:—"give to such applicants such assistance as it thinks fit not exceeding the sum of £750 without requiring payment of interest, or rent, or of any instalment of purchase money during the first five years of his occupation of the land."

As it stands the sub-clause empowers the Board to "take such action thereon as it thinks fit in accordance with this Act and the regulations." That is a limit which the honorable member's amendment proposes to remove. He desires to empower the Board to give an applicant anything up to £750 free of interest, or rent, or instalments for five years. The advisability of giving £750 has been considerably discussed, and I think every member of the Committee is anxious that as liberal terms as possible shall be given to the soldiers.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I must ask the Committee to reject the amendment. It goes considerably further than the proposition which was discussed last night. I quite agree with the honorable member for Gippsland East that the financial aspect will be reached when clause 11, fixing the advance at £500, is under discussion. However, this amendment has been moved, and we might just as well look at it clearly and fully now, and see where it would lead the Committee and the Government. When I introduced the Bill, I indicated that, at the Premiers' Conference held in January last, it was decided that a uniform advance should be given throughout the Commonwealth. That was approved on behalf of the States and the Commonwealth. Not all the States were giving £500. Most of them had that as a maximum; but in the case of Tasmania, I think it was £300. All

the States, however, agreed to come into line. It so happens that by this morning's post I received a report from the Prime Minister of New Zealand, who is also the Minister of Lands of the Dominion. It is the report of the Department of Lands and Survey: Discharged Soldiers' Settlement—for the financial year just ended, in New Zealand. It contains a paragraph bearing on the matter now under discussion. The report says—

Hitherto financial assistance was given to the extent of £500 to enable discharged soldiers to erect dwelling houses, effect improvements, and purchase stock, and the amending regulations further provided that the Minister of Lands might purchase such materials or articles as may be required and dispose of them to settlers under the Act at cost price, plus freight. The effect of this alteration has been most beneficial, as purchases of stock and material have from time to time been made by the Department on behalf of settlers on better terms than they themselves could have made, and in no case has a settler been obliged to purchase such material from the Department except at his special request.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—That does not touch the point.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—It touches the point I am dealing with, that £500 is the accepted amount of advance to all soldier-settlers throughout the Commonwealth of Australia and in the Dominion of New Zealand. At the last meeting of the Soldiers' Settlement Board—which is comprised of one Commonwealth Minister, Senator Millen (Minister in charge of Repatriation), and the Minister in charge in each State—held about six weeks ago, a discussion was raised by the representative from South Australia on the question that, in connexion with some propositions of settlement, particularly wheat growing, the £500 advance would not be sufficient to meet all requirements. After discussion, that Board carried a resolution, to be submitted to the Commonwealth, that, as it was found difficult to get away from the £500 fixed, an amount up to £700 or £750 might be given in certain cases, as long as the average of £500 was not disturbed. Honorable members will readily understand this. A number of our soldier settlers already are men who have gone on to small poultry farms, or who have gone on to orchards, or other propositions where they do not require the full advance of £500. We, therefore, put the proposition to the Commonwealth that they should agree to our raising the

amount above the £500 fixed on condition that we did not disturb the average amount. This is the reply made by the Commonwealth Government to the Premier. It is dated the 17th of this month. They deal with other resolutions that were carried at that time, and which they accept, and then go on to say—

I desire to state that the Commonwealth Government cannot see its way to accept this resolution, as it would mean an extension of the Commonwealth financial obligation in this particular connexion, and a departure from the original agreement.

The question of the granting of discretionary power to the States to advance up to £700 in certain cases, providing that, on the whole, the advances from money supplied by the Commonwealth to the settlers do not average more than £500 each, has also had the consideration of my Government, but, seeing that this discretion would be likely to lead to an increase in favour of one form of settlement to the detriment of other forms, my Government cannot accede to the suggestion put forward at the meeting of the Settlement Board.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (Fitzroy).—Who said that?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The Prime Minister.

Mr. SOLLY.—Is the letter signed by the Prime Minister?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—It is signed by P. T. Russell, for the Prime Minister.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—He has got a nice tender feeling for the returned soldier.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—However, the first point that must be stressed is this: By common consent the advance was fixed at £500, and in fixing £500, Tasmania, loyal to the resolution, agreed to bring up the £300 that their present Act allows them to advance, to £500.

Mr. DEANY.—What does the Minister mean by "common consent"?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—I mean the common consent of all the States concerned and the Commonwealth. That resolution, and the action of the New Zealand Government, make the £500 a uniform grant throughout Australia and the Dominion of New Zealand, and it in that way complies with one of the conditions that each Government set out to endeavour to reach, namely, to make the conditions of advances for settlement as far as possible uniform throughout the Commonwealth. That is point No. 1. Point No. 2 is this—that the Commonwealth Government agreed, when the States decided on the amount of money they would require to advance to each settler, to raise

that money for the States and to loan it to each State, so that they could advance it to the settlers. I have a statement that was prepared this morning, showing what the £500 advance and the suspension of all payments for three years and the payment in that interval of the interest on the purchase money will mean to a soldier settler whose land has been bought for, say, £1,000. We have taken £1,000 worth of land, and this is how it works out: If the soldier settler were a settler under our existing law, and he was put on land that cost the State £1,000, he would pay a first deposit of £30. That would be 3 per cent. of the principal. Then each six months he would pay 3 per cent. interest and principal. We provide the interest and redemption. His first deposit would be £30, which would be 3 per cent. of the £1,000. Then he would pay £29 2s. each half-year following, which would be 3 per cent. on the £1,000, less the £30 already paid. In this way, within three years his six half-yearly payments would amount to £204 12s. During that period the soldier settler would pay no money. Under the ordinary closer settlement conditions a settler getting a £500 advance would, in the same period, pay £19 18s. 4d. each half-year in interest and redemption, or a total of £119 10s. He pays £204 on land rents, £119 10s. on repayments of advances and interest, or a total amount for the first three years of £324 2s. The soldier settler pays no land rents, except under clause 20, which we will come to later on, and for his advance he reaps the advantage in repayment at the lower rate of interest, starting at 3½ per cent. Instead of paying £119 10s. for his advance in three years he pays £104 18s. 7d. In other words, he makes a saving of £15 in his interest, and there is £204 12s. in land payments which he is not called on to meet in the first three years at all, and out of that £204 12s. there is £135 interest which is the gift of the State. The soldier never pays that. He gets his £500 in the first three years, and over and above that he gets £135 interest that any other settler would have to meet—that is, interest on the land purchased. Then the saving in interest on advances comes to £14 11s. 5d. Half of that is paid by the State, and half by the Commonwealth. Over and above that he is relieved of the payment of any instalments for three years, and he has the advantage of that

money to add to the work of his improvements and developing his land. So that, if it is looked at in that way, he gets the £500 advance; he gets £135 interest, a direct gift from the State within three years; and he gets £15 additional interest allowed him by the Commonwealth and State below the cost price of the interest. The State and Commonwealth jointly make a contribution to him of about £15. When all these concessions are taken into consideration, when regard is given to the fact that thousands of soldiers have to be settled throughout the Commonwealth, and that it means an obligation on the Commonwealth to raise very large sums of money for each State, the Government feel that they cannot—first, in loyalty to the Commonwealth and to the contracting States, and secondly, from the financial point of view—accept this amendment to increase the amount above £500.

Mr. OMAN.—I hope that the honorable member who moved the amendment will not persist in it. If he desires to help the soldier settlers, he will not attempt to embody the amendment in the Bill, because it would mean that it would place such a responsibility on the State financially that the State would be obliged to restrict its operations. The inclusion of the amendment would practically kill the measure from a returned soldier's point of view. I do not believe that the Committee would probably embody it. If it were carried, the honorable member would certainly injure the very men whom he is seeking to help.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The honorable member for Hampden argued last night that the £500 advance was not sufficient.

Mr. SALLY.—I am rather surprised at the statement made by the honorable member for Hampden, because he made out a very strong case last night for an increase on the £500 advance. He pointed out that the increased price of stock would of necessity make it impossible for a soldier settler to achieve success, if the amount were restricted to £500.

Mr. BAILEY.—The honorable member for Hampden might be asked on this occasion to follow his voice with his vote.

Mr. OMAN.—This is a different matter. It is proposed that there shall be no payment at all for five years.

Mr. SALLY.—Certainly the proposition is on more liberal lines than the honorable member would perhaps be prepared

to support, and it gives him an opportunity of turning turtle on his speech last night. It gives him a very good let-out. The Minister of Lands states that when the agreement between the various States and the Commonwealth was entered into, that £500 should be the maximum amount advanced to each soldier settler, he had in his mind that some of the soldier settlers would not require £500. The honorable gentleman pointed out that a man who took up a farm for poultry raising would not require so much money as a man going in for wheat-growing or some other form of agriculture.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—He would not want so much stock and implements.

Mr. SALLY.—The honorable gentleman's remarks would lead one to believe that if a poultry farmer only required £250 it would leave the other £250 to be distributed amongst other settlers going in for wheat-growing or other forms of agriculture.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—Clause 11 would prevent that being done.

Mr. SALLY.—It would be an impossibility to do it under the Bill.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The banker virtually objects. That is what it amounts to.

Mr. SALLY.—In clause 11 the maximum amount to be advanced is limited to £500, while the Minister says distinctly that various soldiers who go upon the land will not require £500. Say that of 100 soldier settlers there are fifty who go in for poultry raising, and each of whom only wants £300. That should leave an extra £200 to be given to each of the other fifty soldiers who may be going in for operations in connexion with which more money than £500 is necessary, but the Bill would prevent anything of the sort being done. Does the Minister propose to raise the maximum amount of advances?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—No, because the Commonwealth Government will not consent.

Mr. SALLY.—Well, how can the money be disbursed in the way I have described? The Government cannot do it without breaking the provisions of their own measure.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—If the Bill is passed we can give up to £500 to each settler.

Mr. SALLY.—The honorable gentleman admits that a wheat-grower will require more than £500. There is not a

man with experience on the land but admits than an advance of £500 is altogether inadequate to enable a man to become successful as a wheat-grower. If that is so, and the advance is limited to £500, it means failure for every man who goes in for wheat-growing. The Government are courting failure for every man who goes in for farming, with the exception of one or two forms of farming that have been mentioned.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I do not think the honorable member followed the quotation that my colleague read.

Mr. SALLY.—It was impossible to do so. It was very much jumbled up. One would have to have a typewritten copy of the statement before he could fairly understand the financial proposals, and the obligations which are to be entered into by the Commonwealth, the State, and the soldier settler with regard to the interest to be paid. I could clearly understand from the Minister's statement that a soldier settler will receive greater consideration from a financial point of view than the ordinary settler under the Closer Settlement Act. But I should like to know how the honorable gentleman is going to overcome the difficulty I have pointed out. Take the case of a soldier who decides to go in for dairying. The advance of £500 will be insufficient to enable him to purchase a proper number of cows, and the other things that he will require. It appears that the whole of the soldier settlers will have to be restricted to poultry raising. If that is so, where is a market to be found for the produce of these men as soon as they take on the job? The problem is a big one, and it has not been solved by any speech made by the Minister. I cannot see how the soldier settlers are to be successful unless the Government are prepared to finance them properly when they go on the land. A soldier settler may be able to show that a further advance of £500 would get him out of financial difficulty, and place him on the clear road to success. As I read the Bill, his request for a further advance would have to be refused.

Mr. BAILEY.—It might mean the difference between success and failure.

Mr. SALLY.—It might mean the difference between the soldier settler being a successful farmer, which would be highly advantageous to the State, and his giving

up his block altogether, and coming back to the city.

Mr. MENZIES.—Would not the same argument apply to the amendment?

Mr. SALLY.—The additional £250 would give a man a better chance of being successful than if he were restricted to £500.

Mr. MENZIES.—But would not the same argument apply against fixing the amount?

Mr. SALLY.—Perhaps it would have been better if a maximum had not been inserted in the Bill at all, and if it were left to the discretion of a Board of experts to say whether a man could become a successful farmer with an advance of £500, £600, or £700, as the case might be. I quite admit that, but the Government have put a maximum amount in the Bill, and, therefore, we must discuss the matter from that point of view. If a man wants an extra £500, and the Board which has the management of this business recommends to the Government that that further advance should be made, would the Government have power to make it?

Mr. KEAST.—No; the advance is limited to £500.

Mr. SALLY.—That is what I say; but the Minister said distinctly that the Government could advance more money. The honorable gentleman said that if a poultry farmer could manage with £300, the difference between the £300 and the £500 maximum could be disbursed amongst the other soldier settlers who wanted more financial assistance.

Mr. WARDE.—I did not understand the Minister to say that.

Mr. SALLY.—That was what the Minister stated in reply to my statement.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—No.

Mr. SALLY.—I should like to understand what the honorable gentleman does mean, and I will willingly give way for the purpose of getting an explanation from him.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I thought I had made myself quite clear to the Committee. The Board which sat about six weeks ago, consisting of Ministers of Lands of the various States, with Senator Millen representing the Commonwealth Government, as chairman, asked the Commonwealth Govern-

ment to agree to raise the limit in some cases from £500 to £750. The proposition was launched by the Minister of Lands of South Australia, who argued very strongly that, in connexion with some wheat-growing propositions, £500 would not be enough. We passed a resolution, and sent it on to the Commonwealth Government.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Senator Millen was acquainted with the views of all the States.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—Senator Millen said, "Although you have passed a resolution, I cannot bind the Commonwealth Government, but I will pledge myself to put your views and your resolution before my colleagues." We said, "We admit that there are many cases of men who will not want the full £500 advance, and we would suggest that the States should be given power to raise the limit in some cases to £750, so long as the average of £500 is not exceeded." We pointed out that a man who had only a small area, and who did not want much in the way of stock and implements, could do with a smaller amount than £500, whereas a man on a larger area, requiring extra stock and implements, would want a larger amount than £500. I will again read the reply of the Commonwealth Government. It is as follows:—

The question of the granting of discretionary power to the States to advance up to £700 in certain cases, providing that, on the whole, the advances from money supplied by the Commonwealth to the settlers do not average more than £500 each, has also had the consideration of my Government, but seeing that this discretion would be likely to lead to an increase in favour of one form of settlement to the detriment of other forms, my Government cannot accede to the suggestion put forward at the meeting of the Settlement Board.

Our proposition was turned down. Under the Bill £500 is the maximum advance, and every soldier settler who can make the necessary improvements, or who wants assistance with regard to implements or stock up to that amount, can get it. That is what we are standing on. We are standing on the proposition in the Bill.

Mr. KEAST.—You and your Board did your best to get the maximum made £750, and failed?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—That is so. The Government are in full agreement with a good deal that has been said by

honorable members to the effect that the Commonwealth Government ought to do much more than it is doing in connexion with soldier settlement. We are not in agreement with the contention that the Commonwealth Government should take up the question of land settlement. At the Premiers' Conference in January last, the Prime Minister put forward the proposition on behalf of himself, the Repatriation Trustees, and the Commonwealth Government, that the entire work of repatriation should be a Commonwealth function. The Victorian Government, in common with all the other State Governments, agree that, with the exception of land settlement, which is essentially a State function, the whole question of repatriation should be a Commonwealth function. The Government believe very strongly that, as they possess the land and all the machinery for settling the men, as these men cease to be soldiers, and become civilians, it is the duty of the State to take on the work of settling them on the land, and to use not only its land agency, but its Department of Agriculture, its Public Works Department, its railway facilities, and its water supply and irrigation facilities. The whole of the functions that must be available to a settler to succeed are the functions that the State controls and administers, and the Government must insist that this is a State function.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—You have not agreed to the Prime Minister's proposition that it should be under Commonwealth control?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—No; we said it must be a State function—that the State must settle the soldiers on the land. We do say that the Commonwealth Government should make a more generous contribution towards the work, and the proposition that was put to them was that the Commonwealth could best assist, not only this State, but all the States, in finding the money for the purchase of estates for soldier settlement, in finding the money for the necessary railways to open up Crown lands, and making them available, and for public works generally to make the land suitable for settlement. We urged that the Commonwealth should find that money, and make it available to the States for the double purpose of

purchasing land, making railways and constructing public works to make the land available and more accessible. We urged that they should make that money available to each State Government at a price less than the Commonwealth Government paid for it. This Government and the other State Governments felt that it was a proper contribution to ask from the Commonwealth Government towards repatriating the soldier in connexion with land settlement. In this letter they have rejected that proposal, and the Premier has already taken the necessary action to revive the question at the coming Premiers' Conference, and to insist that the Commonwealth Government shall give further consideration to the desire of this State and the other States, and make money available at a low rate, and so carry a larger measure of financial responsibility in connexion with the scheme.

Mr. WARDE.—A reasonable request.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. — Yes. The figures I quoted from the statement show that, on a £1,000 purchase of land, for the period of three years, the direct contribution of this State to each man in the way of interest would be £142 8s. 9d., whilst the Commonwealth contribution would be only £7 5s. 9d. That is altogether out of proportion, and we intend to urge the matter again on the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. SALLY. — I am not concerned whether it is the Commonwealth's duty or the State's duty to see that the matter is properly settled in the interest of the soldiers. I shall not enter into the question of State rights and national rights, for I am only concerned in the settlement of the soldiers on the land. It is the duty of somebody to see that they are properly financed, so that they may succeed. The Minister states that the Federal Government really turned down his Government's proposition. That proposition was that if a soldier who was settled on a wheat-growing block desired to have a larger advance than £500, in the event of other soldier-settlers not requiring the whole advance of £500, he should be allowed to receive it. According to the Minister's statement the Prime Minister has turned that proposition down. The soldier who goes in for poultry farming may not require an advance

of £500, and the idea is to give that man less, and other men, who require a larger advance, more. The Minister is making no provision to increase the amount, although he and the Government admit that the amount must be increased for a soldier to succeed in wheat-growing. The Minister stated that the Premiers' Conference is to take place some time this year, and that the Premier will endeavour to impress on the Prime Minister the desirability of increasing the £500. If we pass the Bill with the sum of £500 mentioned, we shall not be able to increase the amount.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—And do you mean that we should do nothing in the meantime?

Mr. SALLY.—Oh, no. I am not one of those who believe in putting off until to-morrow what can be done to-day. This is urgent. The soldiers who are returning want suitable employment, and we ought to provide it, whether it is on the land or elsewhere. I am not prepared to see the Bill dropped because it does not contain everything that is beneficial. The Minister admits that the £500 is not sufficient, and yet it appears that he is going to stick to it. That is a very bad policy to follow. It means that he will be starting on a business that he knows will be a financial failure. I cannot understand a man going into a business with his eyes wide open, when he knows very well that it cannot succeed. I have very great pleasure in supporting the amendment.

Mr. BOWSER.—I think it was shown in the discussion last night that competent judges are of opinion that £500 will be insufficient in some cases. The Minister admits that. The scheme will be imperilled if the advance is not raised to £750. We see, therefore, the anomalous position we are in. Our hands are tied by the Federal power, or by the conference of Premiers acting with the Federal power. It is absurd to call this a sovereign State, seeing that we have no control in a matter of vital importance like this. The power has been taken away from us, or apparently is about to be taken away, unless this House asserts itself. The practical common sense of honorable members shows that £750 is needed, if the settlement is to be carried

on in a satisfactory way. The production that will result will run into millions in the course of a few years. The difference between the £500 and the £750 is only £2,000,000, if the whole of the soldiers receive it. A sum of £6,000,000 is involved in the advance of £500, therefore £2,000,000 would represent the extra £250. That is a mere bagatelle when compared with the production of 12,000 soldiers settled on the land. Allowing for a return of £200 per annum per soldier, £200,000 would be the result for 1,000 soldiers. When we begin to estimate the production that will come from the successful cultivation of the land we realize how small a matter the extra £250 is, and how necessary it is for the Government to continue to urge on the Federal Government that £500 is not sufficient for the work that has to be done.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I cannot for the life of me understand the reply received from the Prime Minister on behalf of his Government. The Minister representing him in the Senate, in moving the second reading of the Bill, made a speech, from which I intend to quote. No one during this discussion has used stronger arguments than Senator Millen did concerning this matter. He said—

No man, much less a returned soldier, ought to be invited to go on to a block of land except under such conditions as carry with them the assurance that by steady application there is a reasonable prospect of success. That assurance cannot honestly be given with many of the propositions being made available in the State. Leaving out those cases of special men who succeed in spite of insurmountable difficulties, dealing with the average man under average conditions, no practical man will venture to say that, with £500 for improvements, plant, seed, fertilizers, &c., to say nothing of sustenance and working expenses, men can safely be invited to take up the occupation of wheat farming on the terms now offering.

The same thing applies in regard to wet farming. The expenses are just as great as in dry farming. Just listen to this—

The States now recognise this, and at a Conference held last week a resolution was passed inviting the Commonwealth Government to agree to raise the maximum to £750 without increasing the total sum agreed to be advanced. This arrangement, if agreed to, would help to meet the difficulty so far as the wheat-grower is concerned, but it would be at the expense of other settlers, as if one man is to get more than the average, then another must get less.

That is the point I want to get at. It shows the injustice of the proposal, and

indicates that we are prepared to make discriminations between one soldier and another. Senator Millen goes on—

We are, therefore, brought face to face with two alternatives. Either the amount of advance must be increased, or an effort must be made to find holdings of a class which do not need so much capital for their development.

What does that mean? It means that through force of circumstances some of the soldiers who have no capital of their own will be forced on to inferior land. If there is anything that we ought to recognise in connexion with our obligations to returned soldiers, it is that we should not take into consideration at all whether a man has money of his own or not. Both have won the right to exactly the same treatment. We talk sometimes about the levelling up that has gone on in the trenches, how the men have come to understand one another better, but here we find Senator Millen telling us we are faced with two alternatives—we must put them on inferior land if we cannot give them an increased advance. If we do that, the scheme is certain to be a failure. Representatives of the Federal Government, as well as of the State Governments, have recognised that £500 is not sufficient, and yet we find ourselves in the position because the Premiers have arrived at an agreement with the representatives of the Commonwealth that we will be unable to make a success of the scheme. When failure is apparent, the Commonwealth Government will be able to say it is the result of State bungling. Everybody recognises the position, and is pleading for proper treatment of our soldiers, so that we can make a success of this scheme, yet "the great I Am" says to us, "I will not give you what you want." In view of the fact that we know this scheme is going to be a failure, have we the right to go on with this Bill? We have been informed that the last word has not yet been spoken in regard to the financial provisions of the measure, but what right have we to trust to the future? Now is the time to do what is necessary. How are we to know that a different feeling will come over the Commonwealth in the days to come? The probabilities are that if there is any financial stress that excuse will be offered to prevent any further relief being granted, and we will then be in the position that we will have to say that we recognise the

men are not getting fair treatment, but it is the best we can do for them. In view of all that has been said on this subject the appeal which was made for an increased advance must have been considered by the Federal Cabinet, which has refused to accept the advice of its experts. Are we helpless in this matter? Are we to be compelled, in order to meet our obligations, to advance £250 to the soldier settlers from the coffers of the State? The proposal is an outrage upon our soldiers, and I do not feel comfortable in supporting this Bill. What is the use of talking about meeting our obligations to the returned soldiers when we are trying to dodge them, apparently with the willing acquiescence of the Government, who say they are helpless in the matter? When we know that the present scheme will result in failure, we ought not to agree to the proposals now before us. I feel very strongly that we are simply humbugging the soldiers and the general community, which will not have the details of this question brought so closely home to them as members of Parliament. It will probably be trumpeted before the people that we have done a great deal for the returned soldiers, and the people will believe it, but when the men make failures of their enterprise, we shall have to make excuses for them. The time may come when we shall have the Federal Government saying that the scheme has been a failure, because the men were wasters. I do not want anything of that kind to take place. This Parliament would not be justified in allowing anything of that sort, and we should, therefore, see that these men have sufficient money to do what is necessary. Money is the crux of the whole position. I am surprised that a stronger protest has not been made against the decision of the Federal Government not to grant greater assistance. If the State Ministers had asked for an increase of only £100 there might be some justification for the idea that the original grant of £500 was sufficient, but they have asked for an advance of £250, which is rather a substantial increase. Honorable members in this House connected with farming have told us that £500 is not sufficient, and even Senator Millen has said the same thing, yet the Minister is asking us to pass this clause when we know that the amount is altogether inadequate.

Mr. Elmslie.

Mr. ANGUS.—I should like to ask the Minister if he will tell me by what clause in this Bill the Government will give a settler a concession which amounts to £135?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—Clause 14.

Mr. ANGUS.—Sub-clause (b) of clause 14 says—

The Minister, in respect of any land disposed of under this Act to a discharged soldier, may direct that no instalment of purchase money and interest or rent shall be payable for the first three years, or (in the case of land acquired and taken for the Crown under section 20 of the Closer Settlement Act 1915) for the first year of his occupation of such land, and may extend the term of the lease accordingly, or, where a lease has not issued, may issue a lease for the extended term.

I should like to draw the attention of honorable members to those words, "may extend the term of the lease accordingly." That shows clearly that the settler will have to repay the money. Under the closer settlement law, the term was extended to three years, but the settler had in the end to pay the interest as well as the principal.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—By that clause, we make practically a grant of £135.

Mr. ANGUS.—But the settler will have to pay the money in the end.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—No; we pay the whole of the interest.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The Minister of Lands went through this matter with my officers this morning, and what he says is quite correct.

Mr. ANGUS.—I will take the statement as being correct, though I do not think it is. I should be glad if the Minister will tell me what right we have to assume a responsibility which ought to be on the Federal Government?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—How would you compel the Federal Government to do what you want?

Mr. ANGUS.—I would force them into the position that they would have to do their duty.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—How would you force them?

Mr. ANGUS.—By not being so flexible as the Premier has been.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I will guarantee the honorable member has not read the debates of the Premiers' Conference on the subject.

Mr. ANGUS.—The principle of binding each State to the same amount is un-

fair, and if the Prime Minister had had this matter brought properly before him, he, as a man of business ability, would have seen the necessity for increasing the amount. It is not because I am antagonistic to the Premier that I am raising this question. I merely want to show the injustice which is being done. We should make further efforts to see that the Federal Government will take their proper share of the responsibility in this matter. It is only by taking up a strong attitude that we will be able to accomplish what we want. In all friendliness, I urge the Minister of Lands to have a further interview with representatives of the Federal Government, to try and induce them to carry a more liberal Bill through the Federal Parliament. It will be better for us to wait for some time than to go on with this Bill. We could continue the settling of soldiers in the meantime, and subsequently bring them under any law which was passed.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—Have you ever discussed any Bill without asking that it should be either postponed or withdrawn?

Mr. ANGUS.—It does not matter what I have done about any other Bill. This is an all-important measure. It looks as if the Minister were trying to draw a red herring across the trail, but I am not going to follow it.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—The position is that members in the Ministerial corner ask for Bills to be withdrawn, and the Government always withdraws them.

Mr. ANGUS.—I do not wish to ask that the Bill should be withdrawn. I want to see it perfected. But, after all, in the Federal Bill there is nothing on which we can build. Therefore I think it is ill-advised to press this measure on at the present time. Personally, I do not want to jeopardize the Bill or vote against it, but I do desire to see a measure which will be of some use to the returned soldier.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—I have not interposed during the discussion, because my colleague has explained the exact position. I am glad that the honorable member for Gunbower, who was a little warm at the outset, partially withdrew what he implied with regard to myself not fighting for better terms from the Commonwealth.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The more your colleague explains it the more the opposition.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—To my mind, the position is as plain as a pikestaff. If we defer this measure it means no repatriation Bill this session. How then shall we be able to deal with the applications which come forward for settlement on the land? Already we have settled 181 soldiers. What are we going to do with other applicants for land if the House says that we must not proceed with this Bill until we can force better terms from the Commonwealth? I can speak from experience with regard to the conferences. I venture to say that the honorable member for Gunbower has not read the reports of the whole of the discussions at the conferences. They started in the early part of last year, when Senator Pearce was Acting Prime Minister, Mr. Hughes being in another part of the globe. A considerable amount of battling went on then. All the Premiers, with their Ministers of Lands, were present, and the repatriation trustees and the representatives of the Commonwealth, including the Acting Prime Minister, attended.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—And their agent, Mr. Watson.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Yes, and Mr. Higgs, the then Federal Treasurer. At that conference we were not able to get as much as we thought the soldiers and the different States were entitled to. After the Prime Minister returned from Great Britain we had a conference in the early part of this year. If the honorable member for Gunbower had heard the way in which we battled, in the heat of summer, with our coats off, he would have acquitted us of any suggestion of not fighting hard to secure better terms. Personally, I put the view which I still hold, that the Commonwealth is not doing all that it should in connexion with this scheme for the repatriation of our soldiers.

Mr. OMAN.—At that time it was absolutely controlled by labour.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Yes. The political disturbances took place subsequently. When we met in conference in the early part of this year it was not the present National Government which was in office.

Mr. J. CAMERON (*Gippsland East*).—Did you try to get the same terms from the Labour Government?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Yes. We tried again early this year, when Mr. Poynton was Federal Treasurer.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Then it was the Nationalist Government in power.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—That was before it was created. Everyone admits that an advance of £750 will be necessary in certain cases. However, we were not able to get that. A Board, consisting of representatives of all the States, met and conferred with Senator Millen and passed certain resolutions. As late as the last few days we asked the Federal Government to reconsider the matter, but they turned down our request. It is true, as the Leader of the Opposition said, that Senator Millen, in introducing the Bill, made the statement which has been referred to, but he has not been able to persuade his colleagues in the Federal Government to vary the terms. Those are the facts, and we have to deal with the position as it is. The Ministers of Lands of the different States had different ideas. In some cases it was thought that £200 would be sufficient; in other cases £400 or £500; and in others the opinion was held that £750 would be required. It was eventually agreed that the maximum should be £500. My colleague has read the letter which I received from the Federal Government last week. There have been 685 applications lodged for different kinds of settlement on the land. From a close analysis it would appear that in 8 per cent. of those cases an advance of over £500 would, in all human probability, be required. In the remaining cases the amount would be under £500. Now, for the sake of that 8 per cent. are honorable members going to delay the passage of this measure and leave it until next year? I quite agree with honorable members that in certain cases £500 will be sufficient. As a State Government, we have been doing what we can up to the present. What have some of our critics been doing in their capacity of State members and as citizens with Federal representatives? I give credit to the honorable member for Hampden, as well as to the Director-General of Recruiting, who is not only a State member, but a representative of the Commonwealth. Those two honorable members have been making representations through the Federal members whom they know.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—They have been working for settlement in their own particular districts, generally speaking.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Who?

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The honorable member for Hampden.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—It is hardly fair to put it in that way.

Mr. OMAN.—I have never requested the purchase of a property in my district.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The honorable member for Hampden has pointed out, as he did last evening, what should be done, but the Commonwealth will not vary the terms. I tried to get hold of Senator Millen to-day, but he is away in Sydney.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Is it a matter for the Commonwealth Government or for the Commonwealth Parliament?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The Parliament would have a great deal of influence on the Government.

Mr. BOWSER.—We can only get what we desire by lobbying?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Not by lobbying—by making representations. The point is that if this Bill is delayed the State will not be able to finance out of its own resources the settlement of men requiring £200 or £300. There is a limit to the resources of the State, and if numbers of applications come in and they are granted it will be necessary to curtail expenditure in other directions. The Under Treasurer is continually asking for information with regard to cases passed by the Board and by my colleague. I think that there are close on 200 cases in which we have settled returned soldiers on the land. Even this week cases have been dealt with. Nothing will be wanting on the part of the Government in trying to persuade the Commonwealth to increase the advance, but, as I have pointed out, an arrangement has been made between all the States. I know what Senator Millen would say in reply to representations on the lines suggested by honorable members with a view of making the provision more elastic. He would say that the matter would have to be considered by all the States. Tasmania has already passed an Act limiting the advance to £300, but another measure is to be put through there raising it to £500. If we can get the Commonwealth to do what we desire we can afterwards do what Tasmania is doing. I must say that I do not see a prospect of holding a Premiers' Conference for some time, owing to the

forthcoming elections here, the changes of Government elsewhere, and other reasons.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—Why should the Commonwealth Government object if we have to carry the baby?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The Commonwealth have to raise the money. When one goes to a banker and places a proposition before him the banker will simply lay down the instructions which he has received from a higher authority. In this case the Commonwealth will have to raise all the money. In the circumstances I appeal to the honorable member not to press the amendment. The Government will use all the influence it can, because it is already committed to what is desired, and so are other State Governments. That we should delay the passage of this Bill for the sake of the 8 per cent. of cases which may be affected would be really a calamity, and it would be entirely misapprehended outside by a large class of men who are looking forward to the measure going through. In some cases we have been holding back because there are several other applications which are being reported on, and there are limits to the finances of the State. If we grant all the applications coming in we shall have to curtail expenditure in other directions. The return to which the Minister has alluded, showing what it is proposed to do for Private Jones as compared with Citizen Jones in connexion with a closer settlement block, proves that we are making the returned soldier a direct present out of the funds of Victoria of £142. That is very good treatment, although I do not say that the Commonwealth should not do more than is proposed. We should have no difficulty in getting the other States into line with us on this matter, because their position will be ours, and when we put it before the Commonwealth Government I have no doubt that we shall have the sympathy of Senator Millen.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—I am sorry I could not be present when the time came for moving the amendment of which I gave notice, and I am under an obligation to the honorable member for Essendon for submitting it. There was a general expression of opinion from all around the House, and especially from honorable members whom we are in the habit of regarding as experts on land settlement that £500 would not be adequate for these men who are going to settle on the land.

There are two closer settlements in my district — Colbinabbin and Memsie. I know that the settlers there laboured under great difficulties and trials during the first five years of their settlement. Under this Bill there is a proposal to make somewhat easier terms for soldier settlers during the first three years, but I know that some of the men on the settlements to which I have alluded were in extreme difficulties up to the fifth or sixth year, and if it had not been for nursing by the Government, and the modification and extension of provisions of the Act, many of these men would have been turned out of their homes. As it was, some of them were turned out, and were unable to become permanent settlers. I say we ought to be prepared—and everybody in the House agrees that we ought to be prepared—to strain a point in favour of those men who have given the best of their service in the interests of their country. I do not think the demand for an advance of £750 at all an excessive one. There has been a general consensus of opinion from those who had charge of the measure in another House, from those who have charge of the measure here, and from all sides of the Chamber, that £750 would be the amount required to enable these men to make a permanent settlement on the land. The Premier, in the remarks he made in the House, announced that £100,000 had been spent on 183 settlers. That works out at something like £545 per settler already given by the Government in the first year of settlement. The difficulties have not begun yet. The settlers have got through the initial work of grading and building, fencing, and so on, but much still remains to be done. I contend that the main object of this Bill is rather to settle a smaller number of men on the land successfully. If it is going to cost £750 per head to make successful settlers we must face that amount. We want successful settlers. It would be much better to spend that amount in order to obtain a percentage of successful settlers than to waste the whole amount and have the soldier settlers back on our hands as complete failures. I resent the suggestion made that the Commonwealth Government, because they are the borrowing power, are going to dictate the terms of legislation in connexion with this Chamber. I think that ever since the Commonwealth

came into existence this Parliament of Victoria has adopted a very weak attitude with regard to legislation all along the line. The Government have generally bowed the knee or bent the head to everything that has emanated from the Federal Parliament. Had we taken a stronger attitude earlier in the history of the Commonwealth we might have been in a much better financial position than we are in now. We have allowed the sources of taxation to be mopped up one by one by the Federal Government. We have allowed them to interfere in our domestic legislation to an extent they were not justified in doing and to an extent that a stronger Government would not have permitted. And now they tell us, who have to repay the whole of the £12,000,000 that will be required, and who have to take all the chances of failure in financing the scheme through the years ahead—they have the effrontery to tell us that we are to submit to them the terms under which we are to settle these people on the land. At the inception of the movement for repatriation they were more modest. They were aware that the States had the land and they said that we ought to know more about land settlement than they could know. In the earlier stages of the movement they were modest. They were then willing to leave the question of land settlement in the hands of the State. The members of this House, particularly members on the other (the Ministerial) side, claim that they do know more about land settlement than the members of the Federal Parliament. In the main, honorable members on the other side of the Chamber are men who have been interested in rural pursuits and in land settlement for many years. They ought to know more about it.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—They understand their own State better than the Federal members can possibly do.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—That is so. This Parliament has been intimately concerned with the soil. It knows the country from end to end. And feeling that we do know more about the question it is we who ought to dictate to the Federal Government the terms on which we will undertake land settlement in this State. If that is not to be the position we should be prepared to refuse to undertake what has been forecasted as a failure by those

who are qualified to express an opinion on the matter. We should be unwise if we allowed the Federal Government to interfere in the form of any legislation we pass here. We undertook, if they will borrow the money, that "we will spend it to the best of our ability and judgment." They have no right to more than that. If we make a failure of it we have to bear the burden, and we shall have to repay the loan just the same. I think we have the right to call the tune, seeing that we have to pay under any circumstances. That is my reason for moving this amendment. I trust the Government will reconsider the position. For my own part, I intend that there shall be a division upon it in order that we may see what the opinion of the Committee really is in regard to the treatment to be meted out to the discharged soldier settlers. It would be better to lose a large amount of money in connexion with this movement as long as we honestly try to make a success of it rather than cause it to be a failure through the adoption of a cheese-paring policy.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (Upper Goulburn).—It does not require very much skill to demonstrate that £500 is absolutely insufficient to settle a man on the land, that is if he is going in for dairy-ing, wheat-growing or any industry of that description. It is quite clear that the Premiers of the different States have made a representation to the Federal Government to that effect, and they have asked that they shall be at liberty to pay the higher amount of £750 to those who go upon the land, and a lesser amount to those who are going in for poultry-raising and other like occupations. The reply of the Prime Minister seems to me to mean that the Federal Government object on the ground that it would bring in two different classes of persons to be assisted. I take it that that is one ground of their objection.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—That is so.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (Upper Goulburn).—Supposing an application were made to the Federal Government that the limit should be £750, and it was represented at the same time that it was unlikely that the average would exceed more than £500, then the ground of objection taken up by the Federal Government would be done away with. The Premier

stated a little while ago that only eight applications now before the Depart—

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The Premier said 8 per cent.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Very well. The Premier said then that 8 per cent. of the applications at the present time would exceed £500. If that is so, it is quite evident that the average amount would be lower than £500. I think that is very clear. If proper representations were made to the Federal Government they would see that.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Especially if they are “backed up” by the votes of this Committee.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—I agree with those honorable members who have said that they do not see why the Federal Government should dictate to us in this matter in the way they have done. They are the borrowing authority certainly, but we have to pay. Not only have we to pay back the money borrowed, but we have also to accept all the risks. We know very well that even under closer settlement, where the Board has greater liberty in selecting the applicants than any Board will have under this arrangement, there has been a large percentage of failures. There is bound to be a large percentage of failures amongst the soldiers. There can be no doubt about that, because in granting the land influences will come in that do not operate in granting land for the ordinary settler. Of course, there will be a feeling of gratitude to the soldier settler for what he has done for the protection of the country and the Empire. Naturally there will be sentiment. And it is bound to happen that there will be a larger percentage of failures among the soldier settlers than there would be amongst the ordinary settlers. The Federal Government should bear that risk, because it is a Commonwealth matter. But they do not take any risk. I do not think we should ask them to take the whole of the risk, but I do think we should ask them to take some of the risk. If it is necessary, I think the State should on its own responsibility aid these men to a greater extent. The honorable member for Hampden, speaking in regard to the purchases of dairy cattle, illustrated the great success that had attended the purchase of dairy cattle for dairymen in the Western District.

He showed how that money had been refunded, and stated that only £1,000 was outstanding. That practically means that the whole of the money has been refunded by the borrowers. The same thing might be applied to the soldier settlers. They might be helped in the same way, over and above the £500 if the advance were limited to that. In that way, and in other ways, such as supplying seed, and so forth, men going in for cultivation could be aided. We know how successful the State has been in furnishing seed to farmers, and how that money has been repaid. But before we have recourse to anything of that sort the Government should do their utmost to induce the Federal Government to do their duty in the matter to a greater extent than they appear to be doing.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I very largely agree with the views of the honorable member for Eaglehawk and the honorable member for Upper Goulburn. I entirely dissent from the idea put forward by the Federal Government that they should dictate the terms of land settlement. There is such a question as State rights. It would be rather a regrettable matter if this Bill were made a battle-ground between the Commonwealth Parliament and this Parliament in regard to that matter. But there is a big principle at stake. It is suicidal to the States to have any direction—and here we have a positive direction from the Commonwealth Government—as to what our attitude should be. The failure or success of this measure and the future operations under it will entirely depend upon the State Government and its officials. If we set out with a free conception, which is not a misconception, that £500 is totally inadequate, we can see the position in which we shall be placed. I do not see any harm whatever in substituting £750 for the £500 now in the Bill. I have yet to learn that the State cannot put up a proposition of its own in regard to loans. I know that a certain agreement has been arrived at by this State in common with the other States and the Commonwealth Government as to borrowing and borrowing powers.

Mr. MENZIES.—We should have to find the money.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Yes, we should have to find the money, but I venture to say that the State is not dead to the

finer impulses and claims made on behalf of these men. We are not getting any favour from the Commonwealth Government; we are simply borrowing, and our credit is good.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The credit of the State will have to be pledged to raise money to purchase estates for the soldiers. We have got to raise the money locally for the purchase of the land. The Commonwealth finds the money for advances.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—The land, of course, would be acquired by the State, and would belong to the State. The liability of the soldiers would be to the State Government, which would be the owner of the land.

Mr. MENZIES.—According to the view of the Federal Minister, it would take £40,000,000 to acquire the estates that are necessary.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—It has been plainly indicated all round the chamber that the maximum advance should be £750, and that £500 is totally inadequate.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—In some cases.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—What is the use of writing failure in regard to 8 per cent. of the applicants? Surely we ought to give them sufficient to make a fair start, and there is nothing that I can see to prevent our substituting a limit of £750 for the limit of £500 at present provided in the Bill.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—An advance of £500 will be more than sufficient to enable any soldier settler to make a fair start. It would take a good while for a man to use up £750.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Will there be anything to prevent the Government having a "button day," so as to enable us to get money to help the soldiers if the limit of £500 is left in the Bill? Could not an appeal be made to the public in that way?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—I am quite sure that the House will have to review this Bill, not only in connexion with this proposition, but in connexion with other propositions before very long. We do not believe that this is the final word on the subject. We are doing the best we can at the present moment.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—The best thing the Government can do is to give a lead to the Commonwealth Government, who evidently do not know what is required.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—The responsibility for this scheme being a success, or other-

wise, rests on this Parliament. We cannot get away from that, and if we are absolutely convinced that it is going to be unsuccessful, owing to the inadequacy of the proposed advances, is not now the proper time to make our voices clamant, and to indicate to the Commonwealth Government that we require the limit of advances to be raised by £250 per settler in order to make the scheme a success? We should do that also in order to show that we are not going to take our directions from them in the carrying out of proper State administration. Ought we to hurry and rush into a failure? Should we not try to avert failure by telling the Commonwealth Government and the Commonwealth Parliament, in the plainest terms we can, what our opinion is? The best way we can do that is by substituting a maximum of £750 for the maximum of £500 in the Bill. That would be the proper course to adopt, instead of ear-wiggling Victorian members of the Commonwealth Parliament in order to get the Commonwealth Parliament to carry out our ideas. If the maximum amount is fixed at £750 in the Bill, and the Commonwealth Government does not like to take on the responsibility, the people of this State will find the extra £250 per soldier settler in order to see that success is assured to these men. I trust that the Minister will accept the amendment without going to a division. It is a reasonable amendment, and would indicate in plain and striking terms to the other place that we know our business here, and that we are not going to receive our instructions from the great, supreme, mighty, and august Federal Government.

Mr. OMAN.—If the honorable member for Eaglehawk had limited his amendment to raising the advance to £750, and had omitted the words "without requiring payment of interest, or rent, or of any instalment of purchase money during the first five years of his occupation of the land," I confess that I should have been inclined to support it. But I have taken out the figures to find out what his proposal would amount to. The State would require that the settlers should repay 3½ per cent. on the advance the first year, but it can free them of the payment of interest and instalments of principal on the land transaction. If a man took up land worth £1,500, and obtained an advance of £750, assuming that the interest was at the rate of 3½ per cent. for the first year; 4 per cent. for the

second year; 4½ per cent. for the third year; and 5 per cent. for the fourth and fifth years, at which rates the State would make a loss, because it cannot obtain money under such terms, under the amendment the charges against the State would be as follows:—First year, £78 15s.; second year, £90; third year, £101 5s.; fourth year, £112 10s.; fifth year, £112 10s.; total, £495.

Mr. MENZIES.—You are assuming that the whole amount of £750 would be advanced in the first year.

Mr. OMAN.—Yes, it would be required in connexion with a dairying proposition. Supposing the Government were to advance the £750, at the end of five years the man could walk out of the holding, and leave the State with a loss of £750, plus £495, or a total of £1,245. The State would only have the land and the improvements. That is why I spoke as I did, and said that if the amendment were carried it would so embarrass the State that the State could not carry the load. The Commonwealth might be able to carry such a load, but the State could not. I said in my second-reading speech that I would certainly favour any proposal under which a concession in the rate of interest would be made for the first few years, both with regard to the land and the improvements. But we have a State concession amounting to £142 8s. 4d., and on a £1,500 basis, it would mean £213 13s. 1d. per man.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—You want to give a concession that will cost nothing.

Mr. OMAN.—This concession will cost the State in hard cash £213 for each man. The payments are deferred, and the men will have the use of the land for a certain term free of interest. The amendment of the honorable member for Eaglehawk would put such a responsibility on the State as the State would not be able to bear. It is not because I am not anxious to assist the soldiers that I am opposed to the amendment. The very opposite is the case. I do not desire to see carried a proposition which may be immensely popular on the eve of an election, to give to the settler not only £750 as an advance, but a remission to the extent of £495 in addition, and to enable him, if he so desires at the end of the five-year period, to walk out of the holding with the whole of his accumulated savings in his wife's name, or some one else's name. That is not a sound proposi-

tion for the State. While I am most anxious to assist the soldier, I am not willing to undertake the responsibility of voting for provisions that will land the State in that position.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—Do you mean to say that the State has no security?

Mr. OMAN.—It would have only the land and the improvements, but you do not know what the value of the improvements would be at the end of the five years period.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—I should imagine that the Government, or the Board, would take care that the man effected the improvements.

Mr. OMAN.—From what we saw during our investigation, the Closer Settlement Commission was satisfied that improvements very soon deteriorated in value. Great loss was sustained by the State because of vacant improvements—particularly houses.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—Did you see many settlers who had accumulated savings at the end of five years?

Mr. OMAN.—No. The interjection of the honorable member for Fitzroy was hardly worthy of him.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I did not mean anything wrong.

Mr. OMAN.—There were only three properties bought in my district. I am most anxious to see the Bill put in such a form as will enable justice to be done to the settlers. I hope honorable members on both sides of the Chamber will unite to make the Bill as perfect as possible, and that they will not make a party question of it at all. The tone of the debate has become very much better, and I can see that there is a united feeling amongst honorable members that we should do the best we can in the interests of the soldier settlers, so that they may succeed on the land. I hope that our efforts will be successful.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I did not mean by my interjection that the honorable member for Hampden, or any one else, had done anything that he ought not to have done. I appreciate what country members have done. They have been trying to induce the land-owners in their districts, I understand, to make available to the Government suitable areas at cheap rates in order to settle the soldiers.

Mr. OMAN.—I have not even done that yet.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I understood that that was the intention.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—That has been done.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I understood that that was what many country members have been engaged in, and I admired them for doing it. I did not cast any reflection on them. The Premier took up my remark wrongly, and so did the honorable member for Hampden. I may point out that, while I appreciate what country members are doing in this direction, it is utterly impossible for me to follow suit. There are no areas in my district suitable for closer settlement. My district is too closely settled for it to be in the interests of health. I may say that I support the amendment of the honorable member for Eaglehawk. The Premier says that in about 8 per cent. of the cases the settlers will require an advance of more than £500. I believe that the percentage will be higher. I regard the agreement between the Federal and State Governments as quite unfair to the State, but we are interested in making a success of this measure, and if the limitation of the advance to £500 means failure for those who are put on the wheat areas, and for many of the irrigationists, then we ought to raise the limitation to any amount that would mean success, because failure will mean that the State will have to bear the financial loss, and not the Commonwealth. That is my trouble, and that is the reason I am supporting the honorable member for Eaglehawk. Honorable members on both sides of the chamber expressed the same opinion yesterday. To-day they have an opportunity of voting for the amendment, but members on the Ministerial side of the chamber are now compromising. They are now doubtful whether it would be wise to do what they declared yesterday to be the acme of wisdom.

Mr. BOWSER.—The amendment is weighted with another condition.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—There is always some objection to doing the right thing. We are told, "The time is not opportune," or something else. Honorable members on the Ministerial side of the chamber can find a hundred and one reasons why they should not do to-day what they declared yesterday to be absolutely essential in order to secure successful settlement under this Bill. I have objected many times, as has the Leader of the Opposition, to the commitments that are

made when the Premiers meet in conference. They have committed the various States to a uniform system of land settlement. That is the statement of the Minister in charge of the Bill. What a ridiculous thing for a number of Premiers to commit themselves to a uniform system of settlement for States that are not uniform. Though the lands vary, and the whole of the conditions are dissimilar, they must have similar conditions of settlement. There is not that ordinary business acumen that one would expect from representatives of the States. The Premier made it clear that he had some money that has been expended. He said he had spent over £100,000, and, according to the last agreement, he was to have £150,000 from the Commonwealth for this particular purpose for the year ended on the 30th June last.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The Commonwealth Government have not raised that money yet.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—It was part of the £2,000,000 that was to be allotted to the different States. Although we get the reports of the Premiers' Conferences, I am afraid that we do not read them as carefully as we ought to. Victoria has sent a larger number of men to the Front than any of the States except New South Wales. We have to make provision for about 30 per cent. of the men who will return and require land. New South Wales has to provide for about 40 per cent. of them. Let me show how the £2,000,000 is to be distributed by the Federal Government. Queensland is to receive £500,000, New South Wales £500,000, Western Australia £500,000, South Australia £250,000, Tasmania £100,000, and Victoria only £150,000. Compare that small sum with the half-million to be given to each of the States of Queensland, New South Wales, and Western Australia. We have to deal with a larger number of men than any of the States except New South Wales, and yet we get only £150,000 out of the £2,000,000. Queensland will not have half as many men to provide for. How can the apportionment be said to be just?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—It was an estimate of what each State would require.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—We shall require much more money than Queensland will.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Some of the other States have large areas of good Crown land.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I do not wish to criticise the other States, but we must look at the facts. Queensland has enormous areas of Crown lands, and the settlement would cost much less there than here. A great deal of our land, especially land adjacent to railways, will have to be purchased. We shall have an enormous expenditure, and yet we get only £150,000, whilst Queensland gets £500,000. We have not been treated as we ought to be. If the Queensland Government were hard up, and we had plenty of money, I could understand the position.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—Queensland has not received any of the money.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I do not know what Queensland has received, but I know that under the agreement we are not getting a fair share. The Federal Government will not guarantee more than £500 a man, but there is no objection to the State giving up to £750. The State is taking the whole of the risk in that case. As I pointed out in my second-reading speech, the Federal Government can raise the money by taxation, lend it to the State, and the State can pay it back. To deplete our exchequer is a ridiculous thing. Clause 11 has not received the consideration it should receive. It gives power to the Board to lend £1,000. Up to 100 per cent. may be lent on improvements, and the soldier will be allowed to remain on the land for three years without paying interest.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The soldier has to pay on the advance the first year. It is in regard to the purchase money that there are to be three years without payment of rent.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Then the settler commences to pay the advance from the first year. He may pay £50 the first year, £100 the second year, and £150 the third year, or £300 in all. That £300 may be re-loaned to him over and over again. It does not appear to be a bad arrangement when looked at in that light, though the settler will only get this treatment if he has made a success of his block. My contention is that he does not want the money then, but that he wants it to help him in the initial struggle. I

urge the Government to view the matter in a very generous spirit, but, at the same time, in a business-like way. If a man, through an advance of £750, can make a success of his block, and repay the whole of the money, it will be a fine thing, but if a man is a failure because of restricted capital, that failure will reflect discredit on the soldier and the State, and the State will suffer financial loss. I should be pleased if the Government provided that the advance should be determined under certain circumstances by the Board. The Board would decide that a man was the right type of man, and that it was necessary to assist him to prevent his failure and loss to the State. Senator Millen, in his statement, feared that if we gave one man more than £500, we would be giving some other man less than £500. He did not take into consideration that some settlers will require less. A poultry farmer would not require the £500 advance after he had been provided with land. He might require only £400, and we ought to be allowed to give the other £100 to some other man who could use it profitably. That is, the position our party take up. If honorable members behind the Government would view the matter in the proper light, they would vote to-day for the opinion they expressed yesterday, but I do not expect some honorable members to do that.

Mr. MENZIES.—Since speaking on the second reading of this Bill I have had the advantage of reading the position as presented by Senator Millen in the Federal Senate, and I regret that I did not take advantage of the opportunity of doing that a little bit earlier. It is always easy to be wise after events, and looking at the arrangement entered into between the State Premiers and the representative of the Federal authority one might be inclined to think that one or two of the principal conditions which were agreed to, and which are reflected in this Bill, are not as wise as one would like. For instance, the advance which is proposed of £500 on the improvements has been made informally. One is at a disadvantage in not knowing exactly the position as reflected by the various State representatives and the Federal authority at the Conference, but it does appear to me that the honorable member for Fitzroy to-night really put his finger on a matter

that is not calculated to work out equitably as between the States, that is that a uniform sum of £500 should be granted to the five States that have come into this agreement. In New South Wales they have a territory four times the extent of Victoria, and only one-fifth of that huge area of approximately 200,000,000 acres has been alienated. In Victoria, where we have something like 56,000,000 acres, one-half has been alienated. I think this fact proves conclusively that the difficulties which must present themselves in this matter of land settlement are going to be very much more accentuated in the State of Victoria than in New South Wales, although I do recognise that New South Wales is called upon to provide for a slightly heavier percentage of returned soldiers. As against that I can readily see that it would be very difficult to discriminate as between the States; and it is just possible—I do not know whether I am getting near the truth of that—that when £500 was fixed it was regarded possibly as a maximum for the biggest State of the five, and that they were making provision for the inequalities I have referred to. In fact, the Premier pointed out that, in Tasmania, they have fixed a different amount.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—It was the maximum in three of the States

Mr. MENZIES.—It is quite possible that that view was taken. But there is this view, which has become more accentuated to me after perusing Senator Millen's statement, that the States have assumed responsibility for finding the land and putting the settler on the land. I, for one, am not prepared to recede an eighth of an inch from that position. Although the difficulties are going to be great, and the responsibilities are going to be increasingly enormous, I am still convinced that the only authority that can effectively deal with this question is the State authority, seeing that the States have the machinery, the past experience, and the legal knowledge. I am regarding the matter from the State point of view. Therefore, I hope that none of us will do anything to convey the impression that this is not a matter which we should enter upon, and enter upon with great zest. In saying that, I recognise the position of our State. It is all very well talking about the conditions we should like to get.

We have to look at the matter from the point of view that money is very dear at present, and that great difficulties would present themselves to the States if they were called upon to finance this great land settlement scheme. I am glad to say that the exigencies of Victoria are not so accentuated in this matter as is the case in the other States. The land settlement portion of the scheme of repatriation is after all only a very important section of the general scheme. When we look at land settlement in contrast to the many great problems which still remain with the Federal Government to solve and properly adjust, we must be compelled to the conclusion that the Federal Government have far greater problems to face than we have in order to give effective expression to the desire of the people of Australia to provide for the manifold needs of these men in the various departments of secondary industry. I feel, therefore, that we should do nothing to jeopardize the passage of this Bill. When I say that, I am prepared to accept the assurance of the Premier and Minister of Lands that they will hold up against the Federal authorities as hard as they can what are proven to be the necessities of this State in any effective land settlement scheme. What I mean is this: The Premier has told us that from the immediate past experience 8 per cent. of the men whom they have dealt with might have been more advantageously dealt with if they had been able to grant a larger sum than £500, the amount allowed for improvements. I hope that when this great fact is again represented for the consideration of the Federal authorities they will not allow it to go out to Australia and the world that there are 8 per cent. of the applicants who cannot be effectively dealt with under this scheme. I gave a little quiet consideration to this matter this morning, and I have been wondering whether it would not be possible for the State to make some representation to the Federal Government. I do not know whether the best way to do it would be through the Conference of Premiers, but I feel greatly handicapped in dealing with this matter from the fact that the mind of the State members and of this Legislature is not reflected in the Federal Houses. It would be a great advantage if there was any way of the views

of the State members being made known to the other Parliament when discussing the whole scheme of repatriation, but as to how that is to be accomplished is a question on which I am not able to reach firm ground. I agree with what the Leader of the Opposition has so frequently pointed out in regard to the Conferences of Premiers, but I do not go the whole length with him. At the Conferences the State Premiers meet for important national work which frequently will not wait, and consequently it is thrust upon us to have these Conferences. I do feel, however, that there ought to be some greater provision for reflecting the mind of this Parliament with regard to the agreements that are entered into on behalf of the States at these Conferences. I know it is a very difficult question.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Let the leaders of the three parties here be asked to the bar of the Federal Parliament on this question.

Mr. MENZIES.—It is a distinct loss in my judgment that the Federal and the State Parliaments are called upon to deal with so important a matter as this in a really unrelated sense to each other. But I am not in favour of the amendment now before the Committee. I must be guided in this matter by the Treasurer's statement. It is all very well to talk about increasing the grant, but if we have not the money to do it we should be courting failure, in my judgment, for the whole scheme if what is proposed were adopted. Looking back on my own experience of settlement, I can say that I have known more men to fail on the land through being provided with too much money than I have known men to fail who have had to make a hard fight. I do not say this through any lack of sympathy for the man who goes on the land, because I have lived on the land for a long time.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I know which position I would rather be in.

Mr. MENZIES.—It is my own experience, gathered during a quarter of a century, of men who settle on the Mallee fringe, that more failures have been due to the fact that the settlers got their money too readily in the first half of the tentative lease which they had for the first ten years than in any other way. They were given practically a negotiable security, inasmuch as a man could put the lease into another man's safe and draw up

to about 10s. on it. That is the ordinary trading. It led many men into failure on the land. The men who fought shy of taking advantage of those conditions were the men who went through successfully. As Senator Millen pointed out, a repatriation scheme is not a scheme for handing out money indiscriminately. It has to be a well-digested scheme to place a man amid such conditions that he will have an opportunity to win through. I am afraid there is a tendency when dealing with these matters to rather overdo and spoil things instead of improving them. When I was in New Zealand it came under my observation that, as the result of the National Government's recognition of the quality of the Maori during the Maori wars, trouble had arisen. The Maoris as a class were endowed with the pick of the lands in the North and South Islands, and for years afterwards the Government had diligently to retrace their steps. They gave away too much of the national heritage.

Mr. McGREGOR.—Whose national heritage was it?

Mr. MENZIES.—It was the heritage of the New Zealander of to-day. When I was in the Dominion two or three years ago I met men there who stated that they did not own an acre of land on which they could settle because land had been given away in large tracts to the Maoris. The Maoris were keeping back effective settlement. They are the most difficult people in the world to deal with when it comes to a matter of titles to the land, because of their community ideas.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—The honorable member for Lowan is referring to what happened under the treaty rights, I take it.

Mr. MENZIES.—Yes. I am calling attention to a phase of the subject honorable members will do well to consider. At the time when every man is stirred to the depths of his being in the endeavour to do something for the soldiers, it is quite possible we may be naming amounts that we cannot give effect to.

Mr. BOWSER.—Better fix the soldier well now, because he will be forgotten later.

Mr. MENZIES.—I am not prepared to admit that. The inference is that we should be fixing him well by giving him £750 instead of £500. I have been endeavouring to show that it is possible to err on that side. I think the honorable

member for Hampden, in working out the interest charges on that proposal, demonstrated very clearly that it was not going to be a kindness to the settler, but was going to heap up an additional impost in the shape of interest. I realize that the States have a great work to do. I hope that we shall look at the measure carefully, and endeavour to make the best of it. We have certainly got to assume responsibility. I, for one, readily assume it. It is necessary that we should assume responsibility for making the settlement scheme a success. I hope the Premier or the Minister in charge of the Bill will make representations to the Federal Government that a little further consideration might be shown to the soldier settlers in this matter.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—During the dinner hour I have had a chat with my colleague on the matter that was discussed last evening, and that has been discussed again this evening, and I think I can see my way to a solution of the difficulty. The position, shortly stated, is this: I have shown, and my colleague (the Minister of Lands) has shown, that the members of the Board dealing with this matter—consisting of the Ministers of Lands of the different States that were represented at the Premiers' Conference, with the exception of the Queensland representative—made representations along the same lines. It is clear that all the State Governments say that, so far as certain sections of the soldiers to be settled are concerned, a larger amount than £500 will be necessary. Members on both sides of the Chamber have also stated that they feel that that position is certain to arise. My suggestion to the Committee is that the honorable member for Eaglehawk should withdraw his amendment, that we pass the clauses bearing on this matter, and that the clauses be re-committed after the Bill has passed through Committee. As my colleague (the Minister of Lands) intimated to the Committee this afternoon, a letter was sent to me as the State Premier of Victoria—and a similar letter has, of course, been sent to the other Premiers—from the Prime Minister, voicing the decision of the Federal Government on this particular point. For the benefit of those honorable members who were not in the chamber when the letter was read, I will again read the paragraph bearing on this question.

The question of the granting of discretionary power to the States to advance up to £700 in certain cases, providing that, on the whole, the advances from money supplied by the Commonwealth to the settlers do not average more than £500 each, has also had the consideration of my Government, but, seeing that this discretion would be likely to lead to an increase in favour of one form of settlement, to the detriment of other forms, my Government cannot accede to the suggestion put forward at the meeting of the Settlement Board.

Senator Millen was in the chair, so he is fully acquainted with the matter. The Federal Cabinet are not in favour of that discretionary power being given. If honorable members will pass this clause, and the honorable member for Eaglehawk and the honorable member for Wangaratta will withdraw their amendments, what I propose to do is to communicate by telegraph to-morrow with all the other Premiers of the States who sat on that Board, calling attention to the view of this Parliament on this point. It is a view in which their own representatives concur. I should state that I purpose waiting, with my colleague, the Minister in charge of the Bill, on the Federal Government early next week in order to convey to them the feeling of honorable members, which is practically unanimous on this question, that there should be elasticity in the arrangement. I shall ask the Federal Government if they are still of the same opinion. I have no doubt they will be, but if I get the views of the other Premiers my hands will be strengthened. I know that certain members of this House, and certain members of the Federal Parliament representing Victorian constituencies, are also making representations to the Federal Government in the same direction. I promise the Committee that, after we have gone through the Bill, the Government will recommit clause 11, and I will make a full statement of the result of the negotiations. My colleague (the Minister of Lands) and I are anxious to meet that percentage of cases that will require more assistance. Members on both sides of the House are in favour of that being done. We are all sympathetic in our attitude towards these cases. However, there is a limit at present, and I do not want to delay the passage of the measure. It is certain that next year, after we have gained experience in the working of the measure, we shall have to make some amendments.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Would not the Government be in a stronger position if clause 11 were postponed?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Certainly not. I am hopeful that if we follow the course I have suggested we may be successful. Anyhow, the attempt will be made. Further, I want to point out to honorable members that, if by any chance the attempt should not be successful, we should be able to settle these cases. It is certain that within the next twelve months the bulk of those soldier settlers who will ultimately require more than £500 in the way of an advance would not have drawn up to the £500. By getting into communication with the other State Governments and obtaining their views on the subject it will fortify me in speaking on behalf of the other States. It will be essential shortly to hold a Premiers' Conference in connexion with financial matters, and the question can be threshed out then. I have given a promise to recommit clause 11.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Why not agree to the recommittal of clauses 9, 10 and 11?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I will do that. All the clauses bearing on the subject can be recommitted, and I will then make a full statement, giving the Committee all the information I am able to secure.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Has any State passed a Bill containing the £500 provision?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The Tasmanian Government passed a Bill containing a limit of £300. They are bringing that amount up to £500.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—South Australia fixed a limit of £500.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—That makes our position more difficult.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Since then a meeting of the Land Settlement Board has been held, and representations were made. A new Minister has been appointed in South Australia. Sir Richard Butler has communicated with the Minister of Agriculture, stating that he would be willing to co-operate in making the limit more elastic. The returned soldiers and the outside public are desirous that we should pass this measure at the earliest possible moment, and thus give relief to those men who are now knocking at our doors. The Closer Settlement Board are visiting different parts of the State. From the financial point of view, honorable members would do a good thing for the soldiers in passing this measure now.

Mr. MACKINNON.—The point that impresses me very much in connexion

with this Bill is that it ought to be passed promptly. Every week between thirty and forty cases arise. The Government are committed to the principle of this Bill, because many applications have been dealt with, and dealt with on the assumption that a measure of this sort would be passed. It is desirable that we should get some law on the statute book at the earliest possible opportunity. I am very glad that the Ministry is going to endeavour to get the limit altered. But the point I want to make is this. What I think a fair thing is that anything above £500 should be for the purchase of stock, and so on. Closer settlement is one thing, and the repatriation effort, whether applied to men on the land or to men going into a new vocation, or men starting business, is a different thing. The State has undertaken the one and the Commonwealth the other. Senator Millen said, as clearly as a man could say, "We assume full responsibility for repatriation." The provision of stock, seed, and that kind of thing is repatriation, and until recently it has been treated as repatriation.

Mr. MENZIES.—That is only on the discharge of the soldiers.

Mr. MACKINNON.—We cannot deal with them until they are discharged.

Mr. MENZIES.—There is an amelioration committee.

Mr. MACKINNON.—That is another matter. Stocking and giving a man a movable plant is really repatriation. The spending of money in the purchase of land, or of improving the land, is a State affair, because it increases the wealth of the State. They were on the right lines originally when it was arranged that the State was to find the land, and make advances for improvements to the land, and that the stocking was to be in the hands of the Commonwealth Government. I think that the pressure that will be brought to bear on the Federal Parliament and the Federal Government will be so great that they will be compelled to come in and help the men on the land just as they are helping the other men. Why should the returned soldiers on the land be distinguished from other returned soldiers? I think the money should be advanced in the same way as has hitherto been done. In some cases £150 has been lent without any interest at all for ten years.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—We should want another Bill to deal with that.

Mr. MACKINNON.—If the State is going to take it on, it might be dealt with in this Bill. At any rate, do not let us delay this Bill. Let us get something on to the statute-book, because it is unfair to keep the thing hanging up as it has been. The whole trouble at the present time is that no one can say definitely what is to be done for the soldier when he comes back, and it is material that the soldier should know that now. I regret that some honorable members used the word "failure" so often. We all have the gloom of Victoria's premier efforts at closer settlement hanging over us for the time being. What was the cause of the settlers not being successful I am not going to endeavour to say at the present time. When honorable members say they contemplate failure if the advance is not increased, they are overlooking a great many men who are not looking for anything like £500. There are men coming before the Qualification Committee who are not capable of taking up concerns with £500 worth of improvements on them. As the honorable member for North Melbourne indicated, in many cases to encourage a man to take £500 would be to lure him on to his own financial ruin. I think it is not right to assume that there will be failure necessarily in any of these cases. I think it is a fact that will be established before very long, that there is a great deal of land in the hands of private individuals which is likely to be made available for the soldiers, though it would not be made available for any other State purpose. Many land-owners are prepared to offer their land as a mere patriotic deed, though they would not be inclined to do it for ordinary patriotism in times of peace. They are prepared to make it available for discharged soldiers. Several cases of that kind have come under my personal observation in the last few months. These men will not ask the uttermost farthing for their land, if they are satisfied that the land is going to be used for the purpose of settling soldiers. Therefore, I think that not only will an advantage be offered to the soldier settler, but there will be an opportunity of settling many parts of this country on sound lines that has never before presented itself. If the State is going to incur a little loss, I think it can stand it, because the ultimate gain will be very large. I accept the Premier's proposal. I think it is a fair thing. A

bargain of some sort has been made. I am sorry that the original scheme was got away from. I think the basis adopted was a sound one, because it is a great help to a man to get, free of interest for ten years, £200 or £300, with which to buy plant, stock, and other things necessary in order that he may earn a little profit from the land. It is an enormous help to him. If the Commonwealth Government agrees to the limit being raised from £500 to £750, I think the extra £250 might be lent free of interest. I think that there will be probably more than 8 per cent. of the soldier settlers who will require an advance of more than £500. The purchase of the land, and the improvement of the land is a State concern, but the stocking and the provision of implements is a Commonwealth concern, and every taxpayer in the Commonwealth is entitled to contribute towards that particular form of repatriation.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—I desire to say that I accept the statement of the Premier with regard to the recommittal of clauses 9, 10 and 11. The honorable gentleman desires to have an opportunity of making further investigation in the matter, and I am quite willing to adopt the course he has suggested.

Mr. BOWSER.—I think the suggestion of the Premier a most reasonable and timely one, and, in the circumstances, I will not proceed at present with the amendment in clause 11, of which I have given notice.

Mr. Tunnecliffe's amendment was withdrawn.

Mr. CHATHAM.—I cannot vote for this clause because it contains the words, "whether such assistance has been requested or not." In the past there has been a lot of loss and a lot of trouble owing to the interference, as it might be termed, of the officials with the settlers. One settler in the Werribee district attributed his failure to the fact that the grading was not done in a workmanlike manner on the block that was allotted to him. Clause 15 provides that the Board, with the approval of the Minister, may enter upon any land for the purpose of grading or improving that land. That applies to the preparation of blocks for settlement. How much more necessary is it that the sanction of the Minister should have to be obtained when the officials attempt to interfere with settlers who are already on the land? Clause 8

provides that only returned soldiers, who are recommended by the Qualification Committee, should have the right to apply for land. That is quite a reversal of what took place under the original closer settlement scheme. In the first place land that was suitable was acquired, and then settlers were collected whether they were suitable, or unsuitable, to work the areas. It was placed in evidence before the Closer Settlement Commission that the people who had the selection of the settlers were quite convinced that those settlers were not going to be successful when placed on the land.

Mr. MENZIES.—Do you refer to the Land Board?

Mr. CHATHAM.—No, I am referring to the officers who inquired into the advisability of selecting men as settlers. They acted under the Closer Settlement Board. It is provided in paragraph (a) of sub-clause (1) that assistance may be given in connexion with—

The clearing, fencing, supplying with water, draining, grading, preparing for irrigation, and general improvement of the land in respect of which the application is made.

I think the Bill is overloaded by this provision. Hardly any of the things which are suggested in it can be done. The honorable member for Wangaratta last evening pointed out the advisability of supplying a settler with 150 ewes in lamb. If that were done, it would mean practically an expenditure of £300, taking the ruling rate for sheep during the last few months. He also said that they should be supplied with six milch cows. According to the statement of the honorable member for Hampden last night, they would cost about £90. A horse and trap would cost about £30, and there would be about £80 left for grading, building a house, supplying water, clearing and generally improving the land. It is an utter impossibility to do all these things with the amount of money it is proposed to provide under the Bill. The honorable member for Hampden last night made a good business suggestion. At the present time we have in operation the machinery for dealing with advances for live stock, and, in my opinion, it would be advisable to accept the proposition of the honorable member, and to give the settlers the stock absolutely clear of the £500 advance, and to allow the repayments to be collected through the butter factories or creameries. These men

should be able to get their stock on the same liberal terms as were extended to the settlers in the Western District a year or two ago. If a settler were provided with six milch cows at a cost of £90, or £300 worth of sheep, he would have the major portion of the £500 to carry out some of the operations enumerated in the clause. What I object to is the interference with the settler after he has been selected as being suitable to go on the land. Collusion has been mentioned with regard to some cases of grading in this country. It was pointed out by certain men that they were ruined by the grading done by the contractors, and passed by the officers.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The Commission in their report said that they found that that allegation was not true. You were a party to that report.

Mr. CHATHAM.—The Government wrote off £1,800 of the money that was charged to the settlers for grading, thus admitting that the grading was not properly done. What has the Minister to say to that?

Mr. MENZIES.—That is different from collusion.

Mr. CHATHAM.—It was mooted that there was collusion. The settlers were very emphatic in their statements about some of the grading, which they said was the cause of the failure. If the settlers are to be interfered with as proposed, and if the officers of the Department are going to do as they like, what is the use of having a Qualification Committee to inquire into the soldiers' qualifications? We know that some time ago there was a small holdings proposition at Newtown, one at Highton, and one at Belmont. The Government sought to work all the farms in these districts with one team. The horse was taken out of the stable and set to work at Belmont, and from there he went to Newtown, and afterwards to Highton. The team worked on the three different propositions, and some of the settlers got a bill charging £4 10s. an acre for putting in their crop.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—What sort of a crop?

Mr. CHATHAM.—Oats, or something of that kind. The time that the horse was engaged in travelling between the different settlements was charged to the

crops. Why should we have all this interference that is proposed in the Bill?

Mr. PURNELL.—That statement about the team is not true.

Mr. CHATHAM.—It was given in evidence before the Commission.

Mr. PURNELL.—Newtown is nearly 10 miles from Belmont.

Mr. CHATHAM.—I do not care how far it is, but the statement I made is the sworn evidence given before the Commission. I am going to vote against the clause, because I do not approve of this kind of interference with the settlers. I do not think the £500 advance is sufficient, and I do not think it would be wise to place the whole of the money at the disposal of the Department in the first few months after the soldier settles on the land. We had evidence in connexion with that kind of thing at Merbein. An amount of money was given to the settlers there, and a short time afterwards they asked the Government for more assistance. The advance should be increased to £600, £700, or £800, and should be extended over a number of years. If that were done, the settler and his family could keep themselves going with the money, and would be able to work on the land. I do not want the men to work under the direction of officers who build useless structures and debit the cost to the settler. You have to be very careful in putting improvements on small blocks. Some people say that the improvements on the land are a bar to aggregation, as they make the land valuable. I have yet to learn that improvements generally are not a liability instead of an asset. There is the expense of upkeep, and there is depreciation, whilst the improvements bring in no revenue. I hope the Minister will not ask us to pass this clause, because it will interfere with the settlers and prevent the possibility of success. I do not want to have the Bill hung up, but I cannot accept this clause. We shall have to be very careful in dealing with the soldiers. I remember a short time ago that some blocks of land were vacant in Gippsland, and that some would-be settlers arrived here who were anxious to take up land under the Closer Settlement Act. They had a small amount of capital. They were Danes, and had the reputation of being very good farmers. Some members of the Board thought they would be good

men to have in the district, as they would introduce new methods that would be beneficial to the local settlers. These men bought a horse and some stock. They did not attend to their cows, but they made great use of the horse. They drove him and rode him, and spent freely the money that had been advanced to them. The result was that the Board had to send an officer up to inquire why they were wasting their time. One of them took it as an insult, and left for New Zealand, and the other, after being dispossessed, took a situation in the district. The Board garnisheed his small wages to get a little back. These things have occurred, and will occur again. The Minister will have to be particularly careful in the administration of this measure. No attempt should be made to dishearten the settlers. People like to follow their own ideas until they are convinced that they are not on the right track. If you tell a settler that he has to do exactly as an officer directs him, it means failure from the start, because you break down the hopes of that man. He should not be asked to proceed on lines that he does not approve of. If you say to the man, "This is a lucerne proposition, and we are going to spend £4 or £5 an acre in making the land suitable," you may have a repetition of what occurred at Bamawm, where land was graded for lucerne that was not fit for lucerne, and when the settlers had spent all their money they were told that they could have other blocks where the soil was deeper or drier, and that the amount debited to them would be wiped off the slate. Many of these settlers were from overseas, and were led to believe that they were going to do splendidly. Some of them could not feed their families. One man, in his evidence, said he lost a child through having to feed it on sour apples. I am entirely opposed to any interference with the soldiers.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I am astounded at the statement of the honorable member in reviving two cases of alleged collusion in connexion with the grading of land under the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. The honorable member was a member of the Royal Commission that reported that they had investigated both cases, and found that they were not sustained. The honorable member signed that report.

Mr. CHATHAM.—I said it was mooted that there was collusion.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The honorable member signed his name to the report, and, in view of that fact, it is unfair for him to revive those charges. I have no personal interest in the matter, and it is no reflexion on our administration. The charges were made long before we came into office. I am concerned, however, in seeing justice meted out to all.

Mr. SOLLY.—You ought to practise what you preach.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—I am trying to, and I hope the honorable member will assist me. I am sure the honorable member for Grenville has misread the clause, judging by his criticism. If he wants to object to the Board making improvements before the settler goes on the land, he can object on clause 15. All we do under this clause is to say that, when a soldier applies for land, the Board shall discuss with him as to what clearing, fencing, buildings, and so on are necessary, or what he wants in the way of stock. It is necessary to know to what extent assistance can be given to him. To knock this clause out would be to rob any soldier settler of the sympathetic assistance of the Board. The Board will direct the settler in regard to the improvements, and should have the powers that we propose to give them.

The clause was agreed to, as were clauses 10 to 13.

Clause 14—

Notwithstanding anything in this or any other Act—

(a) the rate of interest for advances under this Act shall not exceed Three pounds ten shillings per centum per annum for the first year, Four pounds per centum per annum for the second year, and so on, the rate of interest increasing by not more than Ten shillings per centum for each subsequent year until the rate of interest reaches the maximum which, but for this section, would have been chargeable;

(b) the Minister, in respect of any land disposed of under this Act to a discharged soldier, may direct that no instalment of purchase money and interest or rent shall be payable for the first three years or (in the case of land acquired and taken for the Crown under section 20 of the Closer Settlement Act 1915) for the first year of his occupation of such land, and may extend the term of the lease accordingly or where a lease has not issued may issue a lease for the extended term.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—I suppose that, in connexion with this clause, the Premier will make further inquiries in view of what has been said during the debate.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The Government cannot agree to any increase beyond the three-year period.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—Will the Minister agree to recommit clause 14?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—That question can be raised on the amendment proposed by the honorable member for Eaglehawk to clause 9. If that amendment is carried, we shall have to recommit for the purpose of further considering clause 14.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—The honorable member for Eaglehawk suggests that five years should be substituted in place of three.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The Government will oppose that.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—I do not want to go all over the ground again. If we are satisfied that the period should be five years shall we get a reconsideration of this clause at a later stage?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—If the honorable member for Eaglehawk carries his amendment to clause 9, we must make the alteration in this clause.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—The Minister in the course of his second-reading speech informed the House that the loss of interest that would accrue during the period mentioned in this clause would be jointly borne by the State and the Federal authorities. I do not see any thing in this Bill bearing that out. No doubt an agreement was arrived at with the Premiers and the Prime Minister, but that is in no way binding upon us. Still the honorable gentleman speaks with perfect confidence when he says that the loss will be borne in the way I have stated. There is nothing we can enforce in that way at all. Apart altogether from the equity of the case, some circumstances might arise which would result in a different interpretation being put upon this particular matter. When it comes for us to claim the share of the Federation, we would say that our Minister told us the Commonwealth was going to bear half of the loss. The Commonwealth might easily reply, "We cannot help what your Ministers told you; where is the Act of Parliament which provides for any such payment?"

It will be very much better, notwithstanding the agreement on which the Minister rests, to have a definite statement in our Act. If we accept the position that the matter was agreed to at a Premiers' Conference we will be establishing a precedent, and possibly giving to such Conferences the force of law. We do not, however want the Premiers in conference to enter into a binding agreement on any subject without consultation with this Parliament.

Mr. SALLY.—There is nothing legal behind a decision of the Premiers in conference.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—That is so, but we may establish a precedent. However, I had better keep off that line of argument, as I have no legal knowledge. I am not going to discuss the question whether the agreement arrived at between the Premiers and the Prime Minister is a good one or not, but we ought to have a safeguard for ourselves. We must not take it for granted that because an agreement has been arrived at in such a way it is a warrant or authority that will hold good. I have no desire to quibble in any way, but I want as far as possible to safeguard our interests in the future, and to provide against any quibbling later. Honorable members know that we frequently pass laws, and when they come to be tested in a Court we find that the interpretation is quite different from what we intended. I remember when we were dealing with the Factories and Shops Act, and the late Sir Samuel Gillott was in charge of the Bill, we tried to fix a certain distance so that operations within that boundary would come within the law. Although Sir Samuel Gillott had a considerable legal training and experience, we found we had done just the opposite to what we intended. I have no doubt that any agreement entered into with the Federal authorities has been made with the honorable intention of carrying it out, but there is nothing binding on the subject.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—I have a letter from the Prime Minister.

Mr. ELSMLIE.—But the honorable gentleman must see that neither an agreement with nor a letter from the Prime Minister is binding upon the Federal Parliament. Such documents will not constitute the law of the land.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—No law that we passed could be binding upon the Commonwealth.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—But there is a Federal law dealing with the repatriation of our soldiers, so far as it affects land settlement. We are, however, apparently leaving the whole thing to chance. The honorable member for Fitzroy has just shown me the following agreement entered into at the Premiers' Conference in regard to the advance to soldiers:—

That loans to soldiers for land settlement purposes, as provided by resolution 3, will be advanced at reasonable rates of interest not exceeding $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in the first year, increasing by $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent each subsequent year to the full rate of interest at which the money has been raised, plus working expenses; the difference between these rates and the cost to the Government of the money to be borne equally by the Commonwealth Government and the State Government.

That may be all very well, but there is nothing binding, although one would naturally expect that the Commonwealth would honour the agreement entered into.

Mr. MENZIES.—You want it embodied in the Bill.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Yes; I want it mentioned in this clause if possible, so that it may be in an Act of Parliament that the Commonwealth is going to bear their share of the burden. It is a proper precaution for us to take.

Mr. SALLY.—The Prime Minister may change his mind. It will not be the first time.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—That is so, and I do not suppose it will be the last, but that is not the point. While his intentions may be all right, Parliament must ratify this agreement, and on our part we must have something more than a decision of a Premiers' Conference. This Parliament must be supreme in every agreement which is entered into. I shall be glad to hear what the Minister has to say upon this point.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—In reply to the honorable member, I may say that the Government are satisfied that the agreement entered into at the Premiers' Conference, and the letter from the Prime Minister, insure the position so far as the State is concerned. In view, however, of the emphasis laid upon this point, the Government will consider the matter, and if it

can be tightened up in the way suggested, I will introduce an amendment after the third reading.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—I have an amendment to propose in paragraph (b). In that part of the clause power is given to the Minister to remit the payment of interest and rent for the first three years, but in the case of land taken up under the closer settlement law the remission will only be for one year. I move—

That after the word "years" (line 20), the words "or (in the case of land acquired and taken for the Crown under section 20 of the Closer Settlement Act 1915), for the 'first year,'" be omitted.

When he was introducing the Bill, the Minister pointed out that there is a difference between the soldier settler under this law and the settler who takes up land under section 20 of the Closer Settlement Act. The amendment I have proposed will not make it mandatory on the part of the Minister to remit the rent in all cases for three years, but it will give him the power to do so. I have been informed by one of seventy or eighty men who have taken up land under section 20—I cannot mention the name of my informant, but to my mind he is worthy of the utmost credence—that he and others were told when they took up blocks under section 20 that they would have a remission of the payments of principal and interest for the first three years.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—Were they soldiers?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Yes, returned soldiers who took up land under section 20. They said that they were told when they took up the land that they would have their payments remitted for three years, and that otherwise they would not have done so. I ask the Minister to take power to remit their payments for three years. If they can satisfy the Minister that they took up land on such a condition I think they are entitled to that remission.

Mr. WARDE.—Why not make it ten years and have done with it?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—The House will not be directing the Minister.

Mr. WARDE.—Pressure will direct him if you leave that opening.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—There are not a large number of these men, and I certainly think that a good deal of consideration is due to them, consideration which I believe the Minister is prepared to give. I ask the Minister to take power to give

that consideration to these persons if they can prove that they took up land under those representations. We know that over and over again representations are made by public servants which very often turn out to be incorrect. The report of the Closer Settlement Commission revealed that. If representations have been made to returned soldiers and they have taken up land believing that they will have their payments remitted for three years, it would be very hard for them to find that they are only to be remitted for one year. There should be no objection to giving the Minister this discretionary power—not a direction—to remit the payments in any cases where he thinks he should do so.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I hope that the honorable members will not persist with the amendment. It is quite true, as he says, that a number of soldier settlers have had these properties bought for them, and that they have gone into possession on the understanding that they would get a remission of their payments for three years. The Government are fully responsible for that. In introducing the Bill last year I sought general power to make a three years' remission, which we are now seeking for other sections of land. I think that the House and the Government are bound to honour the promise made in general terms to those who took up land under section 20 prior to the introduction of this measure.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—That is all I want.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—It is clearly our obligation, and I undertake that we will carry it out, but I wish to say that since this Bill has been introduced the Government have notified that only one year's remission will be allowed to those taking up land under section 20. It must be clear to honorable members that there is a great difference between the position of settlers under section 20 and men who go on to Crown land or ordinary closer settlement land which has been resumed and subdivided, and on which they have to set to work clearing the land and making improvements before the block can be brought to production. In the latter case the first three years are the most difficult years. Under section 20 the Closer Settlement Board have bought for a soldier who has come along perhaps a dairy as a going concern, or it may be a fruit orchard. In several of such cases the men

have gone in one week and made a very satisfactory cheque the next week. We put the proposition to these settlers that when they are able to get immediate returns from their land it is not right—and it is not desirable as far as the men themselves are concerned—that they should have a three years' remission of payments. The bulk of the men settled in this way to whom we have spoken are satisfied with one year's remission. With regard to the men settled under section 20 before the introduction of this Bill, we will carry out our obligation.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—The question is whether the Government will be able to do it consistently under this clause. It might be better for me to withdraw my amendment and move for the insertion of the words "prior to this Act" after "Crown" in paragraph (b).

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—Withdraw your amendment and I will see that it is made right on the third reading.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

The amendment was withdrawn, and the clause was agreed to, as were clauses 15 and 16.

Clause 17—

(1) The provisions of this Act relating to advances, shall extend and apply so as to authorize advances to any discharged soldier who is a licensee or lessee of land under the Land Acts or a lessee of land under the Closer Settlement Act 1915 (as the case may be) and was at the date of his appointment or enlistment eligible to receive an advance thereunder.

(2) The provisions of paragraph (a) of section 101 of the Closer Settlement Act 1915 shall extend and apply so as to authorize advances to any discharged soldier, who is a licensee under paragraph (f) of sub-section (1) of section 129 of the Land Act 1915.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I move—

That the words "and was at the date of his appointment or enlistment eligible to receive an advance thereunder" be omitted.

We want to extend the privileges of the advance to all Crown tenants. These words which I propose to omit would limit it to Crown tenants who had not been six years in occupation of their land before they enlisted, and who at the time of their enlistment were entitled to an advance from the Closer Settlement Board. It may have been that during their absence the period of six years had expired. We were making provision to meet some of those cases. We now desire to strike out the limitation, and make the advance to

all Crown tenants who are returned soldiers and have received their discharge.

The amendment was agreed to, and the clause, as amended, was adopted, as was clause 18.

Clause 19—

At any time, upon the report of an inspector of the Board that any money advanced under this Act by the Board has not been applied to the purpose for which it was advanced, or has been expended in a careless or extravagant manner, or that any live stock (including pigs and poultry) or implements supplied by the Board or the produce (if any) of such live stock are being neglected—

- (a) the Board may refuse to pay any further instalments of the advance or to make any further advances;
- (b) all amounts already advanced, together with interest thereon, shall become immediately due and payable; and
- (c) the Board may forthwith recover the same in the like manner as any instalments due to the Board are recovered.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I do not know whether the clause is absolutely necessary in its present drastic form. It is certainly desirable that some power should be taken to see that a settler is not altogether wasting his time, and that he is making proper use of his advance. At the same time if I read the clause correctly it is left purely to a report of the inspector of the Board, and there is no provision made for any appeal. If an inspector reports unfavorably as far as any man is concerned that is the end of it. I should like to see a provision that a man should have a right of appeal to the Minister. We know that inspectors are not infallible. This clause seems to give inspectors pretty big powers. I have in my mind's eye cases which have occurred in other directions where reports have been made against the settlers and brought before the Board with the result that grievous injury has been inflicted. However, I may as well state straight out what is in my mind. We must expect that when these men come back they will be different in temperament from ordinary persons going on the land. Every one tells us that soldiers will find it difficult to settle down, that their nerves will be shattered, and that all sorts of things may eventuate. I do not wish any martinet to have the power of reporting that a man is extravagant and is not managing his land as he should be, for every inspector may not be able to appreciate all the difficulties which a returned soldier may have to fight within himself. Therefore for the pro-

tection of the soldier I should like to see the right of appeal.

Mr. OMAN.—I would support the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition. We have known cases where men in charge of property have been prejudiced against individuals, and I think the honorable member's suggestion is a wise one.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I am not quite prepared to make provision for that. Of course every settler will have the right of appeal. I understand the sympathetic suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition. We had a case the other day. A man with a poultry run came in late at night, and as the result of a fall smashed the incubator and the eggs in it. He cleared out and left the place altogether. Of course it was necessary for some one to go in. However, I will see that provision is made in the direction suggested.

The clause was agreed to, as was clause 20.

Clause 21—

(1) In the application of the Closer Settlement Act 1915 or the Land Acts to any land disposed of to a discharged soldier (including a discharged soldier who has been permitted to occupy any Crown land in anticipation of the passing of this Act)—

(a) the Closer Settlement Act 1915 shall be read and construed—

(i) as if section 125 thereof were omitted;

(ii) as if in sub-section (1) of section 107 thereof the words "grant or" and the words "or grant" were omitted; and

(iii) as if in sub-section (2) of section 117 thereof the words "one hundred and twenty-five" were omitted; and

(b) the Land Acts shall be read and construed as if paragraph (a) of section 249 of the Land Act 1915 were omitted.

(2) The provisions of this section shall extend and apply to land under section 5 of this Act disposed of to a discharged soldier.

Mr. HOGAN.—It would never do to allow this clause to pass without comment. It provides for the quite peaceable death of what was known as section 69, and while we have become accustomed to members of the Ministerial party and to Ministers shamelessly abandoning their principles and previous convictions, and while that has become chronic, it is not fit or proper that we should allow these things to occur without directing public attention to the fact. I am one of those who believe in section 69, or, as it is now

numbered in the 1915 Act, section 125. At one time I was in agreement with the Liberal Government of Victoria on that matter, because they also believed in that provision. The present Minister of Lands was the sturdy champion of that provision in this Parliament. The Liberal Government put that provision in the Act. It is their policy.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—It was.

Mr. HOGAN.—It was their policy, but the policy of the Liberal party does not appear to stand the test of time.

Mr. SALLY.—It keeps changing.

Mr. MENZIES.—Change is evidence of growth sometimes.

Mr. HOGAN.—It is evidence of shiftiness sometimes. Praise can be given for change on many occasions if the change is forward, but not if the change is backward; and this change is going backward, not forward. The old Zulu battle cry was, "If we go forward we shall die, and if we go backward we shall die, therefore let us go forward." But the Government and the Liberal party say, "Let us go backward," and the honorable member for Lowan says it is a good thing to go backward. That is the crayfish's mode of progress. For its policy this Government is adopting the procedure of the crayfish. I would suggest another name for them in addition to the different aliases they have adopted during the last few years. They can now call themselves The Crawfish party.

Mr. MENZIES.—They move backward in order to go forward.

Mr. HOGAN.—They are moving backward all the time. We saw them go backward a couple of weeks ago. They are attempting to go backward again tonight. We want to prod them up and make them go forward again. Put things of that nature to one side. Is it considered advisable to delete section 69 in connexion with the operation of this Bill? I think not. Apart from any question of principle involved in the matter, are not the Government deserting their own policy? I would ask them to remember that section 69 was their own policy. They put it into the Act. What is the purpose of this Bill? Is it for the purpose of settling soldiers on the land, or for the purpose of giving them something to traffic with? If the latter is the object, you might as well give them a sum of money as a cash solatium for their services to the country. Give them that, and let them have a good time on it.

However, we will have a division upon this question.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—That has an unwelcome sound.

Mr. HOGAN.—That threat has been used three times to-night. I am one of those who, when they make a threat, carry it out. I desire to insure that this soldier settlement will be real settlement, and that this Bill will not be a mere placard for the purpose of providing the soldiers with something that they can traffic in. We want to settle the soldiers on the land. That is what the Bill is for. We do not want to provide them with a piece of land that they can sell immediately to anybody. I am glad to see that the Minister of Railways has come into the Chamber. I wish to inform that honorable gentleman that I am espousing the principle of which he was so sturdy a champion.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—And still am.

Mr. HOGAN.—I hope the honorable gentleman will gird his loins for this conflict and will jump into the arena and fight as strenuously as he has done in the past. I intend to try if we cannot put that principle, which the honorable gentleman knows to be good for the ordinary settler, into this Bill dealing with the soldier settler. What hardship is there involved in section 69? I do not know that it means any hardship to the genuine settler who wants to live upon his farm. But it does mean a hardship to the man who is not a settler at all—to the man who wants to get a piece of land, not for the purpose of living upon it and of remaining in the country as a producer, but of selling it at an advantage to somebody else, or even of renting it to somebody else, so that he may come to Melbourne and live here in Melbourne on the profit out of the transaction. I cannot understand people saying that they favour decentralization and advocating the abolition of section 69. People who do that are altogether devoid of any consistency or logic.

Mr. SOLLY.—Do not look for any logic or consistency on the Ministerial side of the House.

Mr. HOGAN.—Unfortunately I have found that out. But I want to insure that the vacant lands of the country districts of Victoria will be occupied, and that when we put ordinary settlers on these lands or soldier settlers the great

expense that the State goes to in doing that shall not be wasted.

Mr. BEARDMORE.—Give them a clear title—that is what they want.

Mr. HOGAN.—Give them something to enable them to sell to Tom, Dick, or Harry and traffic in the land. If they want that they can get it from private enterprise, apart from the State altogether. That requires to be made clear. If any one does not want land under section 69 he need not come to the State. He can go to private agents, as the honorable member for Benambra suggests. Land settlement that is carried out by the State and financed by the State should be insured for all time, so that our closer settlement shall not be a farce, as it will be if we allow people to settle at great expense on land and then be in a position to traffic in the land indiscriminately in any way they like—to sell to anybody, whether the buyer is or is not a person who desires to live on the land.

Mr. BEARDMORE.—Why not treat all selectors alike?

Mr. OMAN.—Will the Premier of Queensland insert this provision?

Mr. HOGAN.—I do not know what the Premier of Queensland will do, and I do not care. I know what I think is best for settlement in this State, but it is not what the land boodlers of this State think is best. That is the difference. There are certain people who want to traffic in land, and those are the people who object to any limitation in the trafficking in land, and who are opposed to the retention of section 69. As a representative of farmers, I want to see the land of this State settled by farmers who will cultivate the land and live on their farms, and I do not desire that we should have a system of absentee owners. Some honorable members stand for the other type of settlement, but I would ask them not to try to inflict their ideas upon other members of the House. What reason has actuated the Government in deserting their policy? If section 69 is the best for the other closer settlement areas of this State, why is it not best for this particular type of settlement? We want to insure that the soldiers will remain upon the land we provide for them. That is the object of this Bill. What is the reason for withdrawing something from this Bill which will insure that result? Do the Ministry want the soldier settlers to remain upon the blocks they provide for them or not?

Does this Parliament want them to remain on the blocks provided for them or not? That is the question we have to decide on this clause. I am in favour of retaining in this Bill words which will insure that the soldier settlers will stay on the blocks the Government provide for them, and that if they sell their blocks they shall sell them to persons who, in their turn, will reside on the blocks. All that is required under section 69 is that the holder of a closer settlement block, or some member of his family, shall reside on the block for nine months of the year, and that, if he sells the block, the person who purchases it must comply with the same condition. There is no hardship whatever in that provision to the *bond fide* settler, but there is a great hardship to the land speculator—the man who does not want to farm the land, but wants to farm the people who have the land. As I said before, a man who wants land in order to traffic in it should not take advantage of the system of settlement provided by the Government, but should go to the private land agent. I never heard anybody say that there was a paucity of land agents in Victoria. If a man wants to buy land free from what is described as the "spotted title" of section 69, he is not limited whatever. There are agents innumerable in Victoria prepared to work for him and provide his wants. Surely the field is wide enough for that type of man without the Government also "butting in" and allowing its provisions to be diverted in the same regrettable channel. I do not want to delay the Committee. I do not wish to say anything further about this measure. Members of Parliament should thoroughly understand it, but perhaps a lot of people in the country do not understand it. I do trust that there are a few members of the Liberal party who have remained true to the principles that they have advocated, and who will vote for the retention of this clause just as it at present exists in the Closer Settlement Acts.

Mr. MITCHELL.—I do not intend to move an amendment to cover a special class of case that I mentioned before, but I should like to get the Minister's decision as to whether this clause applies to the class of settler that I mentioned at that time. The class of settler that I allude to is a soldier who may be either discharged, or who may be now fighting and may be

discharged later, but who is at present the holder of a closer settlement block. I should like to know whether this clause applies to him or to a soldier who is discharged and takes up land anterior to this measure.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—I will answer that question later.

Mr. BAILEY.—If the Government are genuine in their desire that this Bill should be a land settlement Bill, and they wish the soldiers to become settlers and producers, then section 125 of the present Closer Settlement Act should be inserted in the measure. We know that in the past, under land settlement, there have been aggregations. Lands have been subdivided in the country, and in a few years' time, where there have been fifteen or twenty new settlers on the land, aggregations have taken place, and to-day there are only two or three persons holding land. That is detrimental to land settlement. If the Government really want the soldiers to go on the land, and to become producers, then there is no reason, in my opinion, why a clause similar to section 125 should not be placed in this Bill. Such a clause would not prevent any soldier from selling his land. It is laid down in that section that the owner for the time being, or a member of his family, must reside on the land for eight months in the year. He can sell his land if he likes, but the purchaser of the allotment must comply with the same condition. The purchaser or a member of his family must reside on the land for eight months of the year. That makes it certain that aggregation will not take place, and that one or two squatters in the district will not absorb the land. If the soldier takes one of these allotments, and goes on to it for the first six years of his lease, he cannot go off to the city if he wants to and reside there, and let his land to some one who has no intention to reside on it at all. There has been no stronger advocate of the residential section in this House than the present Minister of Railways. I understand that the Minister of Railways said that if section 125 were deleted from the Closer Settlement Act he would no longer remain in the Cabinet. Although he told us that a Closer Settlement Act cannot be a success unless section 125 is retained, he says he will not retire from the Cabinet if the present

measure becomes law without the inclusion of a similar clause. Surely if the Minister of Railways, or any members on the other side of the House, are sincere in believing that for successful land settlement the inclusion of section 125 is essential, they must admit that if the settlement of soldiers on our land is to be a success there must be a similar provision in the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Bill. In the country, where estates will be purchased, and hundreds of our soldiers placed upon them as settlers, there will be erected, during the first few years, schools, mechanics' institutes, and other institutions, because a great number of men settling in the districts will require these utilities. Shopkeepers will come into existence, and small townships will spring up. That is what we want in many places in the country to-day. But within a few years, through the omission from the Bill of a clause like section 125, aggregation will take place. Soldier settlers and other settlers will drift away from the country, and come into the city to swell the already over large population here. The schools erected through the expenditure of public money will close down, as well as the mechanics' institutes. The shopkeeper will put up his shutters, and there will be fewer people in the country than there were before these millions of pounds had been spent in order to place the soldier settlers on the land. If the Government want them to become permanent settlers they should not have introduced a make-believe measure such as this is. If they do not want them to become permanent settlers they should be candid and say so. They should say, "We are only pretending that we are placing men on the land, because we are not making any provision in the Bill to compel them, or their successors, or a member of the family, to reside on the land." There have been expressions of opinion from very experienced men on section 125. An expression of opinion was given before the Closer Settlement Board by Mr. Macgibbon, who was formerly Secretary for Lands. He said—

"The repeal of section 69 of the Closer Settlement Act 1904 will not, in my opinion, facilitate the disposal of land, or promote settlement. The repeal will, I think, eventually lead to depopulation, and, as a consequence, retard social progress, and diminish the pleasantness of country life. If the adult popu-

Mr. Bailey.

lation on an estate be not maintained, the usefulness of a State school, Mechanics' Institute, or kindred institution will be impaired, and the interests of the State will necessarily suffer."

This gentleman, as secretary for Lands, had considerable experience with regard to land settlement, and he said that by omitting a clause for compulsory residence it would diminish the pleasantness of country life, because where there are twenty or thirty or forty families they can make life much more pleasant in the country than where there are only three or four families. Aggregation takes place when certain families pick up their belongings and go off to the city, leaving only two or three families behind. The conditions of country life for those remaining become less pleasant. Mr. Macgibbon further said—

"Continuous residence, as provided by the Closer Settlement Acts, is, to my mind, the only solution of the problem of permanent rural settlement without encouraging depopulation."

He lays particular stress on that. He says it is the only solution for successful closer settlement; yet, in face of these reports from an experienced officer, the Government, perhaps because some pressure or other has been brought to bear, are going to undo what they formerly considered was a necessary section, and they are not going to extend it to this particular Bill. Mr. Reed, the present Secretary of Lands, said—

"If you abolish section 69 you will undoubtedly facilitate a considerable measure of aggregation, which you want to avoid."

We certainly do want to avoid it. We are desirous of seeing population increase in the country districts. We want land settlement to be a success. Those who do not want land settlement to be a success, those who want aggregation to go on, do not, of course, want section 125 to be retained in the Closer Settlement Act, nor do they want such a clause to be inserted in the Bill now before us. The Government have a duty to perform to the taxpayers of this country. If they are going to spend a few millions of the people's money in securing land to place the soldiers upon in order that they may become land settlers and producers, then they should take all kinds of care that trafficking in land is prevented. There are certain liberal provisions in this Bill that are not provided in the Closer Settle-

ment Act. But I do not see any provision to prevent a soldier, as soon as he goes on to the land, selling his particular block to some one who was never a soldier and never intended to be a soldier. I do not know whether the Government intended that. A great agitation has been going on in certain sections of the community with regard to the question of repealing section 125. But no person anxious to see more land settlement brought about, and fewer people drifting away to the city, would consider that the Government were legislating in the best interests of the people if they did not provide some clause to compel either the owner or a member of his family to reside on the allotment for a certain time every year. I hope the Government will reconsider this measure. I do not know what pressure has been brought to bear on them, but I hope the Minister of Railways will bring pressure to bear on them, bludgeoning them, if he likes, as long as he does something to induce them to reconsider the proposal, so that land settlement under this measure shall be made permanent.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—It seems to me to be an absolute farce to spend money in providing special conditions of settlement for people for the purpose of providing for their future if they are allowed to trade in their allotments, and to let other people enjoy the benefit of conditions that were never intended for them. I recollect the speech made by the honorable member for Rodney when he came into this House. He was the seconder of the Address-in-Reply, and he said that in six parishes on the west side of Echuca there were previously 600 settlers, and that the number at that time was only 127. He pointed out in that speech, and afterwards in the House, and elaborated upon it, that the cause of the diminished population was allowing a condition of things to obtain whereby one man could accumulate properties. He pointed out the evil of that. Since then he has fought and won an election in which the retention of that provision was made a particularly live question. The honorable gentleman said that he felt so strongly on the question that he would not abandon the provision as long as he was in the position which he then occupied. Under this Bill we are providing that certain returned soldiers shall be settled on land under various conditions easier than any conditions ever

proposed before in this State. Our desire is to treat those men well, but we do not want the territory set aside for their settlement to get into the hands of speculators. After the State has gone to a great deal of expense this clause will allow them to put their land on the market and traffic in it. It can be sold to somebody else on the conditions provided in the Bill. Perhaps one-half of the value will go to the speculator and the other half to the settler. It means that other people than returned soldiers will get the land. A few years ago it was stated that the Western District had a considerably greater population 30 or 40 years before. It also had a greater population, I believe, than it has to-day, although miles and miles of railway have been constructed there. In connexion with the Wimmera, when land was thrown open under the Duffy Act, thousands of people went there from Ballarat and other places dummying. Those who visited the district afterwards would see on different areas of 320 acres a small house without windows, merely erected to comply with the Act. The result, of course, was that the land eventually fell into the possession of the big landholder alongside. In clause 16 a restriction is provided on the right of transfer, and now in this clause it is proposed to abrogate the provision that no dummying shall take place. Under the Bill more generous treatment is being given to people whom it is desired to settle on the land that is obtainable under the Closer Settlement Act. Yet in the Closer Settlement Act a provision was inserted to prevent the land getting into the hands of the speculator or the large landlord or the money-lender. It is now proposed to do away with that very provision so that land obtained for the settlement of soldiers may get into the possession of the speculator and the aggregator. Honorable members on the Ministerial side of the House have said that land is wanted for settlement, but they are afraid it is too dear. The bulk of them know it is too dear. In the main, that is land that has been aggregated, although originally it had been cut into small areas for the purposes of settlement. Aggregation took place because there was not sufficient protection against dummying. People went there to make money out of the selling price of the land. A great many farmers who are

doing well in the country do not care so very much what the selling price of their land would be, because they are content to remain there and make a living out of the agricultural pursuits which they follow. Those men have been the backbone of this country, but there are thousands of others who have gone away from their holdings and allowed them to get into the hands of large land-owners. Last year a Select Committee was appointed to investigate the drift of population from the country to the city. Here the Government are proposing to abrogate section 125, and so enable men to get rid of land in the country and return to the town, where they can become competitors in the market for other favours which may be offered. It will allow the land to get into the possession of the large holder alongside. It will permit the mortgagee to get into possession. Section 125 does not say that a man shall not sell his land. It simply says that the conditions under which he receives his land shall be transferred to the man who succeeds him. That insures that the purchaser will be a *bonâ fide* settler instead of a man who wishes to aggregate land, not in the interests of the community but for the sake of his own pocket. The Government are trying in every way to obtain land for the settlement of returned soldiers, and yet they are making this vicious proposal which will enable it to be aggregated so that subsequently the Government will have to come along again and purchase it once more for future settlement. What has the farmer to say to this? As far as I know the farmers, they do not want land to be dummed or to fall into the hands of men who wish to get rid of their obligations. All this sort of thing is due to the farmer being farmed by the speculator. It is because Collins-street has got hold of him. Let honorable members read in the *Bendigo Independent* of a few days ago the report of a speech made by a farmer as to how prices are affecting the district, and how the Collins-street farmer is farming the genuine farmer in the country. Look at the names of men printed on sheets of paper which are sent out for the purpose of helping the farming interest. Why are they doing it? It is because the very thing is taking place that is taking place here to-night. It is proposed to hand over to the specu-

lators the right to possess the balance of the territory of this State—the land that with great labour and great trouble, and by the expenditure of our utmost farthing, we are trying to make available for the purpose of settling disabled soldiers, and other soldiers who will not be disabled. It is not what you are doing for the soldier to-day, but what you are going to do for the future of the community, that is going to spoil the efficacy of this Bill. The Government propose to hand over to the speculator that which should be in the hands of the returned soldier, and while the soldier settler should have the right to dispose of his territory, the conditions that apply to the closer settler should apply to him, and should not be abrogated under any circumstances whatever.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I am very disappointed at the attitude of the Government in connexion with this clause. I think they should have got the Minister of Railways to introduce the measure, because he could have defended the clause as probably no other man in the House could. The history of land settlement in Victoria is the history of one gigantic failure. The whole of the large estates, numbering many thousands of acres, were sold by the Government in very small blocks to settlers. They took up their selections. They possessed the right to sell. Many of them sold out their 320 acre blocks, and found themselves in the ranks of the unemployed in Melbourne, while a few cunning speculators aggregated the blocks until we had very large estates. Many people who were intending to settle upon the land seized the opportunity to sell, and so we began over again. The next proposition is to buy back the estates which have been aggregated in this fashion. We buy them back, but it is not at £1 per acre. Sometimes lands which the State parted with at £1 per acre cost up to £20 and £30 per acre when they are bought back by the State, and very often the improvements are of very little value. After the experience we had had for many years, the Government determined that they would have land settlement—that they would allot the land to people who would settle upon it, remain upon it, and use the land, because, after all, the wealth of the State depends upon the number of settlers and the success of land culture in the State. The prosperity of the State can be gauged

by the number of acres under cultivation. Take the great Western District. It went practically out of cultivation. It was used in large estates for grazing only, and the result was that instead of having prosperous settlement, as we anticipated, we had nothing but desolation, large estates, few people, and many sheep. Then the sheep went, to a large extent. The Government conceived the idea of bringing in section 69 of the Closer Settlement Act of 1904, which is now section 125 of the Consolidated Act. That section reads—

Every Crown grant of an allotment shall contain a condition providing, in effect, that the owner for the time being of such allotment shall personally by himself or any member of his family, or any person approved by the Governor in Council, reside as hereinbefore provided in the case of a lessee on such allotment or on any land adjacent thereto during each and every year, unless prevented by illness certified to the satisfaction of the Board, and that, in the event of any breach of such condition the Crown may at any time re-enter upon the said allotment and hold, possess, and enjoy the same as fully and effectually, to all intents and purposes as if the Crown grant had never been made.

In other words, unless a settler fulfilled the contract he had entered into with the Government the land was to become forfeit. But under that provision a settler can sell his land to another person. Why did the Government introduce that provision? They knew it was made absolutely necessary because of the gambling in land, which resulted in the depopulation of the country, and centralization. We have nearly half the people of Victoria settled in the metropolis. We conceived that this method of land settlement would keep the people in the country there, prosperous and happy tillers of the soil. The Government have now introduced the proposition contained in this Bill, but they have not defended it in any way. They have not told us the reason why they desire different treatment for the soldiers in this respect from the treatment provided for the ordinary settler. It is more necessary, in my opinion, that the provisions of section 125 of the Consolidated Act should apply to the soldier settler, than it is that they should apply to the ordinary settler, for this reason: When the Government bought land under their closer settlement scheme, for many estates they paid more than the real value of the land—indeed, more than the market value. Their own report discloses that fact. The

settler was indebted to a greater amount than the real value of the land, therefore, if he had been permitted to sell his land he could not have sold for the same price as he gave for it. There might have been an inducement to sell, but it would have been next door to impossible for him to get a purchaser. That will not be the case with the soldier settlers. The Government will make available for them, at a cheap rate, the lands held by the Crown. They have already done that at Merbein. Land worth about £15 per acre was sold to the soldier settlers for £5 per acre.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The prices ranged from £4 10s. to about £7 per acre.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (Fitzroy).—The Government gave the land to the soldier settlers at that rate, but the real value was about £15 per acre. What an inducement there would be to a soldier settler to sell out immediately, if he had the opportunity, and take to himself the difference between the real value of the land and the price the Government gave it to him at! It will be seen that there would be a greater inducement for the soldier settler to sell than there would be for the ordinary settler. Then, again, many of the large land-owners of this State have declared their willingness to make available for returned soldiers large portions of their estates at cheap rates.

Mr. SALLY.—And it is said to be the best land.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (Fitzroy).—Yes, and adjacent to railways. It is very kind of them, and no matter on what side of the Chamber he may sit, or what his politics may be, no one can help appreciating conduct of that kind. When a soldier gets one of these blocks he will have a real live asset—something for which, if he were permitted to go upon the market and sell, he would be able to realize considerably more than the Government charged him. It will be seen, therefore, that there is every reason why the Government should not alter the law so far as the residence conditions are concerned. If a soldier is honest and earnest, and means business, and he goes to the Qualification Committee and says, "I want to settle on the land; I want to live upon the land; I want to cultivate the land," what harm is there in giving him the land, and saying, "Well, it is there for you to do that. In the event of sickness, or for any valid reason you will be

permitted to sell your block, but you must sell it to another man who wants to use the land." The thing that hurts the speculator is this: He wants to buy land cheap from a necessitous person who must sell, in order that he may speculate with it, and if he is compelled to live on the land, it prevents him from speculating in the land. We have had this question discussed many times. The honorable member for Mornington has been a very strong opponent of section 69, while, on the other hand, the ex-Minister of Lands, who is now Minister of Railways, has always been a sturdy defender of it. I can imagine that the Cabinet, when discussing this question, and agreeing to this clause, had some heart-to-heart talking. The discussion must have been interesting. It certainly would have interested us if we could have heard it. I shall just quote what the Minister of Railways said in speaking on the Closer Settlement Bill introduced by the honorable member for Mornington.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—There is no need to quote what I said, because I have not changed my opinion.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The honorable gentleman has not changed his opinion! What condition are we in when a Ministry can bring in a Bill containing principles that one of the Ministers has opposed, and is still opposed to, though he remains in the Cabinet? Did you ever hear the song of the "Vicar of Bray?"

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—Sing it.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—It would not be parliamentary to sing it. I think it contains the words—

And this is law that I'll maintain

Until my dying day, sir,

That whatsoever king may reign,

Still I'll be the Vicar of Bray, sir.

It appears that whatever principles a Minister holds make no difference. If his principles do not suit he can change them, and if the Minister does not change his principles he need not say a word about it, but when it comes to voting they are all together. When shall we have men who are prepared to uphold their principles?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—Do not accuse me of recanting my principles.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I cannot conceive of any Minister who holds such opinions remaining a member of the Ministry that murder his principles.

Here is what the honorable gentleman said on the occasion referred to, and I thoroughly endorse it—

Let us analyze the honorable member's assertion that, because of section 69, there is no freehold—that these people do not get a freehold title. Now, I do not know what a freehold title is if these settlers do not get a freehold title. They can hold the land, they can bequeath it, they can sell it, they can lease it, they can get substituted service in the way of residence—in fact, there is only one thing they are prohibited from doing which any other freeholder can do—and that is from selling to an absentee purchaser. That is the only restriction in connexion with this title.

Mr. DUFFUS.—The trouble is the condition of residence—eight months every year.

Just fancy a man who is going to be a farmer complaining that he has to put in eight months' residence in the year on a farm. Can he be successful if he does not reside on it for eight months? Then the report proceeds—

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I do not think there is any hardship in that respect. The settler can have substituted residence after twelve years. I may say frankly that if I thought for a moment that I was going to benefit these settlers by voting for the abolition of section 69 I would do it to-night. But I know that that would not be so. I know that I would be sounding the death-knell of closer settlement in this State.

No honorable member can have travelled through the country without having noticed the large number of holdings that have been deserted, have been speculated in for years, and have been held out of cultivation. We have millions of acres calling for hands, and thousands of men walking about calling for acres, and unable to obtain them. The honorable gentleman was right when he said this would sound the death-knell of closer settlement. The Government have brought in this Bill to settle soldiers on the land, and it will sound the death-knell of the settlement and free the land for speculators. The honorable gentleman further stated:—

Every man has stated that he would get on splendidly but for section 69. Up to now, however, section 69 has had no more to do with a man's success or failure than the death of Julius Caesar has.

Again replying to an interjection by the honorable member for Mornington he said—

Still it is a principle on which the House should never give way. In a few years the people will thank the Parliament for adhering to the provision.

I do not think I need read any more of it. It is a splendid speech in defence of the residence provision. If such a provision had been in force in our original land laws, and the Western District had been settled in 320 acre-blocks with a householder and his wife and family happily settled on each of them, the country would be more prosperous than it is. We find the Government bringing this proposal in without any defence. When the Minister moved the second reading of the Bill he carefully glided over the abrogation of section 69 or section 125, as it now is under the consolidation. He said little or nothing about it. I want to know whether the Government still adhere to section 69 or whether they will tell the Committee the reasons that have caused them to change their opinions. Do they, in their hearts, intend to do what the Minister of Railways said would be done, that is, do they intend to sound the death-knell of closer settlement under this measure? If that is their object they should let us know. If they intend to spend £12,000,000 on this closer settlement scheme with the view of releasing this land for land speculators, and of letting the holders desert, as they have done in the past, then they are playing a part that is unworthy of them. I am in agreement with the Minister of Railways on section 69. I believe it is one of the best safeguards we have ever had. When I was in the district of that honorable gentleman, I was talking one day with a storekeeper about this particular section.

MR. ROBERTSON.—He is an authority on land, of course!

MR. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—No; will the honorable member listen to me for a moment? This storekeeper said, “I do not know very much about the law, but I know if section 69 had not been in the Act to compel the settlers to cultivate their land, I would not have done so well, because the land would have been aggregated, as it was before this estate was purchased, and there would have been fewer people in the district, and less money to spend in the town.” Honorable members must see that the law which enforces residence must result in greater cultivation, and in a larger number of families being dependent upon the township for their supplies, therefore both the country and the town feel the advantage. I was de-

lighted to get that evidence from the storekeeper. Since then I have heard nothing to cause me to change my opinion. On the contrary, I have every reason to believe it is a sound principle if we want to effect permanent settlement. Of course, if we want to pass laws for the benefit of speculators, then we will not enforce residential conditions.

MR. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney—Minister of Railways*).—I do not want to debate the merits or demerits of the clause under consideration, but I want to correct what may be a wrong impression from what the honorable member for Fitzroy has just said. He indicated that I had changed my opinion about the conditions of residence under our closer settlement laws. I have never changed my opinion in any way on that point. My colleagues know that I have differed from them on that particular matter, so far as it refers to this Bill. I have said that, if the Committee divides on the subject, I shall vote against the Government. If any Government of which I was a member attempted to repeal the section in the old Act under which people selected land, and the Government borrowed money for the purpose of buying land, I would no longer remain a member of that Government. I believe it is a fundamental principle of closer settlement that residential conditions should be enforced. I shall have another opportunity when the honorable member for Mornington brings forward his Bill of discussing the merits of section 69. My colleagues know what I am going to do if there is a division on this point.

MR. ROBERTSON.—I should like to congratulate the Government on the inclusion of clause 21. That clause is on all fours with one I had drafted. It is well known that the honorable member for Mornington proposes to introduce a Bill to deal with section 69. The attitude of the Minister of Railways in regard to this section is perfectly consistent. He must have hailed with feelings of relief the announcement that the honorable member for Mornington intended to introduce a Bill on this subject. He has told us that if the Government brought down a similar proposal he would have to resign, but in view of the fact that the honorable member for Mornington is dealing with the subject, he will be able to vote against the Government without resigning from the Cabinet. Remarkable

arguments have been advanced since I have been in the chamber listening to the debate. The honorable member for Fitzroy quoted a storekeeper at Rochester as an authority on land matters.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I did not.

Mr. ROBERTSON.—The honorable member cannot wriggle out of his statement. He said that he was discussing this matter with a storekeeper, who told him that if it had not been for section 69 the land in an irrigation area in Rochester would have been aggregated.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—What I said was that if it had not been for the compulsory residence clause the storekeepers would not have been in such a prosperous condition. The storekeeper I referred to expressed no opinion about the land, nor did I.

Mr. ROBERTSON.—The honorable member is speaking about the clause which deals with Crown grants. But section 69 of the 1904 Act applies only to Crown grants. It does not apply to the leasehold stage.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The storekeeper knew the difference to the township that resulted from compulsory residence. Before that condition was imposed it was a big sheep walk, now the area has been broken up and the settlers remained there as tillers of the soil, making the town prosperous.

Mr. ROBERTSON.—The point which I want to make is that section 69 does not apply to leaseholds. If we take this section out of the Act, so far as it applies to discharged soldiers the whole of the compulsory residence provisions in the Act affecting leaseholds will still remain. Under the Closer Settlement Act, leaseholds may be issued and run from twelve to thirty-one and a half years. There is no other class of Crown land alienated in this State which comes within a coo-ee of the improvement conditions that are specified in regard to land worked under the Closer Settlement Act. Honorable members have urged that the discharged soldier should be protected from the speculator. They point out that he has offered the greatest sacrifice any man could possibly be put to. He has offered his life on the altar of his country. He has been fighting, not only for his own home, but for the Empire, and yet when these men come back, we propose to give them "spotted

titles," which will not be accepted by such institutions as our own State Savings Bank. The honorable member for Fitzroy introduced a proposal in a Bill to amend the Savings Bank Act to induce the Commissioners to lend money upon the security of titles issued under section 69, but the Commissioners refused to do so. Why? Because they are business men, and can get plenty of better securities. In the face of this we are going to hamper these men in giving them a faulty title. The honorable member for North Melbourne made certain charges against this Government, and a previous Government, and said that this particularly obnoxious section 69 was introduced in the original Bill.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The honorable member for Bulla might feel better able to reply to the honorable member for North Melbourne in the morning.

Mr. ROBERTSON.—I wish to finish my remarks now. The honorable member for North Melbourne has said that members of the Government are running away from section 69, and I wish to say that that section was put into the Closer Settlement Act at the instigation of the honorable member for North Melbourne himself.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—I will see that that statement is circulated among my electors.

Mr. ROBERTSON.—When the Closer Settlement Bill was in its Committee stage the clause for the leg-roping and tying down of settlers was put in at the instigation of the honorable member for North Melbourne. The full effects of that section 69 were not detected, and the settlers in the country have to thank the honorable member for North Melbourne for them. I do think that honorable members of the Opposition ought to relinquish to some extent the objections they have put forward in order to knock out this clause, which does away with an objection to the title of the land on which we hope the soldiers will be settled when they return to their homes.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I had hoped that the clause would be passed to-night, but as we have done fairly well I propose that we report progress.

Progress was then reported.

ADJOURNMENT.

PRICE OF GLUCOSE.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr. J. CAMERON (*Gippsland East*).—The honorable member for North Melbourne brought up a question with reference to the Maize Products Company. I have just been in touch with the secretary of the company and I want to read the following statement which has been placed in my hands to the House.

Maize Products Company lost a few thousand pounds during first two years of business whilst selling from £19 to £24—price of maize averaging 3s. 9d.

Present position is, six months ending February, a profit of about 2 per cent. was made on a capital of £80,000. Since then, owing to an increase of £2 per ton in price of glucose, and the using of cheaper maize, a better profit is being made.

The company could easily get £40 for its product, proven by the fact they are supplying the New Zealand market at £30 per ton f.o.b. Melbourne, which means at least £41 per ton, duty paid, at New Zealand (£2 per ton freight, duty, £9 per ton). South Africa is also now receiving large supplies from the Maize Products Company, which is an assistance in increasing profits.

N.B.—Owing to the company supplying New Zealand, South Africa, and Fiji, they are able to make larger purchases of maize than usual, all of which is grown in Australia, and principally Victoria.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—I may say that the statement which I brought forward was made in the *Journal of Commerce*. It was stated there that the Maize Products Proprietary applied to the Inter-State Tariff Commission for an investigation, with a view to the removal of the Excise duty on Australian-made glucose, and for an increase in the duty on American glucose of 8s. to 11s. per cwt. There was to be no increase of prices to the consumers. Maize is cheaper to-day than at that period. It was then 3s. 3d. to 3s. 4d. per bushel. It is cheaper to-day to the extent of 4d. or 5d. a bushel. Honorable members can easily ascertain the market rates. If, before the war, glucose could be sold at the rate of £19 or £20 per ton, it could now be sold at the rate of £18 or £18 10s. per ton. It was stated that it cost the company five times as much for labour in this State as labour cost in America, and the Commission decided that there was no evidence to support that state-

ment. The Commission reported that the price ought to be kept down. The present price of glucose in America is £11 5s. a ton, and, because this glucose cannot be brought here to-day, the local price has gone up out of sight, and, according to the letter read by the honorable member for Gippsland East, will continue to do so.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at eighteen minutes past ten o'clock p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, August 30, 1917.

The SPEAKER took the chair at ten minutes past eleven o'clock a.m.

THE RECRUITING MOVEMENT.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I desire to move the adjournment of the House in order to discuss a matter of public importance, namely, State members' aid to the recruiting movement.

Twelve honorable members having risen in their places (as required by the standing order) to support the motion,

Mr. SNOWBALL said—I desire in a few words to bring before honorable members the need there is for greater help from them in connexion with our system of recruiting. That is now the policy of the Commonwealth for obtaining urgently-needed help in connexion with the war. I do not want to reflect on any honorable member, and I know that some of them have been helping to the utmost of their power. I appeal to honorable members to consider whether this war is not the most vital and urgent matter that should occupy our thoughts and attention. All the troubles with which we are grappling are due to the continuation of the war. Its end would be welcomed by all, and with that object we should put forward every ounce of effort. I do not wish to lecture honorable members, and, in fact, I hesitated very much about taking this action. I have had several requests from the Recruiting Committee to ask honorable members to assist in the movement.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Do not the State members compare more than favorably with the Federal members in this matter?

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Of course they do.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Comparisons are odious. It would be no excuse for any of us that some one else was not doing his duty. The honorable member for Stawell will recognise that that is no excuse. I know that he has been doing his best, and I know he is not excusing himself because of the fact that others do not see their duty in the same striking way as he does. Far be it from me to criticise any one as to what he is doing, but the State Recruiting Committee wish to emphasize the fact that although at the outset many State members gave active assistance, they have cooled off, and it has now become difficult for the committee to get the help which they need. I venture to say, with great respect, and I think honorable members will be with me, that we cannot blame the public for regarding lightly the terrible duty that rests on the shoulders of every citizen if our public men do not give a lead in the matter and try to stimulate the public to realize fully their responsibility and duty. The people are looking to their leaders. It will be no consolation for State members to say that Federal members are doing little or nothing. The public are looking to us in the matter, and I have frequently heard the question asked at meetings, "Where are our public men?" The humble citizen is as vitally interested in this matter as an honorable member, and there is no more obligation on us to take an active part than on all citizens. Still I think it is only natural that our citizens should look to us for a lead. If, in this time of great national crisis, they see that members of Parliament are apparently indifferent, that is reflected in their own conduct. After all it is a serious matter for any one to think about breaking up his home and leaving his wife and children, in order to go to the front and help to save Australia. It means nothing short of that, because I believe that the fate of Australia is in the balance at the present time. We cannot feel that there is anything to indicate that the war is drawing to a end. In the minds of many of us it is but beginning. Surely, when Australia is so vitally interested in the issue of the struggle, and even in the terms of peace that may be discussed, is it not the duty of every representative of the people in the State Parlia ment to go before the public and state the facts and dangers of the whole situation in order to try to induce the people themselves to do

their duty? I hope honorable members will excuse me for bringing the matter before the House, but I find that it is the only way to call attention to it. I know that the Premier is heart and soul with the State Recruiting Committee in their efforts to make a success of the voluntary movement. I have had several personal requests from members of the Recruiting Committee to try to induce State members to help more generously than they are doing, and yesterday I received a letter from the honorary secretary, Mr. Westley, urging me, if possible, to bring the matter before the House, so that honorable members would realize the need, may I say the duty, of assisting more in connexion with the movement. I do hope that there will be no feeling shown in connexion with the matter.

Mr. HANNAH.—Is it being brought before Federal members in the same way?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—We have nothing to do with the Federal House, and I hope that invidious comparisons will not be raised. I venture to say that one is justified in asking honorable members to receive the suggestion in a kindly spirit, and that in discussing it they will not blame me for drawing public attention to the urgent need which exists. Those two or three members who are helping are exhausted as a result of their efforts, and it seems to me that it is a duty which should be more widely shared.

Mr. BAYLES.—Do you think that members speaking outside the Town Hall get any recruits?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—A few. After the meetings I frequently have young fellows coming to me and explaining their position. All these public meetings, in my opinion, are doing some good. I have had personal evidence of that right up to date, and I hope honorable members will not make up their minds that the voluntary system is a failure.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—It is a great success.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I have tried to bring the matter before honorable members individually, and I hope I shall be pardoned for trying to bring it before them collectively in this way.

Mr. BAYLES.—I have assisted at recruiting meetings. I had the honor to speak in front of the Town Hall. As a result, my throat gave way and I was laid up for two days. The doctor has ordered me not to speak any more in the open air for some time. One naturally wishes to

do everything one can to assist voluntary recruiting. When I last spoke in front of the Town Hall, I looked round to see how many men might be considered eligible out of the couple of hundred people present. I gathered that there would be only five or six of eligible age among them, and whether those men were medically fit or not I cannot say. There was one old chap there—what is known as a “beer sucker”—who, after hearing the speech delivered by the gentleman who spoke before me, remarked, “My word, he does speak well, that bloke, don’t he?” That is the sort of thing that goes on. I really think that a time limit should be fixed for voluntary recruiting. It is no use dragging interminably on, wasting a lot of energy that might be better used in another direction. When an appeal is made, let the Recruiting Committee say, “If there are not so many men raised in a certain time we shall have to stop.” It is a weary job inducing many men to enlist when there are others in a better position to go. Men with large families, men who have nearly reached the maximum age, boys who have just left school, those are the ones we are getting as recruits. It is not fair. I feel that a time limit should be fixed for voluntary recruiting. If it is not a success by a certain date, then, in order to obtain more men to reinforce the troops, it will be necessary to try some other way. All the same, I think that the honorable member for Brighton has only done his duty. He has not reflected on any one, and I do not wish to do so. Every one must decide for himself as to whether he should speak. It is not for any man to say that another has not done his duty. One may be rendering more effective service in other ways than by speaking in public and addressing a meeting where there are only five or six eligible in an audience of a couple hundred. The voluntary recruiting system is not fair to those people who are beating about the bush trying to obtain recruits from wherever they can. Many recruits are obtained from among boys and young men who are not fit to go to the Front. We know that there are boys of eighteen years of age just leaving school who are making their fathers’ lives burdensome to them by pressing for their fathers’ consent to go to the Front. In some cases the boys are ready to perjure themselves by saying that they are twenty-one in order to enlist. They have a natural aversion to being looked upon as shirkers,

and they are really anxious to get away to the war. I thank the honorable member for Brighton for bringing the matter before the House, and I am convinced that honorable members will do all they can to assist the Recruiting Committee. It should not be supposed, if an honorable member is not seen frequently on the recruiting platform, that he is not doing his best to obtain recruits; he may be hard at work in other directions. There is a big block in my electorate where there were some fifty odd men of eligible age. Forty-seven of them have gone to the Front; four were found to be medically unfit, and the only one remaining was a medical man, and, therefore, exempt. In another street, Ross-street, Toorak, there are fifty-two houses, from which forty-two boys have gone to the Front, and there is only one man of military age left there now, and he is medically unfit for active service. I think that such a record will compare favorably with that of any other locality in the State. Two military crosses have been awarded to former inhabitants of the street I have referred to, and three or four of the boys have made the supreme sacrifice for their country.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—The honorable member for Brighton is to be commended for bringing this matter under the notice of the House. The honorable member has conferred with me during the last few days in regard to this subject, and has shown me the correspondence which he has received. I feel that we are in honour bound, as public men, to support the Recruiting Committee and the Director-General of Recruiting, no matter how much we may differ over the question of the conscription referendum. During the conscription campaign, one of the arguments put forward by the opponents of conscription was that the voluntary method had not received a fair and complete trial, and, therefore, the conscription proposal ought to be turned down. That being so, every honorable member should feel that we ought to co-operate with the Federal authorities and with the Director-General of Recruiting, who is a respected member of this House, in their recruiting efforts. I think we shall always be proud of our association in this House with the honorable member for Prahran, because of the magnificent work he has done throughout the length and breadth of Australia in connexion

with the recruiting movement. Australia has demonstrated at the polls that conscription shall not be adopted in this country. What is the duty, then, of every citizen? It surely is to support the Federal authorities in their efforts to obtain the necessary reinforcements for the troops by the voluntary recruiting system. I am aware that many people hold very strong opinions on this matter, and those opinions vary. Personally, I felt the defeat of the conscription referendum very keenly. The country was assured that the voluntary effort should be given a fair trial! Our plain duty now is to support the Federal Government, and to support the Director-General of Recruiting. In order to do justice to my fellow members all round the House, and particularly country members, I desire to say that it is not known in the metropolitan area, through the medium of the press, what the country members have been doing ever since the movement was initiated. The recruiting efforts of country members in their own districts are continuous. They are not reported. Of course, country members are not looking for publicity. They realize that they are doing their duty, but they do not want to boast about it. The excellent work done by some of my fellow members in my own electorate has come under my notice. I have also come in contact with members at functions which, though not exactly recruiting meetings, have the same effect, indirectly. The honorable member for Stawell has been found hard at work at the week-ends, and the members for Ballarat and the surrounding district have been indefatigable in their efforts in this connexion. I mention these cases more particularly because they have come under my immediate observation. Other country members have been working just as hard in different ways. I am satisfied that country members, generally, have not received the credit in the public mind for the work they have been doing that they deserve. There is not a member of this House whose time is not already greatly taxed in connexion with his duties here and in his constituency. But I think I can say, on behalf of honorable members generally, that they will be pleased to co-operate with the Recruiting Committee and render them every assistance that they possibly can. It is particularly our duty to support the efforts of the Director-General of Recruiting, our personal friend, the hon-

Sir Alexander Peacock.

orable member for Prahran. He has sacrificed time and money travelling all over Australia, and his work will always be remembered gratefully by the whole nation. Last Tuesday I was at Footscray with my friends, the honorable member for Flemington and the honorable member for Williamstown. I was delighted to see displayed there an honour roll, which is probably the finest in the Commonwealth. It has been provided by the local City Council and cost over £250. It has been placed in a prominent position, so that every man, woman, and child in the municipality can read the names of the men whom the municipality desire to honour. From that municipality 54 per cent. of the eligible men have gone to the Front.

Mr. LEMMON.—The municipality's quota should have been 2,000; it is actually over 3,000.

Mr. HANNAH.—And now the Labour party have insults thrown at them.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Let us look at the matter from a higher point of view than that.

Mr. CLOUGH.—Insults are heaped on Labour representatives all over the country.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Not by honorable members of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria.

Mr. CLOUGH.—Some of the insults come from the recruiting platforms.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—You will find people everywhere who will take up a peculiar attitude on any question. Our duty, however, is to lend every assistance to those people who have the recruiting movement in hand, and I think I can promise, on behalf of honorable members generally, that this will be done. It is certainly a terrible strain to speak in the open air outside the Town Hall, owing to the noise of the trams and the general traffic.

Mr. HANNAH.—The Recruiting Committee should move their platform from the Town Hall to some other place.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I agree with the honorable member for Collingwood. It is a tremendous tax on one's powers to talk there in the street. Meetings in other places could be arranged for quite as well. I do not want it to be thought that if honorable members are not taking part in the Town Hall meetings they are not doing their duty. I know that they are doing their duty. I feel that we can assure the Director-General of

Recruiting that honorable members of this House will give whatever assistance they can in this direction. Other people, of course, ought to do the same.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I am very much obliged to the honorable member for Brighton for bringing this subject before the House. It is a matter of very great importance to the people of Australia. If State members are a little lax—particularly one section of them—in their efforts now as compared with the work they did previously, it may be that there are reasons for that laxity. Personally, I would rather sacrifice anything and everything than see the Germans win the war and German rule established in this country. But I admit that there has been a change—undoubtedly there has been a change, and there has been a cause for that change. You cannot call a man a traitor; you cannot call a man a pro-German; you cannot abuse and revile that man and then ask him to come on the recruiting platform to be abused and called ugly names by the general public without causing that change. The public suppose that the man has deserved to be called these names. Take the case of my friend, the Leader of the Opposition in the Federal Parliament. No man has done more on behalf of the voluntary recruiting movement than he has done. The work that he did was really splendid.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Hear, hear! I have referred to it on several occasions.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I do not want to belittle the efforts of any other man by saying that no other man has done as much. But we all know what a great work Mr. Frank Tudor did. During the last Federal elections, and during the conscription referendum, Mr. Frank Tudor and all the Labour men were dubbed pro-Germans. They were called traitors and disloyalists. It was said that they were men who had no love for their country or their kind. They were abused in almost every paper, and from numerous platforms. They were abused by speakers of the Liberal party. I do not say that all the members of the Liberal party abused them.

Mr. HANNAH.—A big section of the leaders of the Liberal party did so, anyhow.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Let us look at this matter quietly. After all, if people wish to do the right thing they had better look at the facts. The Re-

cruiting Committee invited Mr. Tudor to speak outside the Town Hall. He accepted the invitation, and did any man ever receive more public abuse than he did on that occasion? He was publicly called a traitor and a pro-German. Both men and women insulted him. He has been given a name. Every Labour member has been called that name, and if you give a dog a bad name, he will keep it.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—He should not live up to it.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Who said he was living up to it? Does the honorable member for Stawell infer that any Labour member is living up to it? Mr. Tudor accepted an invitation to speak outside the Town Hall. He went on to the platform and was insulted by his political opponents, and now the honorable member for Stawell says he should not live up to that reputation. What does he mean by that? Is it not sufficient that Mr. Tudor was insulted publicly, without saying, by inference, in this place, that he is really guilty of the charges that have been made against him?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Every decent person objects to and regrets the insults.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Yes, but the trouble is that there are so many indecent persons who are opposed to the Labour party.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Will the honorable member let me explain? Men should not give a semblance of living up to that kind of reputation.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Should never give a semblance—

Mr. TOUTCHER.—They should not refrain from going on the recruiting platforms.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—He has not refrained. He has been on the platform since. What does the honorable member mean?

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I do not mean anything.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—That is the sort of thing we have to put up with. Those who are opposed to the Labour party have said for purely political reasons that the workers themselves, their organizations, and their leaders are under German influence, and there has been a suggestion of the distribution of German money.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—More than a suggestion of that.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Naturally the workers from whom we must get the bulk of the recruits have become so disgusted at these statements that recruiting has been injured. Honorable members can say what they like, and do what they like, but there is no doubt that owing to these statements the enthusiasm which was disclosed when the workers and their unions were appealed to by their leaders to volunteer is not apparent now. Why should they enlist to fight for those who declare that they are traitors and pro-Germans?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—It is certainly wrong to use those epithets, but that is no excuse for other people not doing their duty.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I do not want to be misunderstood, and I should like to say here that the Premier took me up wrongly last night. I made an explanation afterwards which was perfectly satisfactory to the honorable member for Hampden. If the Premier had been in the chamber at the time he would have been satisfied, too, though he did say that my interjection was unworthy of me. However, these things will not weigh with me at all, because I will do what I believe to be right in spite of the criticism I get.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Hear, hear!

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Honorable members need make no mistake about the position when they abuse the workers in the way they have done, from the Prime Minister down or up, whichever way members like to put it.

Mr. MENZIES.—The Prime Minister has received some abuse, too.

Mr. HANNAH.—And he deserves it.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I am trying to discuss this matter without any passion or undue heat. There is no doubt recruiting has fallen off, but still I do not admit that the voluntary system has failed. On the contrary, I think the voluntary system has succeeded very well. It must be recognised that we have taken from the eligible men of this country 370,000 men as volunteers, and we have rejected about 125,000 more. At one time the authorities were rejecting about 60 per cent. of the volunteers.

Mr. BAYLES.—Many of the rejects have been taken on since.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I know that. On occasions the rejects have been more than 60 per cent., but honorable members must see that if we want

the workers of this State to volunteer we must not abuse them first.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Hear, hear!

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—If we explain to a man that he is pursuing a foolish course we may be able to win him by reason, but if we tell him that he is a fool, or use some equally objectionable epithet we are likely to antagonise him. Recently an election took place at Geelong. I do not want to say anything against the honorable member who won that election. I never indulge in personalities in political or any other campaigns. I should like, however, to call attention to advertisements which appeared in the *Geelong Advertiser* on 6th August, in which reasons were given why the electors of Geelong should not vote for Labour. Printed in bold type was the following:—

You also will be a traitor if you vote for the candidate who represents the extreme Labour section.

Do you sing the National Anthem? Do you stand up when it is played?

Do you sing "God save our splendid men"? If you do, vote for Purnell. It does not matter whether you call yourself Labour or Liberal.

We also have this in the paper—

Do you wish to end the war?

Do you want industrial peace?

Voting for Purnell will bring the war to a speedy end.

Voting for McCormick will prolong the war.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Who was the author?

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The author does not sign his name, and I am not interested in him. All I want to point out is that the other side cannot indulge in the wholesale abuse of the workers, who represent 80 per cent. of the people of this State, and expect to get the same response to appeals for recruiting as if that sort of comment was not indulged in. We ask men to make a great sacrifice, and we should treat them with the respect they deserve. There are no more pro-Germans on the Labour side than there are amongst their opponents. The workers are no more disloyal or dishonest than those who are opposed to them.

Mr. BAYLES.—Why don't they get rid of their leaders?

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I suppose they do not get rid of their leaders because they have confidence in them. I know that if the opinions of their leaders published by their opponents

were true they would get rid of them tomorrow. The fact is that the statements made by their opponents, and by the press of their opponents, about the union leaders are lies. The result is the men stick all the closer to their leaders. Opponents of Labour have been abusing the workers, and now they complain that the dog they whipped and kicked will not come and lick their hands.

Mr. DEANY.—How do you account for the result of the Geelong election?

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—There are one or two reasons for the result.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—We got a majority of votes.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I will be quite fair. The Government candidate won because the majority of the electors did not indorse the Labour platform and the Labour candidate. My own opinion is that they did not indorse the Labour candidate because they believed the abuse that has been heaped upon the Labour party. They believed that supporters of that party were disloyalists and controlled by Germans, according to statements published in the local press. They accepted these statements because they had no other means of ascertaining the facts. I may be wrong in the view I take, but, at any rate, that is how I account for the result. I have spoken with only one object in view, and I hope I have achieved it. The policy opponents of Labour have been pursuing has killed the voluntary system, and there is only one way to revive it, and that is by a change of tactics. Justice must be done to unionists whose ranks have been depleted by volunteers. One union has sent nearly 35,000 men to the Front. Politically we can fight as hard as we like, but at least we must endeavour to be fair, and not besmirch the characters of the workers in the way that their opponents are doing now.

Mr. McGREGOR.—I have taken an active part in voluntary recruiting in my own district, but I felt from the beginning that national service would be more equitable in its incidence than voluntary service. In fact, a lady came to my office and told me that her brother had ten sons, nine of whom had gone to the Front. Four were killed, and the tenth was going as soon as the harvest was over. That was early in the war. I

urged everybody whom I knew to enlist voluntarily, and I took a part in the conscription campaign. Whilst the honorable member who has just resumed his seat commented strongly on what was said by those who believed in conscription, as against the other side, there is another side to the matter, and I heard language equally as strong used by those with whom he is associated in regard to those who were advocating conscription.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—You cannot abuse a man without getting a return.

Mr. McGREGOR.—It is impossible for the honorable member to thrust the blame upon those who advocated conscription, and those who claim to be Nationalists. There were faults on both sides in regard to using language that perhaps was unwarranted, but whilst hard and harsh language ought not to be used, yet I suppose criticism is allowable in a time like this, and there would be some justification for any man in the community to condemn the very many strikes that we have had in Australia since the war broke out, and of recent date—strikes that are unwarranted, and in view of the Wages Board determinations and Arbitration Court awards, are not to be tolerated. They are criminal, in my opinion, at the present time.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I agree with Mr. Hughes that German agents were at the back of it—that they caused the strike. The introduction of the ticket system by the New South Wales Government caused the strike. Therefore, the German agents must have control of the New South Wales Government.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Do not let us have this kind of thing.

Mr. HANNAH.—They are not going to throw it without getting a little back.

Mr. McGREGOR.—Who is “throwing it?”

Mr. HANNAH.—You are now.

Mr. McGREGOR.—I think all the throwing is coming from the honorable member with his interjections. I have endeavoured to put plainly, forcefully, and truthfully the facts as they appear to me, and my remarks in regard to these strikes have met with the concurrence of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—In regard to the cause of them. I do not want you to misinterpret my words.

Mr. McGREGOR.—I cannot interpret them in any other way than that the honorable member condemns strikes.

Mr. SALLY.—You say the strikes were unjustified. How do you know? You do not know anything about it.

Mr. McGREGOR.—The honorable member is the great Solon who knows everything. He is the only man who knows!

Mr. SALLY.—You say the strikes were unjustified.

Mr. McGREGOR.—I maintain that they are unjustified at any time if there is a Wages Board or an Arbitration Court—a proper method by which you can settle any differences. Does the honorable member say strikes are justified? Are they justified now?

Mr. SALLY.—It seems to me that the men in New South Wales were justified in protesting against the card system.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—And the price-raisers.

Mr. McGREGOR.—We have heard a great deal about the “price-raisers.”

The SPEAKER.—Will the honorable member take no notice of these interjections?

Mr. McGREGOR.—They are very silly, I must admit. I do not want to enter into any controversy with regard to the very many differences of opinion that exist, but there is one primary object that we ought to have in view. Whatever differences there may have been in the past, whoever may have been wrong, and whoever may have been injured, we have one primary duty before us now, and that is to try to get the men required to devote their time and talent to the object of obtaining recruits. I have just replied to a circular I received from Mr. Westley. I have always offered my services in connexion with recruiting, but I must say that it will be with some diffidence, in view of the noise of the trams and the traffic, that I shall go down to the Town Hall to speak. I cannot blame any honorable member for not desiring to speak at that particular part.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—They must go where they can get the people. They have tried having meetings in the hall, and the people would not go in.

Mr. McGREGOR.—I am aware of the fact that meetings have been called, and that the eligible men have not turned up.

However, I am willing to do my part, as the Labour members have done theirs. I know that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the honorable member for Carlton, and a great number of members of the Opposition have done splendid service, which ought to be commended by every right-thinking man and woman in the community.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—The honorable member for Fitzroy thanked the honorable member for Brighton for bringing this subject before the House this morning. I thank him also, because it has afforded the Premier an opportunity of making it clear to the public of Victoria that State members have not been neglectful of their duties in regard to carrying out the voluntary system of recruiting. It is quite true that nothing appears in the Melbourne press about the work that is done in the interior and in the suburbs. When the honorable member for Fitzroy was speaking, I interjected, “Why live up to it?” The honorable member, in my opinion, seemed to be trying to justify inaction on the part of some State and Federal members.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I made it clear that I was not justifying anything of the kind.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—That was the opinion I formed at the time, and it has occurred to me that probably I was not doing justice to every member sitting on the Opposition side of the House, because I have frequently met Opposition members at recruiting meetings, and know the work they have done with regard to recruiting. I also had in my mind, when I interjected, the idea of giving the honorable member an opportunity of showing that the State Labour party were not identified with a certain thing. I was not insensible of a resolution carried at the Trades Hall forbidding certain members of the Labour party, or the whole of the Labour party, from making speeches in regard to recruiting.

Mr. HANNAH.—That is not true.

Mr. CLOUGH (to Mr. Touther).—Why do you not say something you know something about?

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I know it appeared in the public press.

Mr. CLOUGH.—Such a resolution did not.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—It did appear.

Mr. HANNAH.—I rise to a point of order. I say that the statement of the honorable member for Stawell is a reflection on me personally, and I ask him to withdraw.

The SPEAKER.—What is the statement the honorable member objects to?

Mr. HANNAH.—The statement the honorable member has made, that a resolution was carried at the Trades Hall forbidding men to take the platform in connexion with recruiting.

The SPEAKER.—I ask the honorable member, primarily, Are you the Trades Hall?

Mr. HANNAH.—No, I am not; but I am one of the components.

The SPEAKER.—If the cap fits the honorable member he can wear it; but unless he claims to be the Trades Hall there is no point of order.

Mr. HANNAH.—That may be all right, coming from you as your ruling, but it is quite different from the ruling that was given in the Federal House the other day.

The SPEAKER.—I know nothing about that.

Mr. HANNAH.—What the honorable member for Stawell says is untrue, and when we say it is untrue, he ought to withdraw it.

The SPEAKER.—If the honorable member will say —

Mr. HANNAH.—I say it is untrue.

The SPEAKER.—The honorable member has no right to say that.

Mr. HANNAH.—But I do say it is absolutely untrue, and he knows it.

The SPEAKER.—The honorable member charges another honorable member with speaking something that is not true in this House.

Mr. HANNAH.—I say his statement is untrue.

The SPEAKER.—It is out of order to say that. I ask the honorable member to withdraw.

Mr. HANNAH.—I will not. He ought to accept my assurance that it is not true.

The SPEAKER.—Does the honorable member for Collingwood intend to defy the Chair? The honorable member has stated that another honorable member has stated on the floor of the House something that is not true. I ask the honorable member does he decline to withdraw that? If he declines, I must find that he is defying

the Chair wilfully, and if he does that, there is only one course open to me.

Mr. HANNAH.—You can take what course you like. The honorable member for Stawell has made an untrue statement, and he knows it.

The SPEAKER.—I name the honorable member for Collingwood, Mr. Hannah, for defying the Chair, and I ask the Premier to take the proper course to support the Chair.

Mr. MCLEOD (Chief Secretary).—I appeal to the honorable member for Collingwood to withdraw the statement. No one knows better than the honorable member that, rightly or wrongly, the statement referred to appeared in the public press. Whether it was justified or not, I do not know. For the honour of the House, and for his own reputation, the honorable member should take the proper course. He must realize that the statement did appear in the press.

Mr. HANNAH.—It did not appear.

The SPEAKER.—Order!

Mr. PRENDERGAST (to Mr. McLeod).—What has this to do with you?

Mr. MCLEOD.—I have a perfect right to speak in the Premier's absence.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I do not know, Mr. Speaker, whether I am permitted to go on.

The SPEAKER.—The honorable member cannot proceed at present. I have named the honorable member for Collingwood for flagrantly defying the Chair, and I now ask the Premier to take the usual course.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—I am sorry I was out of the chamber when this episode occurred. I should like to know the facts.

The SPEAKER.—The honorable member for Stawell, in speaking to the question before the Chair, stated that a certain motion had been carried at the Trades Hall, and the honorable member for Collingwood said that the statement was untrue, and repeated that several times. I asked him to withdraw his statement, as he was not entitled to make it. He defied the Chair, and would not withdraw, and therefore I named him.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—I appeal to the honorable member for Collingwood to withdraw.

Mr. HANNAH.—You ought to know what the honorable member for Stawell said. You ought to know the facts.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Surely the honorable member recognises that the Speaker must be supported.

Mr. HANNAH.—Not if he makes a mistake.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I am sure the honorable member is too good-tempered to cause trouble. I have been on the platform with him at Collingwood assisting in the recruiting movement. I feel that the honorable member for Stawell, if he has made an incorrect statement, will withdraw it.

Mr. HANNAH.—He will not do so.

The SPEAKER.—The honorable member for Collingwood said several times that what the honorable member for Stawell said was not true. That is the offence that the honorable member for Collingwood is guilty of. I cannot say whether the statement referred to is true or not.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I appeal to the honorable member for Collingwood to withdraw the statement that the honorable member for Stawell made a deliberate misstatement.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—He did not say that.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—This occurs in connexion with a resolution carried at a meeting of the Trades Hall Council. The honorable member for Stawell was perfectly justified in making a statement with regard to something that appeared in the public press. I saw the statement myself, but I do not know whether it is true or not. The honorable member for Stawell has simply quoted something that appeared in the public press.

Mr. CLOUGH.—He did not quote what appeared in the press.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I think the honorable member for Stawell should be afforded an opportunity of stating what he did say.

The SPEAKER.—I do not know how the Speaker is to carry on the business of this House if his ruling is to be disputed in this fashion. I heard all that was said, and the honorable member for Stawell stated something that was known to us all, and was told to his teeth that it was not true.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I again appeal to the honorable member for Collingwood. He knows that he cannot deliberately charge a fellow-member with having made a deliberate misstatement, and then defy the Chair.

Mr. HANNAH.—I asked the honorable member to withdraw his statement, as it was untrue.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Are members to withdraw all the statements that appear in the press?

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—He has misquoted the press.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The Speaker must be supported, and honorable members sitting in Opposition know that.

Mr. HANNAH.—Exactly; but I want the truth.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I am very proud of my long connexion with this House, and of the fact that our Parliament has a record for the excellent conduct of its proceedings. Our reputation for the last twenty-eight years compares most favorably with that of the other State Parliaments and with that of the Federal Parliament. I make a final appeal to the honorable member to withdraw his statement. I am sure no honorable member will feel it more keenly than the honorable member for Brighton, if there is an unsatisfactory termination to this discussion. He introduced this question in a most moderate speech, and it has been discussed fairly with the object of helping our country in the present crisis. It is regrettable that we should have any scenes in discussing the question of finding additional recruits, and I shall be very sorry indeed if I have to move a certain motion. I therefore make a final appeal to the honorable member for Collingwood to withdraw what he said about the honorable member for Stawell. Does the honorable member for Collingwood listen to my appeal?

Mr. HANNAH.—Ever since I have been in this House, I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to obey the Chair, and to support the rulings of the Speaker.

Several HONORABLE MEMBERS.—Play the game!

Mr. HANNAH.—I shall do so, as I have always played the game. Whenever any honorable member rises in his place, and asks an honorable member who has made a statement that is untrue—

The SPEAKER.—I cannot allow the honorable member to make a speech. He must withdraw the statement that is objected to. If he does so, he can then state his position.

Mr. HANNAH.—I am going to state my position now.

The SPEAKER.—Order! I recognise that the honorable member is, as a rule, one of the most orderly members of the House, and that he willingly obeys the rulings of the Chair. I shall allow him the latitude he asks, that is, I shall allow him to explain his position on the understanding that, at the conclusion of his speech, he will withdraw the objectionable statement.

Mr. HANNAH.—I was proceeding to say that the honorable member for Stawell had made a missstatement. I rose in my place, and said, as one who is associated with the Trades Hall, that the statement was untrue, and I asked him to withdraw it. The Speaker did not insist on the honorable member's withdrawal of that statement. It was a reflexion on me as an individual. As a member of this House, I asked the honorable member to withdraw the statement. The Speaker would not insist on his doing so, and therefore I said that the statement was untrue. It is untrue, and therefore I will not withdraw what I said.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—Then there is only one course open to me, because the honorable member is virtually defying the Chair. I am compelled to move—

That the honorable member for Collingwood, Mr. Hannah, be suspended from the service of the House.

The Speaker has gone as far as possible to enable the honorable member to withdraw from the position he has taken up.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I am very sorry that this position has arisen.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—It is regrettable that it has arisen in connexion with this subject of recruiting.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I was just going to make the same remark. We must recognise that, as the discussion has proceeded, it has engendered some heat. It shows that there are strong feelings, though underneath the whole thing there is a unanimous desire to demonstrate our faith in our country in connexion with the conflict that is going on.

The SPEAKER.—The honorable member is speaking by grace of the House. The motion that has been moved by the Premier should be put without debate, but, under the circumstances, I shall allow the honorable member to make any explanation he deems necessary. I can-

not, however, allow a general debate on the question.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Under the circumstances, I shall not proceed.

The House divided on the motion—

Ayes	34
Noes	13

Majority for the motion 21

AYES.

Mr. Angus	Mr. McLachlan
Major Baird	„ McLeod
Mr. Barnes	„ McPherson
„ Baylcs	„ Menzies
„ Beardmore	„ Mitchell
„ Bowser	„ Oman
„ A. F. Cameron	„ Outtrim
„ J. Cameron	Sir Alexander Peacock
„ Carlisle	Mr. Purnell
„ Chatham	„ Robertson
„ Deany	„ Rouget
„ Hutchinson	„ D. Smith
„ Livingston	„ Snowball
„ Mackey	„ Toutcher.
„ McDonald	Tellers:
„ McGregor	Mr. Keast
„ H. McKenzie	„ Pennington.
„ M. K. McKenzie	

NOES.

Mr. Bailey	Mr. Rogers
„ J. W. Billson	„ Sinclair
„ Blackburn	„ Solly
„ Clough	„ Tunnecliffe.
„ Cotter	Tellers:
„ Hannah	Mr. Elmslie
„ Prendergast	„ Lemmon.

PAIRS.

Mr. Gray	Mr. Hogan
„ Farrer	„ Warde
„ Gordon	„ Jewell.

Mr. HANNAH.—Seeing that the motion has been carried—

The SPEAKER.—The honorable member cannot address the House. He has been suspended for the rest of the sitting.

Mr. HANNAH.—I realize that.

Mr. Hannah then withdrew from the chamber.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I wish to say—

Mr. COTTER.—The honorable member is now going to undo his dirty work.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I am not going to do any such thing. I have not done any dirty work. I simply quoted what I saw in one of the leading papers.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Didn't the Political Labour Council carry a resolution?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—No.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I took the Melbourne press as my guide.

Mr. SALLY.—You did not know what you were quoting.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I was going to say that I was pleased to see that honorable members on the other side of the House—I am making no apology for them, but wish to do justice to them—did ignore the particular resolution moved at the Trades Hall. If honorable members on the Opposition side of the House desire to be enlightened, let me tell them that there are some members of the Trades Hall Council who were brought before the Court and fined for trying to prevent recruiting. I read that in the press. Am I wrong in that?

Mr. BAYLES.—No.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—That shows that my previous statement was justified.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—You are right by accident.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—No, I am right by design. I am sorry that in the pursuit of this discussion controversial questions have been touched on. I will not say that he intended to stir up trouble, but I think the speech of the honorable member for Fitzroy seemed to touch a great many members, because they seemed to come in for a general castigation in connexion with the application of opprobrious terms and epithets to the Labour party. I think this is the last place for those statements to be made.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I did not say anything of the kind.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—The honorable member said, in a general way, that members on this (the Ministerial) side of the House had cast all sorts of reflections on the Labour party.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I proved what I said.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—It was mutual. Probably it is very wrong to apply epithets to either side. However, I very much regret that the honorable member for Collingwood did not play the “sport,” as he generally does, and that, after accusing an honorable member of an untruth, he did not see fit to withdraw the statement.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I am sorry the honorable member for Stawell did not, as a gentleman, accept the assurance of the honorable member for Collingwood that the statement he had made was incorrect.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—The honorable member for Collingwood said the statement was untrue. It was simply a reference to an outside organization.

Mr. LEMMON.—The honorable member for Collingwood took it as a reflection on the Labour party.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Where will this kind of thing end? Supposing I belong to a trading concern, and a member on the other (the Opposition) side tackles that concern, and I say you have no right to tackle it because I am a member of it.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—A member would have no right to say anything about the concern that was not correct. If he makes an incorrect statement, he ought to apologize.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—If that rule were strictly followed, a lot of apologies would be made in this chamber. A member of another place stated the other day, at an investigation, that he was the most abused man in Australia. According to his evidence, he seemed to be the most abused man in Australia.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—Statements made by that member were disproved by a Judge.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Would any member on the other side accept the statement made by that member of another place? They would act in the same way as I did with regard to the statement made by the honorable member for Collingwood. I did not accept his assertion and charge myself with an untruth regarding something that I read in the newspapers.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—The press notoriously misrepresents certain people, and the honorable member for Stawell knows that that is the case.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I know nothing of the kind. The fullest justification of what I said has been gathered in the Police Courts of this country. That statement cannot be got away from. I did not say that honorable members on the other (the Opposition) side of the House were in accord—

Mr. COTTER.—Let those members speak for themselves.

The SPEAKER.—Order! Will honorable members cease interjecting?

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I stated what I believed to be a fact, and what I had

read in the newspapers. Subsequent events seemed to justify my statement.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—The honorable member for Stawell has a bad memory. That is all.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I underwent a course of memory-training once, and I think I have a good memory.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—There has been a poor result.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I do not wish to pursue the subject any further.

Mr. SOLLY.—Oh, keep it up! You are doing an immense amount of good to recruiting.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—In regard to recruiting, I think that a big meeting might be held in the Exhibition building. The speakers should be prominent members from both sides of Parliament, Federal and State. Such a meeting might very well be held on a Sunday afternoon, and I think it would prove a great success. We should in that way be upholding the cause of the Christianity and the civilization that we stand for in this war. And there could be no more appropriate day than Sunday for that purpose. I was trying to elaborate what I had to say in that direction when the unfortunate incident occurred. However, I thank the honorable member for Brighton for the very nice manner in which he placed the position in regard to recruiting before the House. He has himself done great service in that connexion throughout the length and breadth of the State, and the Recruiting Committee, the Director-General of Recruiting, and everybody identified with the voluntary recruiting movement, owe much gratitude to him for his labours.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—I am sorry that, after the sane and temperate speech which opened this debate, any unfortunate incident should have arisen. As a matter of fact, the honorable member for Stawell did make an incorrect statement. That statement was repeated in a worse and more inaccurate—or whatever other term is parliamentary—form by the Premier just now. When the honorable member for Stawell stated that a motion was carried at the Trades Hall directing Labour members to abstain from assisting in recruiting, and from speaking on recruiting platforms, he said something

that was not correct. When the Premier said that the Political Labour Council had passed a motion directing members to take no part in the recruiting campaign, he also said something that was inaccurate.

Mr. SOLLY.—It was worse than inaccurate.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—The Premier's statement especially was contrary to the truth.

Mr. BAYLES.—What was the truth?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—I am coming to that. I, personally, have never had any time for what is called the voluntary system of recruiting in Victoria. I am not apologizing for my position in regard to that matter. I am stating what I know. The honorable member for Warrenheip, if he were present, could verify my statement in parts. For two years I have been a member of the Central Executive of the Political Labour Council. That body was approached last year by the Director-General of Recruiting, and we were asked whether we had any objection—this was after the conscription campaign—to members of the Labour party taking the recruiting platform. The Central Executive is a body charged with carrying out the Labour constitution, and the decrees of the Labour Conference. Mr. Mackinnon, and, I think, Mr. Dean, came down and saw two of our officers. We considered the matter, and replied that it was a matter upon which members were free to act as they thought right. Members who wished to take part in the recruiting scheme, and who thought it their duty to do so, we said, ought to do so. They would not be hindered in any way. I supported that contention, because I believe that a man is entitled to do what he conscientiously believes to be his duty in the matter. At the recent conference of the Political Labour Council—a body whose annual meetings determine the policy of the Labour party for the year, and who make recommendations in regard to the Federal policy—a motion was proposed, part of which stated, "That no member of the Labour party should be allowed to take part in the recruiting scheme." An amendment was moved to strike out those words, which interfered with the liberty of members, and, after some discussion,

the amendment was carried by an overwhelming majority. That is to say, a proposal to direct members not to take part in recruiting was rejected by the Political Labour Conference by an overwhelming majority. That disposes of the Premier's statement. As I have said, the Premier's statement was more inaccurate than that made by the honorable member for Stawell. The next thing that happened was this: There was a discussion at the Trades Hall Council upon what was felt to be general pressure towards economic conscription. I am speaking now of what appeared in the press. A motion was moved condemning that form of conscription, and a statement made that, in the opinion of the members of the Trades Hall Council, the Central Executive should direct members not to take part in recruiting. The Trades Hall Council has no power over members at all. It is an industrial body, representing metropolitan trades. It has no jurisdiction over members of the Labour party at all, and, by the motion moved there, they admitted that.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Is not that exactly the same thing referred to by me?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—There is something more to follow. The honorable member for Stawell said that a motion was carried at the Trades Hall directing members not to go on the recruiting platform. Now, there was a motion carried at the meeting of the Trades Hall Council that, in the opinion of that council, the Central Executive should direct members not to appear on the recruiting platform. That resolution was forwarded to the Central Executive, of which the honorable member for Warrenheip and myself are members. The Central Executive replied to the Trades Hall Council, and the reply appeared in the press, stating that nothing could be done to give effect to that resolution, because the Labour Conference, by an-overwhelming majority, had rejected a similar motion. No member had it in his mind for a moment to state that the honorable member for Stawell had deliberately made an inaccurate statement. I do not think he would be guilty of making such a statement deliberately. I would not think that of any honorable member of this House. But the honorable member for Stawell incorrectly quoted a resolution.

Mr. BAYLES.—It was a difference between the Political Labour Council and the Trades Hall Council.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—The facts are these: The Political Labour Council, by an overwhelming majority, declared that it was a matter on which members had a right to do what their consciences told them to do. That position has not been receded from.

Mr. McPHERSON.—I sympathize to the fullest extent with the remarks made by the honorable member for Brighton. He and the honorable member for Gippsland North are to be congratulated on the work they are doing in the interests of recruiting. It does not seem to me that any one can say the voluntary system has been a failure, in view of the fact that, under it, we have already sent 320,000 men overseas. No system which has done that could be called a failure. I realize, too, that the majority of those who have gone to the Front have come from the labour ranks, and they have done exceedingly well. I feel, however, that we are getting to the end of the usefulness of the voluntary system. I have been attending at the Town Hall whenever I was requested to do so, and I have felt recently that appealing for recruits is like talking to a blank wall. The sooner the Commonwealth Government realizes that the usefulness of the voluntary system has passed, the better it will be for recruiting. The Minister for the Navy said in my hearing the other day that as soon as the Commonwealth Government did realize that the voluntary system had outlived its usefulness, other steps would be taken to support the men at the Front. If it were merely a question of losing money or property, I would say there was no need to hasten recruiting; but we know that we are losing lives, and the sooner we realize the position, the better it will be for every one.

Mr. BAYLES.—The Commonwealth Government ought to fix some time limit.

Mr. McPHERSON.—A time limit ought to be fixed. As I go past the Richmond race-course on Monday afternoons, and see the numbers of men spending their time in horse-racing and gambling, more particularly during a part of the day when every decent man in the community is trying to produce something for

the public good, I am filled with indignation. It is the duty of the Federal Government to take steps to stop this sort of thing. If men will not take up arms in defence of the Empire, and in support of our men at the Front, they should not be permitted to spend their time on racecourses. In this connexion, even the State Government could take action. We do not seem to know, from the appearance of this city, that there is a war at all. I very much regret the incident that has just occurred, and I hope it will be immediately forgotten.

Mr. SALLY.—Great injustice has been done to the Trades Hall Council by the remarks made here this morning. Some weeks ago, a letter was received from the Peace Society requesting that a deputation should be received by the Trades Hall Council, of which I am a member; and I was present when the interview took place. Speeches were made by a number of members of the Peace Society in favour of an effort being made to secure peace. They also urged that those in Australia who believed in an early peace should have the utmost liberty to place their views before the public. After the deputation had retired, the subject was discussed by members of the council, and statements were made that a considerable number of unionists had been dismissed from their employment without any particular reason. Some of them had been in the same employ for a number of years, and no complaints had been made about the way they had done their work. In spite of the fact that the people of Australia voted against conscription, a form of economic conscription was being forced upon them, with the result that considerable suffering was imposed upon many members of this community. A good deal of indignation was displayed by the speakers who were representatives of unionists, and, smarting under the unfair dismissal of employees, a resolution was carried to the effect that the central executive be approached for the purpose of asking the withdrawal of Labour men from the recruiting platforms until such time as the employing class had ceased to force economic conscription on the working classes of the community. There is some justification for the attitude which was taken up by the Trades Hall Council. I know of a case of a young fellow, nine-

teen years of age, who was dismissed from his employment. His parents made things pretty warm for him because he could not get another job, and he was forced to enlist. After being at the Front for about twelve months, he, unfortunately, was killed. He was one of the finest young men I ever met in my life, and it was most unfair he should have been treated as he was.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—If we had had a different system, that would not have happened.

Mr. SALLY.—I am not talking about the system now. The voluntary system has been a great success; but there are many reasons why it is not succeeding just now. One of them is that certain employers are putting in force economic conscription on a number of married, as well as single, men. Then we know that the Government have refused to recognise their responsibility in protecting mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters of men who have gone to the Front.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Don't say that.

Mr. SALLY.—I must say it; because it is a positive fact, and it ought to be stated. Members of the Labour party have been abused because they have not gone on the recruiting platforms during the last three or four months, but I have given reasons why so many people are indignant at the want of character on the part of the State Government in neglecting to provide that protection which is necessary. They have permitted robbery to go on in the shape of the continual increase in the cost of living and advances in rents. I can take honorable members to hovels in my own district which are not fit for even pigs to live in; and the same sort of buildings can be found in other parts of the metropolis. People come to my house every day wanting food for themselves and their children. My wife has to secure relief for them through the Ladies Benevolent Society, and from our own resources. This happens because the National Government, and particularly the Government of this State, do not recognise their responsibilities at this time. It is the duty of Governments to protect the poorest members of the community; and it is because of their neglect to do so that we have trouble. A member of another place has made statements to the Inter-State Commission about the

losses he has sustained, and he declared that he had sacrificed his business to supply cheap food to the people of this country. What did a Judge of the Supreme Court say about that individual? Members of the Government know what has been recorded against the one I refer to. We know that the Judge practically passed sentence upon him.

Mr. LEMMON.—And the *Argus* told him to get out of public life.

Mr. SALLY.—That is so. A newspaper which is not in favour of fixing prices said he ought not to remain in public life. There is no man in the world who desires Great Britain to win the war more than I do. I class myself as being equal to anybody in that desire. I am a Britisher. Bad as conditions were in the Old Country when I left, and in spite of the suffering I had to go through as a boy, I say that I prefer the British flag and the British Constitution to German rule every time, and I am prepared to do everything I can to assist recruiting. I have done my best in my own district, and outside of it. I have been on the platform with the honorable member for Brighton. He has done a lot, so far as the recruiting movement is concerned, but he stirred up a lot of sectarian strife that ought to have been left entirely out of this movement. He stirred up sectarian strife as much as he could. That should not have been done. We should be a united people in Australia at the present time, and politics and sectarianism should have been left out of the movement altogether. If that had been done, we should have been more successful.

Mr. MENZIES.—The honorable member for Brighton is not the only man who has stirred up sectarianism.

Mr. SALLY.—I know that. I am not taking sides one way or the other. The sectarian bigot is no good to any country, I do not care who he is, or what he is. As a trade unionist of over 40 years' standing, it is my duty to stand up here and protect the Trades Hall against any slander, and any untruth that may have been uttered. I claim that the honorable member for Stawell has not done justice to himself, or to the institution he has attempted to slander this morning, by making the accusations which he has made. I regret very much that the hon-

orable member for Collingwood has been suspended for the remainder of the sitting, but that will not do him any harm.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—It will win a thousand votes for him.

Mr. SALLY.—I do not know whether it will or not. At all events, I believe that the honorable member for Collingwood did believe that the statements made by the honorable member for Stawell were untrue, and he stuck to that. I admire him for sticking to what he believed to be a positive fact.

Mr. PURNELL.—I did not intend to speak this morning, because the district which I represent, and the adjoining districts, have, I think, done record work in connexion with recruiting. I am sorry the honorable member for Fitzroy has gone out of the chamber. I understood him to say that the newspaper advertisement he referred to was my advertisement.

Mr. MACKEY.—He did not say that.

Mr. PURNELL.—I wish to say I had nothing to do with the insertion of that advertisement. In fact, I disapprove entirely of the introduction of personalities in connexion with politics. I know Mr. McCormick well. We shook hands at the beginning of the contest, and we shook hands afterwards. The only reference to "German gold" that I heard was at the declaration of the poll. When Mr. McCormick had said how unjustly he had been treated by all sorts of influences, some one interjected, "German gold"; and he said, "Yes, German gold." I did not say anything about German gold. I have a particular interest in recruiting, and my own boy is at the Front. I was sorry to hear it stated during the election campaign that my son, who has been away fighting for a couple of years, was in a soft job in London. We make allowances for all sorts of electioneering squibs, but this statement was industriously circulated throughout the campaign about my son, who has been fighting for two years in Egypt and in France. I am sorry that my name has been mentioned this morning. I realize that the Labour men in my district have done excellent work in connexion with recruiting. The president of the Trades Hall, Mr. Tom McHugh took a very active part in the recruiting movement.

Mr. SALLY.—He is a fine fellow.

Mr. PURNELL.—A very fine fellow. I have known him for years. I am sorry that an advertisement such as the honorable member for Fitzroy referred to should have appeared. I do not know who wrote it, but I defy any one to say that I referred to the Labour people in that way. I do not know anything about the matter. I do not know who inserted the advertisement.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—You did not bother to contradict it, did you?

Mr. PURNELL.—No.

Mr. CLOUGH.—What did you say at the declaration of the poll?

Mr. PURNELL.—I wish to say that in Geelong the employers and the employes are on pretty friendly terms, and a considerable amount of work has been done in connexion with recruiting. I am glad to say that the average of recruits is keeping up fairly well. The returned soldiers have taken an active part in the movement, and from week to week the number of recruits is very fair. I trust that the recruiting movement will be successful, and that we shall hear very soon that the war is at an end.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—The matter brought forward by the honorable member for Brighton is a very easy one to discuss. We all, I think, understand it. There is simply an appeal to public men generally to see whether they cannot give a little more help in connexion with the all-important matter of recruiting. I think everybody must admit that there was never such an important matter before the people of Australia as the question of supplying reinforcements for our troops. That is generally admitted by all public men. The public of Australia declared against any system of obtaining recruits except the system that is now being carried on—the voluntary system. One method of carrying on the voluntary system is to have appeals made by public men from lorries, or stands, in the public streets of this city, and elsewhere. Some good is accruing from that, though people think that little or no result is being achieved by it. The work is exhausting and unhealthy, and that is the reason why more speakers are needed. The more speakers there are, the shorter will be the time that each man will have to speak. If it had not been carried on in this way the voluntary system would undoubtedly

have gone dead. The people of Australia declared by their vote for this system, and no other.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—They did not declare for the recruiting system. They declared for true voluntarism.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—They declared at the ballot-box for the voluntary system as against compulsion. Of course public men are supposed to take part in all matters affecting the welfare of the people as far as they reasonably can. Some public men, on account of some physical infirmity, or because very little of their time is spent in the city, cannot take part in this work. The bulk of the work at the present time is being carried on in the city, because half the people of this State are in Melbourne. Consequently, it becomes necessary for the authorities to provide lorries and stands in various parts of the city, from which public men may talk to those whom they can get to listen to them, on the subject of recruiting. Meetings in halls have been a comparative failure. You have to go where the people are, and within an hour, or two hours, thousands of people pass the street corners in this great city. It is at the street corners that the recruiting sergeants and the public men ought to be.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—And not a word said by the speaker can be heard.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—I know it is a most difficult matter to make one's voice heard in the city streets, and particularly in front of the Town Hall in the afternoon. But still this work has to be done, and if the voluntary system fails, something else will have to be adopted, because it is very clear that Australia is under an obligation to the men who have gone to find the necessary reinforcements for them. Australia has said, "Get the men required under the voluntary system," and many public men are endeavouring to do that. The honorable member for Brighton this morning, in a kindly spirit, invited honorable members to give a little more of their time to this service if they could see their way clear to do so. I, personally, want to see this system a success, and notwithstanding the attitude taken up by some public men and a section of the press, I believe that the voluntary system could be made a success. But when it is carried on, as at present,

in a limited way, and only at rare intervals in this great city, there is a feeling of comparative indifference on the part of the community. The absence of public men from the meetings in the streets will have a tendency to create that feeling in the minds of the people. If public men could see their way clear to give addresses for a quarter of an hour, or twenty minutes, at 10 o'clock in the morning, and 10 o'clock at night, at all the main street corners, the attention of the public would be arrested. The feeling would be aroused that Australia was really in earnest in the matter. But when the movement is carried on, as at present, with only a limited number of men, and only now and again, it cannot be successful as it should be. It is not the fault of the officials. They are doing all they possibly can. That applies particularly to the Director-General of Recruiting, who, we may say, is the foremost man in Australia. He has conducted his work well, and has conducted it fairly, as every one will admit. He deserves all the support that can be given to him. There is a shortage in the staff of men, as well as a shortage of speakers. I need not dwell on the point that it is only fair to endeavour to get the required number of reinforcements. We all admit that. Of course, some of them could probably be obtained by a house-to-house canvass, but the common method employed in Australia, where every one rules himself or herself through Parliament, is for an appeal to be made from some place or other. The street is the common place for making the appeal, and the appeal that has been made there has done some good. I am sure that if we could get the members of the four Houses of Parliament at present sitting in Melbourne, to deliver quarter-of-an-hour, or twenty-minute, addresses at the street corners, a considerable impetus would be given to the movement, and, in all probability, it would be prevented from failing.

Mr. ROUGET.—I want to say just a word or two in connexion with this recruiting matter. I thank the Premier for the few words he spoke this mornin' in regard to country members. While no country member desires any testimony of appreciation of what he does, yet I think the Central Committee fail to realize the amount of work country members have to do in connexion with recruiting, and t'

various matters arising out of the war in which we have been engaged during the last three years. I have not spoken at the Town Hall, but I have replied stating that I hope to do so at convenient times. It must be remembered that we have had to conduct, during the three years, meetings of this character in our electorates, and we have had to go through the Federal electoral campaign and the conscription campaign, which duties, speaking for myself, I have not shirked in the slightest degree. There have been other occasions in connexion with the war, such as the unveiling of honor rolls, and other gatherings, when we have never failed to be present and to make appeals for the raising of men. Personally, whatever part of the country I have gone to, I have always endeavoured to do that, and I know no boundaries whatsoever in connexion with these matters. We have been endeavouring to push as much as we could the recruiting movement. I believe that at the present time we require some spirit of revival in connexion with it, but it strikes me very forcibly that we must adopt some fresh methods. In the first place, you do not get to all the men you desire to speak to in the city at the Town Hall, or at any other place in any electorate. You may call a meeting, but the public you wish to speak to will not be there. The plan has been adopted of recruiting officers going through the State and interviewing men personally. So far so good. Some have been very successful, but some of them are indiscreet, and do not know exactly how to do the job. I was going to suggest this to the recruiting authorities—that we should adopt the plan of getting the assistance in our districts of a number of men who are deeply interested in this great matter—men, if you will, and preferably so, who have their own boys at the war, and who have made some sacrifice in connexion with the war. Let these men interview people, not with a view of coercion—let that be out of their minds altogether—but simply to place before men who are eligible to go the facts of the case in such a way that they would be able to realize the position, and their duty and responsibility to the country and the Empire. If that were done, I think that better results might be obtained in many localities than are being obtained at present. I agree that the system we have adopted

and are using to-day is simply reaching the boys who are coming of age and married men who feel their personal responsibility of defending their wives and homes and families. I do think that a revival of recruiting ought to be entered upon, and I am willing to spend my efforts and time and what energy I have for that purpose. I have listened to men on several occasions endeavouring to speak at the Town Hall to the crowd in the street. The noise of the traffic is so great that it is very inconvenient to speak there. Only men with very strong voices can stand it, and unless a man has a strong voice he has no right to speak there. People who are on the outside of the crowd cannot hear what is going on. The Recruiting Committee should look for some place that will be more convenient.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—You have to go to the people. They will not come to you.

Mr. ROUGET.—I do not know whether we should not make another attempt to throw the Town Hall open, and let the meetings be held there for some time. We want to get away somewhere from the traffic, so as to be able to put the facts in such a manner that the people who are present will realize what we are up against. I sincerely believe that a large number of people do not realize the seriousness of the situation at the present time. If they did realize what really is the position, some at all events would rise to the occasion and offer their services to the country and the Empire at this time. But I do really think that we want fresh methods and fresh ideas in this recruiting movement. I might suggest that more personal work should be done, but it should be done judiciously and carefully so as not to give offence. The men that we desire to reach do not attend the recruiting meetings. We shall have to go to the people with our message. I hope, for the sake of the men at the Front, to whom we are so greatly indebted, that something more definite will be done in the direction of recruiting. There is a lack of effort at present. We have done very well up till recently, but there is now a falling-off. If we are going to get the best results, seeing the great sacrifices we have made, we must support our troops in every legitimate way.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I have no bouquets to throw at the honorable member for

Brighton for introducing this subject, though I do not impute any motives to him. At the same time, I think his action was very indiscreet, and it has had the effect that I anticipated. We should have been better without the discussion. I hold that members of this House understand the position just as well as the honorable member does. We understand it thoroughly. Honorable members have shown their faith in the cause, and their sense of duty, and they have acted according to the dictates of their consciences. The holding of public meetings for recruiting is an obsolete and worn-out method. The effort used in this direction is wasted in the main. To speak at these meetings is quite different from speaking at ordinary political meetings. I would sooner speak for hours at an ordinary public meeting than for half-an-hour at a patriotic meeting.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—So would any one.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—We have to judge the efforts by the results, and the results show clearly that the efforts are mostly in vain. Some time before I ceased addressing recruiting meetings, I had come to the conclusion that the results were not commensurate with the efforts put forward. I shall not enter into some of the phases of the question mentioned to-day. There are methods adopted by some public speakers that are calculated to bring about the very opposite of what is expected. It is a mistake to start off by calling the young men "shirkers" and "cold-footers." I have nothing but pity and contempt for those who adopt such methods. I have heard men occupying public positions who spoke in this manner, and used the cloak of recruiting to deal with all manner of subjects, and to insult men in various directions. Under no circumstances would I associate myself with some of these men on the recruiting platform. With the honorable member who has just spoken, I think it is time that some of those in authority placed less reliance on platform speaking. I have made it my business to attend some of the meetings. How many eligibles do you see at them? Hardly any. The audiences are composed mostly of old people. All the evidence shows that the present method of recruiting by platform speaking, and at street corners, is almost useless. The recruiting effort is carried on opposite the Melbourne Town Hall, and I defy any one to make an intelligent

speech in the midst of the noise and rumpus going on. Some of us know, to our cost, what it means, and we are not likely to repeat it. I am sure that honorable members are willing to do their utmost in a practical way, but I do not think that platform speaking comes within that category.

The motion for the adjournment of the House was then put, and negatived.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL (No. 3).

Mr. McLEOD (Chief Secretary) moved for leave to introduce a Bill to extend the powers of municipalities with respect to hawkers and itinerant traders and the sale of fish and the sale or supply of milk.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was then brought in, and read a first time.

STREET TRADING BILL.

Mr. McLFOD (Chief Secretary) moved for leave to introduce a Bill to regulate street trading in certain cases.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was then brought in, and read a first time.

GAOLS BILL.

Mr. McLEOD (Chief Secretary) moved for leave to introduce a Bill relating to the employment of prisoners, and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was then brought in, and read a first time.

VOTING BY POST (WAR SERVICE) BILL.

Mr. McLEOD (Chief Secretary) moved for leave to introduce a Bill to enable electors on war service outside Victoria, but within the Commonwealth, to vote by post at parliamentary elections.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was then brought in, and read a first time.

TOTALIZATOR BILL.

Mr. BAYLES moved for leave to introduce a Bill to legalize the totalizator, and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was then brought in, and read a first time.

WHEAT STORAGE BILL.

The amendments made by the Legislative Council in this Bill were taken into consideration.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Railways).—I move—

That the amendments be now read a second time.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—I should like the Minister to explain the general attitude of the Government on these amendments. Some important alterations are proposed by the Council, and after this motion is carried we shall only be able to deal with them one at a time.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Railways).—The first amendment made by the Council is the omission from clause 3 of sub-clause (2), which provided—

Works authorized by this Act to be executed by the Victorian Railways Commissioners shall (unless in any special case the Minister otherwise directs in writing) be executed under the supervision of the said Commissioners or their officers, and in accordance with plans and specifications prepared by the said officers.

I propose to ask the House to disagree with that amendment, for reasons which I will give at a subsequent stage. The second amendment of the Council is the substitution of "who" for "which" in clause 4. Either word is correct, and I will move that the amendment be agreed with. The other amendment made by the Council is the omission from clause 16 of sub-clause (1), which states—

The prices to be paid to workmen by the Victorian Railways Commissioners in the execution of any works authorized by this Act to be executed by the Victorian Railways Commissioners shall be the recognised standard rate of wages for the work performed for a maximum number of hours.

That provision was inserted on the motion of the Leader of the Opposition, and, for reasons which I will give later on, I will ask the House to agree to the Council's amendment.

The motion was agreed to, and the amendments were read a second time.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Railways).—It will be remembered that there was considerable debate here as to the addition of sub-clause (2) to clause 3. I pointed out at the time that the Government had decided that they would eliminate the elevator system from this storage work, and that there was nothing very peculiar about the preparation of

plans and designs for silos. I added that, as far as I could judge, the engineers of the Railway Department were quite capable of preparing those plans and designs. Honorable members, generally, agreed with the Government that if the work were done by the Department it would save money, and that it would be carried out as effectively as if we obtained plans and designs from outside. Therefore, I think that sub-clause (2) should be retained. There is another reason why that provision should not be omitted. The Commission appointed by the Federal Government under the Commonwealth Act might say that two States had already obtained plans and designs, and that it was desirable that we should adopt them for the sake of uniformity. We do not want to be in that position. I do not think for a moment that the Commissioners now would go outside the Department to obtain the plans and designs, but if the sub-clause (2) is eliminated they will have the power to do so. The House, I think, does not want that to be done, but desires that it should be specifically laid down that the plans and designs for silos should be prepared by officers of the Railway Department.

Mr. KEAST.—They are not very accurate, as a rule.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—Even in plans and designs prepared outside I suppose that there are inaccuracies. Where big works are involved that will be found with all designs. It is desirable that the Commissioners should be supported by sub-clause (2), so as to prevent the other authority which I have mentioned saying that we must have designs uniform with those of the other States. I move—

That amendment No. 1 be disagreed with.

The amendment was disagreed with.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Railways).—I move—

That amendment No. 2 be agreed with.

The amendment was agreed with.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Railways).—The other amendment is for the omission of sub-clause (1) of clause 16. I move—

That the amendment be agreed with.

Sub-clause (1) was inserted on an amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition pretty late in the evening, and I told the House that I would accept it tentatively, but that I should have to consult the

Commissioners with regard to it, and that if they showed any valid reason against its inclusion in the Bill I would ask my colleague in another place to submit an amendment for striking it out. The Railways Commissioners point out that the work which they will be doing in connexion with the silos will be really railway work, such as sidings, formations, and all that sort of thing, on which their own men will be engaged. As there is a Wages Board in operation in the Department now, it would be very undesirable, they say, to have men working on the sidings leading up to the silos under a different wages authority. That is a grave objection to the provision, and one which, I think, must appeal to the House. It is already provided that the standard wage must be recognised in connexion with contracts. Therefore, it does not alter in any way the position of the contractors who may be constructing work under the Railways Commissioners. The work that the Railways Commissioners will be likely to do in connexion with this scheme will really be railway work just as much as any other railway work, namely, constructing sidings for the silos.

Mr. KEAST.—Will the Classification Board deal with that work, too?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—They will deal with all the men employed.

Mr. WARDE.—Does the Minister of Railways propose to wait until the Classification Board have brought in their report before proceeding to build the silos?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I think the Classification Board are making progress now.

Mr. WARDE.—It would be twelve months before their recommendations could come into operation.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—There is no reason why the award should not be made retrospective. The House will see that it would be undesirable for the Railways Commissioners to have another authority coming in to control wages for work which they are doing all over the State. Although the work in connexion with this scheme appertains, no doubt, to the silos, yet it will be railway work. Sidings will have to be constructed for the silos.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—But the erection of the silos themselves will not be ordinary railway work.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—But the silos will not be erected by the

Railways Commissioners. They will, no doubt, be erected by contractors.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—When the matter was under discussion previously the Minister told us there was nothing to prevent the Railways Commissioners doing that work by day labour.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I said there was nothing in the Bill to prevent it. It is not likely, however, that they will undertake such a big scheme as this, where so much labour is necessary, and so many works have to be carried out simultaneously. It is hardly likely that they will do the work by day labour.

Mr. SALLY.—The Railways Commissioners can engage labour in the same way that a contractor can.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—They can, but this is a question of another authority coming in to control the wages for men employed by the Railways Commissioners. That is the objection. This matter is controlled by an authority within the Railway Department created by this House last year. The Railways Commissioners do not wish to have the invidious distinction of another authority coming in to specify the wage for men who will really be doing railway work.

Mr. SALLY.—Is it at the request of the Railways Commissioners that the Legislative Council have thrown out this particular sub-clause?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—It was at the request of the Railways Commissioners that I suggested to my colleague in another place that he should ask for the amendment to be made there.

Mr. SALLY.—It amounts to this then: This House agreed to the sub-clause, and another House has wiped it out.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—They have eliminated the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition that I tentatively accepted, and stated why. I ask the House, for the reasons I have stated, to agree to this amendment.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I think it is needless to say that I regret the attitude taken up by the Minister of Railways. It seems to me that he has given extraordinary reasons why we should agree to the amendment made in another place. Honorable members have only to call to mind the original form in which the clause was introduced. It was proposed by the Government that the wages, on an average, should be 9s. per day. We were successful in persuading the Minister to delete

that portion of the Bill, and in its place to insert the sub-clause which has been eliminated by another place. The excuse that the Railways Commissioners object to some outside body fixing wages and conditions for the same kind of work done by hundreds of other employees in the Railway Department, is an extraordinary one. The position appears to be that, in the first place, the Ministry felt it was necessary to make some protection in the Bill for the workmen. That was done by specifying that, on the average, 9s. per day should be the ruling rate of wages, an outside body altogether fixing this rate of wages. Because the protection afforded the workmen has taken another form the Minister now says it is objectionable. The effect in both cases is the same, but the wording is a little different. The Minister further says that it would never do for the Railways Commissioners to have one scale of wages for a certain class of work, and for some body outside to fix the scale for some other class of work. I think he misinterprets the meaning of the clause. The clause says the "recognised standard rate of wages," and surely the Railways Commissioners for the same class of work give the recognised standard rate of wages already.

Mr. SALLY.—If they are not doing so, they should be.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I agree with the honorable member for Carlton. The Minister of Railways puts forward this argument: That we are going to have a Classification Board's finding to fix the rate of wages. So far as this particular work is concerned, that will not be done. He imagines that there is danger somewhere because we are making the position of the workman secure by saying that the recognised standard rate of wages shall be paid. Would not that be the rate fixed by the Wages Board or by the Classification Board?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—If a rate is fixed by that Board it will, of course, be paid.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—The Minister says nothing about substituting anything for the sub-clause that has been deleted. He does not ask the House to restore the old clause, under which provision would be made for an average wage of 9s. per day. The Ministry themselves thought it essential that a safety provision of that kind should be made. Now they abandon

that, and we shall have no security in any shape or form for the workmen. The Minister, in asking us to reject a previous amendment submitted by another place, said the work of preparing plans could be done more cheaply by the Railway Department. He said it stands to reason that that is the case, and advanced certain arguments why it stands to reason that that is the case. I maintain that the erection of silos could be done cheaper by the Railways Commissioners than by the system of tendering. As has been stated, they have the supervisors, and they have all the appliances in many cases. Contractors coming in would have to purchase new appliances. A large amount of carpentry work will have to be done in building up the cases inside of which the concrete silos will be constructed. I am absolutely certain that the Railways Commissioners could construct the silos at a cheaper rate than they could be constructed under the contract system. We should have this position: There would be no Wages Board or Classification Board finding as regards this particular scheme, and what guarantee could we have that the Railways Commissioners would not follow the practice they have too long been following, that of paying a little less in the Department than the recognised standard rate of wages paid outside? The Commissioners, with the wide experience they have had in the construction of railways and the management of men, would recognise the position at once. One of the first things they would do would be to call for tenders for a few of the silos and start to construct some under their own supervision. As the works would proceed under the same conditions, they would be able very quickly to ascertain which system was the cheaper. If it were proved that the day-labour system was the best, they would only be doing their duty in having all the other silos erected by that means. If the Railways Commissioners think fit to go in for the erection of these silos, what objection can there be to inserting in this Bill a declaration that they must pay the standard rate of wages? It is specified in the next sub-clause that the contractor must pay the standard rate of wages, and why should a different system prevail when the Commissioners are doing the work?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—We say that the Commissioners have a Wages Board of their own now.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—That may be so, but, as the honorable member for Flemington pointed out, we know the time it takes for a Wages Board in an ordinary trade to arrive at a decision; and with all the complications arising out of the railway system, it is only reasonable to suppose that still longer time will be occupied before a decision can be arrived at by the Classification Board.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—The Board can deal specifically with this matter.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—That gets us back to the position we were in when the Bill was first before us. It was provided that the average wage should be 9s. per day. It was not the idea that that should be the maximum wage. Now we are asked by the Minister to wipe out that provision from this Bill, so far as it affects the Railways Commissioners, although it is the only provision that will insure to the workmen a decent rate of pay. From statements appearing in the press, the Classification Board, in dealing with work of this kind, has fixed 9s. 6d. as the basic wage. I suppose the suggestion to put the average rate at 9s. per day in this Bill came from the Commissioners. If that is so, why should we be asked to fix a smaller rate than that which the Classification Board has decided shall be the minimum? Whichever way we look at it, the Minister of Railways is taking up a peculiar attitude. The Minister has made a declaration to which we ought to strongly object. He has announced that the Commissioners will not do this work by day labour.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—He said the Commissioners might do it by day labour.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—What I said was that the Bill will not prevent them from doing it under that system, and neither it does.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—The Minister says that the construction of sidings may be done by day labour, but not the erection of silos.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—The work of the railway men will be confined to sidings principally, in connexion with this scheme.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—We were led to believe they might build the silos also.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I never said so.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—It was the general impression that they would build the silos, whether the Minister said so or not. Neither he nor any other member in this House wants to take up the position that we should not adopt the cheapest and most effective plan of erecting these silos. Are we doing right if we insist that the most expensive method shall be adopted? We are going to spend a large sum of money on this work.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—The silos will have to be erected in accordance with the plans and specifications.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—That does not make any difference to the question whether they are to be erected by day labour or under the contract system. I am absolutely certain that with the machinery the Commissioners have for the mixing of concrete they are in a better position to carry out this work than anybody else.

Mr. KEAST.—They ought to be able to buy a good deal cheaper.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Of course they ought.

Mr. CARLISLE.—Will it not be a difficult matter for the Railways Commissioners to get the staff and machinery required.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—They have any number of men.

Mr. CARLISLE.—This will require a great number above the ordinary staff.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—If the Commissioners have not the men in their employ, they can easily secure them. They will be able to select the best men if they pay proper wages, because there is a preference for State over private employ. But that matter is not under discussion just now. The Minister proposes to remove from this Bill altogether any protection for the men who may be employed in this work. He said we do not want two different systems, but his proposal will result in that being brought about. The honorable gentleman has persuaded his colleagues to have this sub-clause removed in another place, and it has a peculiar look. This matter was the subject of a considerable amount of discussion when the Bill was under discussion in this

House, and it looks as if a trick was being played upon us.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I said at the time I would accept the proposal tentatively, but I could not do so definitely without consulting my colleagues.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I am prepared to give the honorable gentleman credit for everything he said, but he cannot deny that it has been a common practice in this Chamber to accept amendments with the knowledge that they will be knocked out somewhere else. We know that many amendments in the Factories and Shops Act have been accepted in this House at the request of members of the Labour party, but they have been rejected in another place. I hope that is not what has happened in this particular instance. I strongly object to the proposal the Minister has made to us. He did not give any reason, to my mind, for his proposal, but it seemed to me that he indulged in a little special pleading to get this sub-clause deleted to please the Commissioners, but the Commissioners ought to be our servants and not our dictators.

Mr. MCPHERSON.—I have no intention of voting for the deletion of this sub-clause. When the Bill was before the House I was waited upon by contractors, who pointed out to me that the Department would probably invite tenders for the erection of these silos and at the same time ask the officers of the Department to submit a quotation. It was pointed out by the contractors that if different rates of wages were prescribed, and that for the Railway Department was less than that for private firms, the tender of the officers would naturally be lower. The Minister has told us that an invidious distinction will be made if the Railways Commissioners have to pay the rates fixed by the Classification Board, which I have just heard is regarded as a Wages Board. I have objected to the creation of a Wages Board for railway servants. I have pointed out that it would be composed of public officers, who would really be adjudicating upon their own rates of pay. When the Classification Board was appointed, we were told it was merely to make recommendations. To-day the Minister tells us that the railway men have got a Wages Board. If so, it was probably got in by a back door. The honorable gentleman referred to invidious

distinctions, but there is an invidious distinction when men are doing the same class of work for the Railway Department and for the contractor, and getting different rates of pay. I have always said that the Government of Victoria can afford to pay the same wages as outside people. This Parliament makes laws with which outside people have to comply. Let the Government obey the laws themselves, and pay the same wages as outside people. For the reason I have given, I will not support the deletion of the sub-clause.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I am not only sorry, but surprised, at the back down of the Government. I thought that the sub-clause, which another place has struck out, was one of the things that the Government would fight for. That sub-clause provides for the payment of the standard rate of wage. When it was under discussion in this House, I asked that the term "standard rate" should be defined, but we got no definition. The Government considered that that term would be quite sufficient to protect the men who would be engaged in this work. Why do they desire now to leave the men without any protection? This sub-clause was struck out by another place on what appeared to be a catch vote. Two members of the Ministry were away, and there were ugly rumours as to why they had left the House. Some people thought that they had done so in the interests of the contractors, but they did not like to say so, and I would not suggest such a thing. However, the Government seemed to dislike the decision, and recommitted the clause.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—Not this clause.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Is not this the clause they recommitted?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—No.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Well, the same principle is involved. When the next division was taken, one of the members of the Ministry walked out of the Chamber, so that the vote would go against the Government. That is a peculiar method of supporting a Government Bill sent by this Chamber to the second Chamber. Members of the Government either opposed certain provisions, or absented themselves so that the

provisions would be lost. I want the sub-clause, which another place has struck out, to remain in for very many reasons. One of the reasons why I believe in the Wages Board system is that it places the whole of the employers on the same footing. In my own trade some employers were able to get sweated labour. They were able to get what we used to call black-leg labour, and get it very cheap. That resulted in the ruin of many manufacturers who were proud of their principles, and would not indulge in sweating. The sweating system ruined hundreds of them, and besides that it was very injurious to the workmen themselves, because they were continuously pitted against men who worked long hours for low pay. If a Wages Board is of any use at all, it ought to protect both the decent employer and the decently skilled workman engaged in any particular calling. As the honorable member for Hawthorn said, both the Government and the private contractors should be placed in exactly the same position. I think it was a slip of the tongue for the Minister to say that the Board now sitting in the Railway Department is a Wages Board. On the Railways Classification Board the Government have three representatives and the employees have two.

Mr. MCPHERSON.—They are all railway employees.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I know that, but they represent different interests. In connexion with this Board, and ordinary Wages Boards, if the decisions are not agreeable to the Government, they can turn them down. The Minister of Labour has the power to veto the determinations of Wages Boards. On the Railways Classification Board the Government have a majority, but even if the Government did not like the decision of the majority, they could turn down the recommendation, send it back to the Board, or neglect to gazette it. Therefore, the workers have no protection whatever. The Government have the best of it under any and every circumstance.

Mr. WARDE.—The Commissioners, as well as the Government, can turn down the decision of the Board.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The Commissioners act on behalf of the Government, but even if the Commissioners

adopted the decision of the Board, the Minister need not gazette it. The Government propose a sacrifice of principle that I do not think this House would be justified in agreeing to. During the last 20 years we have been fighting for protection for the workers in the way of minimum wage provisions, and standard rate of wage provisions. It has been the desire on our part to institute machinery for the suppression or abolition of sweating, and why at this time of the day we should turn round on all our promises and good wishes to those who do the world's work, I cannot understand at all. I think it is quite a wrong thing, and I intend to vote against the Minister's motion. I am surprised at the Government agreeing to an amendment such as that of another place, but since they have done so, I think it is the duty of honorable members of this House, who believe in fair conditions, who do not believe in sweating, and who believe it is better to have collective bargaining and harmony in preference to ruptures and strikes, to vote against the amendment of another place. I think it is our business to put in all the machinery we can to make the wages provision effective, rather than to leave it doubtful, which may cause trouble to ensue afterwards.

Mr. SALLY.—I am rather surprised at the Government backing down after having accepted the provision contained in the sub-clause, which, I think, was inserted at the instance of the honorable member for Warrenheip. The sub-clause provides that the recognised standard rate of wages shall be paid by the Railways Commissioners to workmen engaged in the construction of silos. We got into a difficulty in connexion with the Geelong sewerage works.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—There was a six months' strike.

Mr. SALLY.—There was six months' industrial struggle, which was absolutely unnecessary. Harmony would have prevailed if we had inserted in the Act under which the works were carried out a provision for the payment of the recognised standard rate of wages. Why should we run the risk of bringing about industrial strife, when by a simple piece of legislation all the risk can be overcome? I doubt very much whether the Railways Classification Board are capable of dealing with this question, because at the pre-

sent time they are simply dealing with matters which are well known to the Commissioners and the railway workers. There may be a number of things in connexion with the erection of silos of which the Classification Board have no knowledge at all, so far as the regulation of the wages and conditions of the workers is concerned. A large number of workers may be engaged who do not come under a Wages Board award, or an Arbitration Court award, and who may not be dealt with by the Classification Board. Under these circumstances, who is going to fix the rate of wages? The contractor may say to himself, "I must see if any decisions have been given as to the wages to be paid, in order to guide me in framing my tender for the construction of these silos." Honorable members will see the difficulty that the tenderers will be in, through having no knowledge of what the industrial workers will demand. If the conditions as to the wages to be paid are not laid down clearly in the Bill, it is more than probable that industrial strife will be started as soon as the foundations of the silos are laid. I do not think there is a member of this House, or a member of this Parliament, who wants to see anything like that brought about. It is highly probable that industrial strife will be brought about, and, to my mind, it is more than possible that it will be caused through there being no provision in the Bill as to wages and conditions of labour. If other classes of employers are forced to pay a regular standard wage as agreed to by a Wages Board, why should the Government oppose the adoption of this principle in connexion with Government work? I cannot understand it. It appears to me so reasonable to say that the first standard should be, at all events, the Government standard, and yet the Government refuse to agree to this. You may have again the same industrial upheaval as occurred at Geelong, where great bitterness was created when there was no need for it. One deplores that these industrial struggles and strikes should take place, but they are all brought about by Parliaments not recognising that, to-day, the workman is an intelligent human being, that he has a soul, and that he has respect for the home, and for the wife and children he has to support. He recognises his responsibilities more to-day

than ever he did before. He is a better educated man. He knows better than he did years ago the value he is creating. He knows that better now than in past times when there was no schoolmaster about, and no education for him. The workman then was simply the slave of the employing class. To-day he stands up asserting his independence, and his right, under any circumstances, to be able to take a sufficient amount home at the end of the week, so that his home may be his home in reality, in the sense that it will be happy and comfortable for himself and his wife and his little ones, whom he has to protect, and for whom he has to do everything in order to bring them up as good citizens. How is this to be done if you are going to leave it to the sweet will of the sweating class of contractors to say what wages should be paid to these men?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—The case of contracts is provided for.

Mr. SOLLY.—Well, why not force the railways to have a standard wage?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—The railways have a standard rate of wage now.

Mr. SOLLY.—Is it a fact that the Railways Commissioners have approached the honorable gentleman, and have asked him to let them be the sole arbiters in the matter, or do the Legislative Council insist upon this principle with regard to a standard rate of wage being wiped out of the Bill in order that they may have an opportunity of winning the war? The Legislative Council, from the very inception of industrial legislation, have held to the principle that no protection whatever should be given to the industrial classes. They declared lately—only this week—that they are solely for the purpose of protecting the interest of the propertied classes, and they say, in effect “To hell with the working classes! No legislation of this kind shall pass our Chamber.” There is a challenge to the representatives of the people, and the Government very coolly sit down and allow this to be done. A number of the honorable members of the other Chamber declare that they are superior human beings, that the Almighty has made them different from other men, that they have greater intelligence and more ability because they own a little more bricks and mortar, or a few acres of land. The Government, who claim to be the people’s representatives, stand by, and do not pro-

test. They do not insist that this legislation shall be passed in the interest of those who toil to live. I say it is unwarranted for the Government to turn this legislation down. It is most deplorable that we should have a weak-kneed Government in this State at a time when men of character and determination are essentially necessary. If this is what is termed the reflection of the British race, well, God help it in the future! We ought to endeavour to carry out the same policy that is being carried out by Lloyd George. When industrial strife has taken place, if he has seen any injustice being done to the employees, he has insisted on the whole thing being regulated and put right. But this Government are prepared to back down to the other Chamber, which is opposed to such legislation being passed. The members of the other House have protested against such legislation all their lives, and will continue to do so, I presume, until the end of time. The amendment made by the other House in this Bill will mean that we shall have industrial strife again in Victoria. We have it now in our midst. Hundreds and thousands of men are on strike here in Victoria, and tens of thousands of men are on strike in New South Wales. All this could have been obviated if a little common sense had been brought to bear by the Railways Commissioners in New South Wales. We may have the same big turmoil here unless we have a strong Government that will say to the other place, “You do not represent the people, and you have no right to say what the conditions of these men shall be. It is for those who have the responsibility of government to say that.” Therefore, it is a most regrettable thing that a Minister of Railways who is supposed to be elected on a popular franchise, and a Government who are supposed to mete out even-handed justice to the people, should back down on a most important industrial measure of this sort. I would ask the honorable gentleman what is going to be the result if the Classification Board do not come to a determination in regard to the wages of any of the employees who will be working on these silos. How are the wages then to be regulated? Will they be regulated by the Railways Commissioners saying that they will have the basic wage that the Board had so much argument over, and that 9s. 6d. a day will

be sufficient? But there will be a different class of men to deal with. A basic wage that was arrived at for the unskilled worker will not be recognised by some of the skilled labourers, who claim a higher wage than is received by unskilled labourers. Then, again, will a basic wage apply to the whole of those engaged as artisans in the various operations that have to be performed when these silos and other things are being constructed, and in making the silos suitable for the storage and the handling of the wheat? I cannot see how this matter is going to be settled, except by the Government admitting, in the first place, the broad principle that the standard wage should be recognised by the Railways Commissioners. I cannot see any other way out of the difficulty. Unless that is done, the Government will be creating industrial strife in the State, and on the heads of the Government will rest the responsibility for anything that takes place in the future. The Government have been warned time after time about this, and surely argument on the matter is now unnecessary. It is admitted, as a principle, that wages should be regulated by law, and that both employers and employees should be parties to what is done. It is a deplorable position that we have reached to-day, when the Government are prepared to back down to the Chamber which has always been in opposition to the regulation of wages in any shape or form. I trust the Government will reconsider the matter, and see what can be done to prevent that industrial strife that must of necessity follow, if there is no regulation on the lines I have indicated.

Mr. COTTER.—I trust the Government will reconsider the position. Since I have been in the House we have had to pass factory legislation each session to compel the unscrupulous employer to come into line with the fair and honest employer. Here we are passing a Bill that will leave it optional with the Railways Commissioners to do certain things. As the Bill has been amended, it is a direct intimation to the Commissioners to pay a certain wage. It is really courting disaster. If, in the course of a month or two, when we return to this Chamber, as I hope we shall, a strike occurs, every honorable member sitting behind the Government will denounce the men for going

on strike, yet we are proposing by this Bill to do something that will bring such trouble about. Is it to be expected that men are going to build silos for the Government and receive underpay? The Railways Commissioners pay a lower wage than many employers in the State. We compel other employers to pay certain wages, whilst the Railways Commissioners do not pay those wages at their workshops. How long are we going to perpetuate this kind of thing? Would it not be better to point out to the Commissioners that the men should be paid the recognised ruling wage? If that is done, there will be no dispute. If we throw the onus on another place or upon the workers, we shall be courting disaster. The House should not be asked to accept the Bill with the amendment made by another place. As soon as the Government get into trouble with another place they are prepared to run away. At the close of last session we had an instance of this kind in connexion with the super-income tax proposal. There has been a good deal of wailing in this Chamber since, and the Premier and other Ministers at the usual banquets have made glorious speeches about another place. What would have happened if another place had accepted the super-income tax proposal? Is this an electioneering dodge—that the Government were going to give the workers something but for another place? We were sent here to pass legislation in the interest of the bulk of the taxpayers, and this is how we are facing the position. This Government is the most spineless Government I have seen since I have been in the House where anything occurs that affects another place. They are willing to get in behind the Win-the-war party and catch votes. When it comes to giving even-handed justice to the worker, they care not what may happen. I do not intend to take up much time on this question. I rose simply to protest. It really makes one wonder. We had recently to decide between the Government and the members in the Government corner. The Corner party would not have treated the workers any worse than this. The Government are always going to do something for the workers, and now we know what they are going to do. If there is a large number of men out of work, as is likely to be the

case, the Railways Commissioners can dictate terms to the worker, and the worker will have to choose between those terms and starvation. A complacent Government will sit idly by. The sooner the country knows what is going on the better it will be. It is simply humbug to pass this kind of legislation. The working people should have a fair deal. If the Government intend to defend their position, now is the time. When we had the Watt-Murray Government, the same cry used to be raised. I remember members of that Government going to banquets and describing another place in language that the Speaker would not allow me to use here. They were out advertising the Government, and they were always going to fight another place, though they always neglected the opportunity when it came along. We are not asking for an increase in the wages, and we are not asking the Government to employ men in the Railway Department. We are only asking the Government to protect the men that the Railways Commissioners will have to employ. We want the men to receive the standard rate of wages. It will be good to be at Creswick to hear the Premier in one of his wild and whirling moments defending the party. I should like some of my constituents to be present to ask him something about this matter. He might go out to one of the metropolitan constituencies and propound his views. I do not know how the Minister of Railways feels in regard to Echuca, but I suppose it is a nice little centre, where he can propound his views with impunity. The Government have told the workers not to depend on the Labour party, but to depend on them. Here is an opportunity for the great Liberal party, and how are they facing it? The honorable member for Geelong was recently returned to this House, and will soon have to face his constituents again. Is he prepared to shoulder the responsibility for discontent such as we had over the Geelong sewerage system? Parliament would not do the right thing in that case. Parliament would not face the responsibility, and the same thing is being done to-day. When the disturbance occurs, as it inevitably will, not one member of the Liberal party will get up and say that he was responsible. That party will get their newspaper friends to be little the men. I am beginning to con-

sider whether I did right in voting the other day to save the Government from the Corner party.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—I think the Government have shown how hollow their pretensions were when they started this proposal in the first place. They pose as doing something for the workers, and then they thank God that they have an Upper House. It appears to me from the speech made by a member of the Government on this measure that they are agreeing to the contention of another place because there is a possibility of the rate of pay in the Railway Department being somewhat increased. It is acknowledged that the Railway Department does not pay the standard wage. If the matter went into a Court for consideration, the advantages that the railway employee has in the shape of railway travelling would be allowed for; therefore, the wage in the Department is less than the standard wage paid outside. It looks to me that, instead of this House ruling, the other House, which represents a much smaller number of people, is entirely blocking the situation. There are 818,000 voters represented in the Assembly. There are 311,000 property votes represented in another place. A great many of the electors are plural voters. At the most only about 150,000 people are entitled to elect members of the Council. Yet that place has interfered in connexion with what wages shall be paid. Year after year we are putting up with it, and not making the slightest effort to remedy matters. It almost makes one believe that there is something in the statement as to there being a two-faced attitude in connexion with it. When honorable members on the Ministerial side of the House are questioned by their constituents as to whether they have tried to introduce the minimum rate of wage they will say that it was agreed to here, but thrown out in another place. That will be their excuse. Yet they know that that has been done repeatedly, and those who inserted the provision here in the first instance are not prepared to put up a fight, but rather welcome the action of the Council in connexion with measures of this description. It is a wonder that the other House allowed certain portions of this clause to go through, because its actions have always been opposed to the interest of the workers. The patriotism of people representing property in another place will not

go to the extent of giving our soldiers the franchise for the Council, although they know that nine out of every ten men at the Front have not got a vote for that House. Their patriotism is so strong—I may use that expression in a certain sense—that they would prefer to see the soldiers' interests submerged rather than there should be representation there that might serve the interests of the workers in this community. Promises have been made by the Government that they will fight and try to prevent this sort of thing, but they allowed the rejection of the Super-Income Tax Bill last year to go silently by. That taxation would have resulted in 2,500 men, who have since been turned out of the Railway Department being kept in employment. Some of those men had as much as ten years' service to their credit. The other place, however, would not pass the measure, and now plumes itself on its action in throwing the Bill out, arguing that because the finances have been straightened up by those dismissals and économies it was evident that there was no necessity for the taxation proposed. The Government allow that sort of thing to be done deliberately. When honorable members on this (the Opposition) side of the House have to vote for keeping in power such a Government it shows that things have come to a pretty pass.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I did not have the advantage of hearing what the Minister said with regard to this amendment, but I gather that the Government are in agreement with another place as to the omission of the sub-clause.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I explained that the Railways Commissioners will employ men in constructing sidings to the silos, which is practically railway work, and as there is already a Board dealing with wages in the Department they do not want another authority to be controlling wages.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—In the past we have stated the rates of wages to be paid to men employed on various railway works.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—There is a minimum wage now in the Railway Department, and contractors will be bound by the next sub-clause in the Bill.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I think the House should be the guiding factor as to the rates of wages paid, and that the Govern-

ment should pay the same as people outside.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—You must bear in mind that railway men have certain privileges.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—The men employed on this work will not be permanent hands.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—They may be permanent. It will be really railway work.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I am sorry to see the attitude the Government adopt on this question, because I believe that our doings here, especially in regard to financial measures, are too much challenged by the other House. This is the popular House representing the Democracy outside, and it should be the determining factor in regard to what wages shall be paid.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—This House gave the Railways Commissioners a Classification Board last year, and it will control the wages paid.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—That, I take it, relates to men in the permanent employ of the Department.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—Some of the men employed on this work will be permanent hands.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I suppose that before sending up measures to another place the Government has given them certain deliberation and consideration. In this case we have a decision by this House reversed in another place, where members may not have the same knowledge of the conditions.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—When the Leader of the Opposition moved his amendment I only accepted it tentatively.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I do not know whether that is so.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—The honorable member will see it in *Hansard*.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I do not dispute it for a moment, but the honorable gentleman must have been impressed with the arguments brought forward on that occasion, and he must have thought that there was something to justify the inclusion of a standard rate of wage in the Bill.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I did not know what would be the effect of the amendment until I saw the Railways Commissioners.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I am not aware whether members in another place were

guided by the opinion of the Commissioners. What attitude did the representatives of the Government in the Council take?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—They moved for the omission of the sub-clause at my request.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I am sorry that its removal was instigated from this House. When a minimum rate of wage is enforced outside I do not know why we should not apply it ourselves. When a provision of this kind is agreed to here it is more satisfactory to stand by it. If the Government are going to be changeable, and after agreeing to something here, alter their attitude towards it when it reaches another House, and are not prepared to maintain the full strength of the financial powers of this Chamber, I will vote against them on this matter if a division is taken.

Mr. JEWELL.—I hope that the House will reject the amendment made by another place. I am sorry that the Government have brought it forward. I am surprised that the Minister of Railways, after accepting the amendment in this House, should ask that another place should reject it. Apparently, that has been the case. We have had similar instances before. There are times, apparently, when the Government say, regarding an amendment, "We will put it in the Bill, and see that it is rejected in another place."

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I told the House at the time that it might be necessary to do that.

Mr. JEWELL.—A majority of this House decided that the sub-clause moved by the Leader of the Opposition should go into the Bill. Another place has rejected that sub-clause. I am afraid that, if the House acquiesces in the elimination of the sub-clause, it will mean that sweating conditions for the men will obtain. It will mean, perhaps, in time to come, when the silos are being erected, that men will have to work for very low wages indeed. If they object, and say, "We will strike for a fair wage," members of the Government will point to their action and say, "Look at these unpatriotic men! They will not build stores for the soldiers' wheat." If such a thing happens, if there is a strike in the near future in connexion with the building of these silos, it will be because of the Government's re-

fusal to insert the sub-clause in the Bill. I hope that the House will insist on the clause in the form it appeared in the Bill when sent to another place. If the sub-clause is retained, we shall know that the men will be paid a reasonable wage. We are all aware that, at the present time, working men cannot afford to take very low wages because of the high price of all foodstuffs. A clause should be inserted in the Bill to at least insure the payment of reasonable wages to the men. The honorable member for North Melbourne has pointed out that the voice of the people is not heard in another place. That Chamber is representative only of a minority of the people. The members of another place are not elected on the same franchise as this House. If the franchise were made more liberal, the members of that Chamber would, in all likelihood, be more representative of the workers. I am surprised that the Minister of Railways accepted the amendment carried in another place, seeing that he must know that the sub-clause proposed to be deleted is a necessary one in the interests of the workers. I trust that every honorable member of the House will have a word to say on the matter, and that, as the result of a division, the sub-clause will be retained in the Bill. It may be that, before the debate is finished, the Government will agree to reconsider their attitude.

Mr. LEMMON.—I desire to enter my protest against the action of the Government in connexion with this matter. I am of opinion that if sub-clause (1) of clause 16 is struck out, the efficacy of sub-clause (2) will be seriously impaired. Sub-clause (1) calls upon the Commissioners to establish a standard, and once that standard is established by a public authority it would be a very difficult matter, if any portion of the work were carried out by a private contractor, for the private contractor to pay less than that standard. Therefore, the action of the Minister of Railways in asking this House to agree to the amendment made by another place aims a severe blow at sub-clause (2), which deals with the private contractor. The Minister of Railways stated that, assuming contractors build the silos, necessary railway works would have to be carried out by permanent men, who would enjoy certain privileges. He was referring to sidings leading up to the silos. The cry is raised every time we try to obtain a

fair living wage. "Look at the privileges these men enjoy," we are always told. My opinion is that those privileges are paid for over and over again by railway employees, by reason of the fact that they do not get that amount of remuneration for their services that, in the opinion of many members of this House, they are entitled to. A free trip to another State once a year is, after all, only a paltry privilege. It costs the Government, or the Railway Department, very little indeed. I would point out that the work referred to by the Minister in connexion with the scheme will be carried out largely by temporary men, and not by permanent men at all. Work in connexion with branching off a line, and carrying out alterations necessary to a railway platform in country districts, is generally performed by temporary men, who do not enjoy the particular privileges that the honorable gentleman referred to. Under the Bill, it is quite possible for the Railways Commissioners to carry out all the work.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—It is mighty improbable.

Mr. LEMMON.—It may be, but the honorable gentleman knows that it is possible for the contractors to make an arrangement to "fleece" the Government. That has been done before, and may be done again. There are indications in connexion with the work to be carried out under this Bill that the competition will be very restricted indeed. Consequently, it is quite possible that when the tenders come in the Railways Commissioners may be satisfied that an attempt at exploitation is being made, and they may say, "We will do the work ourselves." Assuming that that position is created, who is going to fix the wages for all the different classes of work in the building trade—work essential in connexion with the building of the silos and that is beyond the Classification Board? The Classification Board have had no experience, and are not competent to decide some points that may come up. The Classification Board are opposed to the very principle that has characterized our legislation—legislation that the Premier has, from time to time, submitted to this House, the essential feature of which is that practical men who know the industry shall be brought together to fix labour conditions to apply to their own trade.

Will the Minister of Railways say for a moment that the individuals who form the Classification Board are competent to do that? Mr. Gibney, the representative of the working section of that Board, understands a good deal about coachbuilding, and that sort of thing. But he would not presume for a moment to say that he could do justice to the bricklaying and carpentering trades. Therefore, I say that the fixing of a standard wage is essential. The Railways Commissioners will probably, when this work is taken in hand, have almost exclusively to engage temporary men. They will acknowledge the Wages Board as being the authority for determining the wages. That is what would be done today; but, from what the Minister has said, the Classification Board is going to supersede the Wages Boards, although the men engaged on the Classification Board may have no particular knowledge of the trade they will adjudicate upon. The Government are courting trouble. The organizations concerned will not tolerate their particular work being taken out of their hands in regard to the wages to be paid for the erection of these silos, and handed over to a tribunal which is absolutely unrepresentative of the trades concerned. It is deplorable that such a proposal should be made in these days, when there is such a strong belief in responsible government. I can almost feel the shadow of the impending election in connexion with this matter, and in imagination I can hear the honorable member for Stawell, for instance, saying he is not going to support the Government, because he is a firm believer in the principle that the Government should be a model employer.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—He always backs up his opinion by his vote.

Mr. LEMMON.—There are many others on the Ministerial side of the House who will say that the Government should be a model employer, and now we have an opportunity for them to show by their votes whether they are true to their convictions. Are we to once more have honorable members thanking God that we have a Legislative Council, and the Government passing the word to their colleagues in the other House to make certain alterations? The Minister said he

was going to alter this particular clause, but he has absolutely slaughtered it. I regret very much the attitude the Government have taken up in this matter. I know members of another place pride themselves that, in spite of these days of enlightenment and political progress, they have never yet agreed to the fixing of a minimum rate of wage. The honorable member for North Melbourne has consistently advocated that principle in this House, but members in the other place have just as consistently opposed it. I believe members of the other House have a censor, who is instructed to pick out amendments coming from the Labour party.

Mr. MACKAY.—Nothing good can come out of Nazareth.

Mr. LEMMON.—It is absolutely impossible for any good to come from the Labour party, so when this amendment came before the Legislative Council, it was marked out for slaughter. If the Commissioners undertake this work, it is absolutely necessary they should have to pay the standard rate of wages, and if we strike out a provision providing for that, we are practically asking the Commissioners to pay less than the standard rate. I intend to vote against the proposal.

Mr. SINCLAIR.—I intend to oppose the rejection of this clause—

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Will the honorable member permit me for a moment? Owing to the change in the time-tables, it is getting near time for honorable members to catch their trains, and if the honorable member will move the adjournment of the debate, I will agree to it.

Mr. SINCLAIR.—I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, September 4.

ADJOURNMENT.

CONDUCT OF POLICEMEN.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr. LEMMON.—I desire to bring under the notice of the Chief Secretary a statement which has been made to me about the conduct of policemen in arresting women. I have no direct evidence of what I am going to say, but I have been assured by a man, on whose word I can rely, that a lady who was arrested yesterday in connexion with the trouble which is now taking place in the city was very severely handled by a policeman. He assured me that a senior constable rushed through the crowd, and deliberately struck a woman, causing her to fall.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Was that Barber?

Mr. LEMMON.—The name given to me was Senior-Constable Scanlon. I am told that, following the attack on the lady, a number of men made a rush at the constable, and other constables came to their colleague's assistance. This is only one of a number of cases of rough treatment deliberately carried out by the police against certain women who, at the present time, are fighting for fair play in connexion with the price of foodstuffs. While we may not all agree with the methods that are being employed, there is no necessity for the rough handling of women, and I hope the Chief Secretary will investigate the complaint, and take such action as will prevent the police from being unduly rough in taking women into custody.

Mr. MENZIES.—It is only right, when a matter of this sort is before the House, that I should detail an incident that came under my own personal observation, and which proves exactly the opposite to what the honorable member for Williamstown has just said. I happened to go into the Treasury Gardens a day or two ago, where a crowd had congregated, and I stood on the outskirts to listen to what was taking place. A constable was standing very close to me, and within a very short distance of him was one of the ladies who are carrying on the agitation at the present time. A man, addressing his remarks to this lady, and alluding to the constable, said, "These b—s are that low that they would require a step-ladder to get up into hell." The lady replied, "Oh, I thought they would have to get a step-ladder to get down into hell." And the man answered, "That is

where you make the mistake." Similar remarks were passed between them, and, as one of the makers of the law, I wondered at the forbearance of the constable in not taking any notice of a conversation which was of a most scandalously personal character. I could tell, from the constable's face, that he was a man of some sensitiveness, and felt his position keenly. He, however, made no remonstrance to these people; and it is only right that I should, in reply to what the honorable member for Williamstown has said, relate what I recently heard. If I might be permitted to express any view with regard to those ladies who are carrying on this agitation in our public streets, I would say that I marvel at the forbearance of the Federal authorities in not having dealt with them in a more stringent manner than they have. I am convinced that they are doing infinite harm to the Labour party, and I regret their conduct exceedingly. They are on the outskirts of the Labour party. They naturally go to the official leaders of the Labour party, because they feel that they are nearest to them in their sympathies and their ideals; but I am convinced that the Labour party of Victoria is suffering a great deal by the association of these women, who, as I said before, are carrying on in such a way that I marvel at the forbearance of the Federal authorities, and wonder that they have left so much to be done by the State authorities in connexion with these gatherings.

Mr. MCLEOD (Chief Secretary).—If the honorable member for Williamstown will give me in writing a statement regarding the case he referred to, I will have it inquired into. I have had interviews with some gentlemen of standing in the city, who have expressed their admiration for the forbearance the police have manifested under trying conditions. It is due to the forbearance and tact of the police that we have not had very serious riots. We have an element in the city that is always ready to create trouble, and to take advantage of any trouble that arises. I am quite sure the honorable member for Williamstown will not say for a moment that marching in disorderly processions through the streets, and "boo-hooing" and carrying on, is the way to win any

constitutional measures. These people have ample means at their disposal to get any redress they want in a proper manner. I am sure the honorable member will not say that the scenes we have witnessed in the streets are a proper means of getting reforms effected. I have been surprised at the letters I have received, and the statements which have been made to me by individuals of standing, with regard to the forbearance of the police. An attack was made on the Federal Parliament the other day. Members of that House, and other people who watched the disturbance from the windows of the White Hart hotel, have expressed to me their surprise at, and admiration for, the forbearance of the police. I say to the honorable member for Williamstown, and to other honorable members, that if we wish to keep good order and discipline, and prevent trouble, it is our duty to assist the police as far as we can, and encourage them in the work they are doing. If the honorable member hands me a written statement with regard to the case he mentioned, I will have full inquiries made. But the police have had instructions to be as forbearing as they can, and not to provoke strife. I have been spoken to by gentlemen who are unknown to me, about the forbearance the police have exercised.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—The question of the conduct of the police generally is not under discussion. I think every one of us had reason, on occasions, to express admiration for the tact displayed by the police; and the police, as a whole, I have no hesitation in saying, are a body who carry on their duties very efficiently, and with all that forbearance so much admired by the honorable member for Lowan. I have seen somewhat similar incidents to that which he described myself; but, nevertheless, there are some policemen who, through over-zealousness, or sometimes through not knowing better, fail to exercise that tact that their comrades do exercise upon occasions such as have been referred to. I am inquiring into a case that has been brought under my notice. The circumstances are of a very similar character to those in the case mentioned by the honorable member for Williamstown, and a very definite charge is made; but I am getting the whole of the facts in writing, so that I may be able to place them be-

fore the Chief Secretary in the way that I think they should be placed before him. I want to ask the honorable gentleman not to lose sight of the fact, in his just admiration for our police force, that there are possibly times when some members of the force do make mistakes, and are rough.

Mr. MCLEOD.—I am not losing sight of that at all.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I have known men of repute who have complained of this, and they have had no other reason to complain than that they desired to see the right thing done. We have to recollect, and the members of the police force have to recollect, that these are not normal times, and people are not in a normal condition. Some allowance or excuse should be made for that reason, but I am afraid that in some cases it is not made. However, I do not want to pre-judge the case. What I rose for was to say that I did not think the honorable member for Williamstown was in any way attempting to cast a reflection on the police force.

Mr. LEMMON.—I did not intend that at all.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—I have just come into the chamber, and I do not know what particular case is under consideration; but I am of the opinion that has already been expressed—that a great number of members of the police force have performed their duties quite excellently. I recognise, also, that supervision is required in the community, but I say that there are some members of the force who, by their temperament, are quite unfitted for the work that may be placed in their hands, whilst the temperament of other members of the force eminently fits them for the work, and they are able to get obedience from the people with a great deal less fuss. I would point out that trouble is sometimes caused by the attempted military dragooning of the people—if I may use that term in connexion with the police force—to get them to do certain things. Some statements have been made in connexion with the arrest of Miss Pankhurst which certainly deserve consideration, and should be looked into. A report upon the matter should be called for. In the first place, if it is true, as alleged, that a certain constable used a certain word to Miss

Pankhurst when she was being arrested, I have no hesitation in saying that he should be dismissed from the force. The term is not altogether a bad term. The word "bastard" is alleged to have been applied to her. If the allegation be true, the policeman who used that term should not be allowed to remain in the force. The statement has been also made that at one of the meetings the senior officer of this same man corrected him, or reproved him, for his attitude towards the public, and requested him to moderate it. There ought to be such a wise administration of the police force that it would not be possible for that man, who may otherwise be an excellent official, to be brought in contact with the public. He might be given useful work to do in other directions.

Mr. MCLEOD.—He may be a young member of the police force.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—He is not a young member of the force. I say that the military attitude of dragooning leads to a rebellion against the methods adopted. It is objected to by a great many people in the city who do not want to be mixed up in that sort of thing, and who would sooner suffer being wounded, or something of that kind, than be brought into contact with the police. Whenever any dragooning is attempted in a country like Australia, it is resented by the public, and it would be resented by any member of this House with as much force as it might be resented by a citizen outside. Steps should be taken by the authorities immediately to select men who are suitable for doing the class of work that is necessary. You do not want to provoke trouble. What you want to do is to avoid trouble. You want to point out to the citizens in what directions they may act, and in what directions they may not act. I learn with a great deal of misgiving that people who walk down the street, not in any formation, are liable to be arrested for taking part in an unlawful procession. That has never been laid down as the law before. It is stretching the law. Men have to march in an organized formation of twos, threes, or fours before they can be considered to form a procession. A crowd strolling along is not an organized formation of any kind. If you attack these people because they have not the money to fight the cases right up to

the Supreme Court, you will find that a vast body of public opinion will get behind them. What should be done is to attempt to lead the public in the direction we want them to go, instead of attempting to dragoon them. I am sure it must be the intention of the Chief Secretary to see that the men do their duty with the least possible friction. I am satisfied that Mr. Sainsbury will not tolerate any attempt by the police to exceed their duty by placing themselves in an attitude of opposition to the public when they should be conciliatory. These people should be told how they are disobeying the law, and should not simply be dragooned by those who have a little brief authority. The police force, as a rule, cannot be blamed. I hope the Chief Secretary will see that the fullest inquiry is made, so that men with the proper disposition are detailed for this kind of work. Only men who know what their duty is, and how they should enforce it, should be told off for this kind of work.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at three minutes past four o'clock until Tuesday, September 4.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, September 4, 1917.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at ten minutes to five o'clock p.m., and read the prayer.

RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

APPOINTMENT OF THIRD COMMISSIONER.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT asked the Hon. W. L. Baillieu (Honorary Minister)—

If the Government (seeing that the New Zealand railways show, despite abnormal conditions during the past year, earnings totalling £4,800,000 and a net profit of £1,874,000) will consider the advisability of appointing as the third Commissioner of the Victorian Railways some one who has been prominent in the management of the New Zealand railways?

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister).—The following is the answer to the honorable member's question:—

The Commissioners have the honour to report that, although the Annual Report of the New Zealand railways for the last financial year is not yet to hand, it may be accepted that the figures quoted, which appeared in the Melbourne press on the 29th ultimo, are approximately correct, but it should be made clear that the sum of £1,874,000 was not the net profit earned, but the surplus after paying working expenses, and the interest charges must necessarily be deducted therefrom in order to obtain the actual net profit. It is apparent, however, that the operations of the New Zealand railways in the last financial year produced satisfactory results, as according to the press statement, the earnings, after paying for the working expenses, represented a return of 5.3 per cent. on the capital invested.

The Commissioners had previously analyzed the results shown in the last available report of the New Zealand railways, viz., that for the year ending March, 1916, when the earnings, after providing for the working expenses, showed a return of 4.72 per cent. on the capital invested. This was up to that time the best year on record, as the highest return previously obtained was 4.06 per cent. in 1911-12, and it was found that the main factor responsible for the excellent showing in 1915-16 was the high revenue per train mile, viz., 116.50d., as compared with 99.0d. in Victoria for the same year, the latter being the record figure per train mile for this State. Obviously the greater earning power per train mile in New Zealand could be attributable to only two main causes, viz., either that the traffic carried per train mile was greater, or the charges for the business handled were higher than in Victoria. The New Zealand statistics of train loads are not available, but seeing that the average tractive power of the 585 locomotives in existence in that State was only 13,551 lbs., as compared with 18,831 in Victoria, and having regard to the exceptionally good results gained as a result of the close attention to the matter which has been given in this State, and which caused the 1915-16 figures to be better than in any previous year, it is clear that the average business per train mile in this State would certainly be greater than in New Zealand. On the other hand, it was found that, while the country fares were on the whole about the same, the suburban fares and the goods rates were much higher in New Zealand. The fact, too, that so great a population is centred in Melbourne, and necessitates a large train service at low suburban fares, whilst in New Zealand the population is distributed, and none of the centres there are large enough to require an appreciable suburban train service, also operates to the disadvantage of this State in a comparison of revenue per train mile, and the comparison may be vitiated also because of the traffic differing in character. The conclusion is, therefore, undeniable that the favorable condition of the New Zealand railways is

due mainly to higher charges, and, in addition, the cost of the New Zealand railways, which are of narrow gauge, is also less than those of Victoria; the respective average costs per mile being £11,737 and £13,317, and the interest charges are consequently relatively lower than in Victoria. The following comparison of the results for the year 1915-16 is supplied:—

	New Zealand.	Victoria.	
Revenue per train mile	116·50d.	99·03d.	
Revenue per mile of line open	£1,540	£1,443	
		Excluding Special and Abnormal Charges.	Including Special and Abnormal Charges.
Working expenses per train mile	74·50d.	64·31d.	69·39d.
Working expenses per mile of line open	£985	£937	£1,011
Percentage of working expenses to revenue	64·00	64·94	70·07
Net revenue per train mile	42·00d.	34·72d.	29·64d.
Net revenue per mile of line open	£555	£506	£432

and it will be apparent therefrom that, although the working expenses per train mile were less in Victoria, this advantage was outweighed by the higher revenue per train mile in New Zealand, and therefore the net revenue per train mile in the latter was greater than in Victoria. When, in addition, the higher interest charges due to the greater average cost of the Victorian lines are taken into account, the reason for the superior net results in New Zealand becomes self-evident. The Commissioners are unable from the data available to make a more extended analysis, nor have they any definite information as to whether or not the adverse influences of the war and industrial demands have had such an effect on the cost of coal and other materials, and on the rates of pay in New Zealand as in this State. There is no doubt, though, that conditions in New Zealand have been exceptionally favorable in the last two years, as in this period the railway revenue has not only been the highest on record, which was partly due to increases of 8½ per cent. in passenger fares and 10 per cent. in goods rates which were made in September, 1915, but the net results after paying all charges have also been the best on record, and it would therefore seem that the railways there have not felt, to the same extent, the adverse conditions which have proved so serious in Victoria. The Commissioners, however, submit that sufficient has been shown to justify them in repeating what has been stated many times previously, viz., that it is absolutely futile to attempt comparisons between the results of any two railway systems, unless allowance be made for the difference in the conditions. They further desire to say that the suggestion that an officer who has been prominent in the management of the New

Zealand railways should be appointed third Commissioner on the Victorian railways merely because it is assumed, without any analysis in order to effect a comparison on even terms, that the efficiency of the New Zealand railways is superior, appears to them to be decidedly unfair and unjustifiable, especially in view of the eminently satisfactory findings of the Royal Commissioner, who has just completed his investigation into the operations of the Victorian railways.

(Sgd.) C. E. NORMAN, Chairman.

The PRESIDENT.—The answer read by the honorable gentleman goes further than the question, and, in so far as it does, it is contrary to parliamentary practice. Furthermore, the question asked has not been answered. The reply contains a comparison between the New Zealand and the Victorian railways, and justifies the Victorian Railways Commissioners, but all that is foreign to the question.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—As you have remarked, Mr. President, my question has not been replied to. I wanted the Government, not the Railways Commissioners, to reply to my question.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—I shall answer the question at a later date.

WONTHAGGI COAL MINERS.

INTERVIEW WITH RAILWAYS COMMISSIONERS.

The Hon. A. A. AUSTIN.—I desire, by leave, to ask the Honorary Minister (the Hon. W. L. Baillieu) the following questions without notice:—

Was the proposed interview between the Railways Commissioners and representatives of the Wonthaggi coal miners held this afternoon; if so, will Mr. Baillieu inform the House of the result of such interview?

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister).—I believe that such an interview took place this afternoon. I am unable to inform the House as to the result of it. I understand, however, that it has not been completed.

The Hon. A. A. AUSTIN.—Will the Premier make a statement in the other House?

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—I do not know whether he will do so or not. He may do so later.

SPECIAL WAGES BOARD.

CHEMISTS' ASSISTANTS.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister).—I move—

That it is expedient to appoint a Special Board to determine the lowest prices or rates which may be paid to any persons employed in a shop dispensing, compounding, or selling medicines, drugs, or medicinal preparations.

This is the first of two resolutions, information concerning which has been placed before honorable members on printed slips. If the House is satisfied with the information contained in the document in the printed form, I will not read the details. The notice has appeared on the notice-paper for three weeks. It has been the custom of the House, whenever prac-

ticable, to allow such notices to remain on the notice-paper for at least two weeks. The reasons given for the application are—

- (a) That after years of study and experience, the average wage is less than that of a labourer;
- (b) That the hours of work in most cases are very long;
- (c) That employees work seven days per week.

No communication protesting against the appointment of a Board has been received. The number of places from which records were received are 299. The usual number of hours worked per week are forty-four to fifty-eight. The following table shows the number of persons engaged in the industry and their wages:—

Age of Employee.	Males.		Females.		All Employees.	
	Number.	Average Wage.	Number.	Average Wage.	Number.	Average Wage.
21 years and over ..	218	s. d. 73 3	57	s. d. 37 9		s. d.
Under 21 years ..	77	15 10	65	8 10	417	47 9
Total ..	295	58 3	122	22 4		

Number of employees twenty-one years of age and over receiving—

Sex.	20s. and under.	21s. to 25s.	26s. to 30s.	31s. to 35s.	36s. to 40s.	41s. to 45s.	46s. to 50s.	51s. to 55s.	56s. to 60s.	61s. to 65s.	66s. to 70s.	71s. to 75s.	76s. to 80s.	81s. and over.	Total.
Males ..	2	3	11	2	5	1	11	6	23	8	34	11	39	62	218
Females ..	18	8	7	2	3	1	2	2	2	..	5	7	57

(Statistics have been specially prepared, and relate to the whole State.)

The average wage varies considerably in following comparison of two groups of different places, as will be seen from the places:—

Group Places.	Males.			Females.			All Employees.	
	Number.	Average Wage.	Number under 21 Years.	Number.	Average Wage.	Number under 21 Years.	Number.	Average Wage.
I. .. 48 ..	71	s. d. 74 0	9	16	s. d. 49 1	5	87	s. d. 69 5
II. .. 48 ..	65	52 8	12	22	20 2	10	87	44 6

These figures indicate that in the places included in Group II. each male employee receives on an average 21s. 4d. per week less, and each female receives 28s. 11d. less than labour is held to be worth by the

employers included in Group I. If a Special Board were appointed, a uniform minimum wage would have to be paid. The employees in some places would benefit, and the good employers would not be sub-

jected to unfair competition by other employers who at present pay much lower wages. I would merely add what I have said before on many occasions, that it is the established practice in our State to grant Wages Boards to practically all industries, and I do not think that we can withhold a Board in the present circumstances. Some honorable members may take the view that Wages Boards and other tribunals for dealing with labour conditions are not respected. Of course, we all know that a strike is now in progress, but it cannot be said that it affords any evidence that Wages Boards are not respected.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—It is a long time since any proposal for the creation of a Wages Board has been opposed in this House. I think, however, that the House would do well to oppose this particular application. So far as I understand the matter, it seems that a proposal was made in another place last year for a Wages Board for persons employed in dispensaries. During the discussion on that subject the Opposition managed to secure the inclusion of chemists' assistants. The proposal came up to this House towards the close of the session, and nothing was done in the matter. I understand that during the recess conferences on the subject were held between the two bodies affected, and that they could not come to any agreement. The Government wanted to have one Wages Board, and the two branches of the profession fell out over the question of representation. It appears to me, on the face of it, that it would have been very much wiser and more business-like for the Minister of Labour, if he considered a Wages Board practicable, to have told the parties interested, "I will not give either of you a Wages Board until you arrive at an agreement." Now it is proposed to appoint two Wages Boards. Every Wages Board costs the country a lot of money. As regards the chemists' point of view, I understand that both employers and employees are very much opposed to the creation of a Board. Some years ago an attempt was made to get a Wages Board for chemists' employees, and a large percentage of the employees petitioned against it. They were thoroughly satisfied with their conditions, and did not want any interference at all. The

present position, it appears, is that some of the employees, by threatening to take the case into the Arbitration Court, have managed to persuade two of the chemists' employers to join in the application for a Wages Board. Doubtless, they think it the least expensive way of getting out of the difficulty—in fact, they may be said to be following the line of least resistance. The whole of the rest of the profession, and a large proportion of the employees, are, I am given to believe, decidedly against the creation of the Board. They want to be left alone. As far as I can gather, the hours are very different in the case of the persons mentioned in the next motion.

The PRESIDENT.—The honorable member cannot discuss the next motion.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—At all events, it is claimed that the two branches of the profession are not identical. Some of the figures supplied on the printed slip which has been distributed are absolutely misleading. The wages are given for employees twenty-one years of age and over, and employees under twenty-one years. We are informed that sixty-five females under twenty-one years of age are getting an average wage of 8s. 10d. a week. Such a statement is utterly absurd. It includes, probably, persons engaged merely in sweeping out the shops, and that sort of thing. The President will not let me contrast these figures with the figures given in respect of the other motion to come before us. At all events, honorable members, when they come to deal with that matter, will see that the wages given for females under twenty-one years of age are very much higher. As regards apprentices, I am told that the chemists take a premium, which is repaid in small weekly instalments during the term of apprenticeship. It cannot be called wages; it is really a sort of pocket money. It is arranged that during the term of the apprenticeship the apprentice shall be repaid the whole of the premium. I think the Minister is wrong in attempting to get a Wages Board for chemists' assistants against the will of the whole profession excepting the two chemists I have referred to, and most of the employees, and in support of this to submit figures which, to my mind, are manifestly incorrect. So many people are employed as servants in

connexion with a large chemist's business that the only way to get at a fair estimate of the wages paid is to confine the figures to employees over twenty-one years of age.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—Even so, the amount would be small.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—If the Minister will cast his eye over the corresponding figures that have been supplied in support of the other motion, he will notice an extraordinary difference. I contend that this Wages Board should not be forced on the profession against the will of the employers and most of the employees. To my mind, it is idle to compare the two trades. One is an exceedingly busy trade, and the other is one in which, whilst the hours are long, very little is done. I think the Minister is quite wrong in some of his statements, and, in the circumstances, we ought not to provide for two Wages Boards. We ought to wait until they have settled the differences between them, and not saddle the country with the cost of two Boards. If we adopt the proposals now before us, we shall have two Wages Boards operating in regard to many persons doing exactly the same kind of work, and very likely different rates of pay will be provided. This House ought not to agree to the appointment of this particular Wages Board.

The Hon. J. McWHAE.—I hope this House will support Mr. Manifold, and refuse to give a Wages Board to chemists. In the past we have welcomed Wages Boards in season and out of season. They are regarded as the panacea for all labour troubles; but, in this particular case, the Board is not wanted by either side. I know there is a strong feeling amongst chemists in Melbourne against the appointment of this Board, and apparently the information given to us has been misleading. In a number of cases a premium of £100 is paid by persons who desire to become chemists, and while they are learning the profession they get something like 8s. a week as pocket money. In this way the money they pay as a premium is, to some extent, repaid to them. Why should we endeavour to create a Board which neither side wants? I hope honorable members will accept the advice of Mr. Manifold, and reject this motion.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—I move—
That the debate be adjourned.

We ought to adjourn this matter for two weeks, so that the Minister will be able to supplement the information which has been provided on the printed statement circulated amongst honorable members. While that statement contains the information that there is no opposition to the proposed Wages Board, we are told that only two employers have agreed to it. In the circumstances, the information is contradictory, and it does not seem as if the House has been fairly treated in the matter. I do not know if the statements made by honorable members who have just spoken are correct, but we ought to have definite information on the subject. It is in the interests of both parties that this matter should be cleared up, because, apparently, statements have been made which are not in accordance with fact. If it is a fact that employers do not want this Board, why have they not communicated their desires to the Minister?

The PRESIDENT.—The honorable member must not go into the details of the motion on the question of the adjournment of the debate.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—I want to support the view I take of the matter.

The PRESIDENT.—The honorable member can speak as much as he likes, but if he goes into the details, he will not be able to speak again.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I do not quite fathom the opposition to the motion, nor the necessity for an adjournment. This is by no means a new matter. It was before the House last year, and the printed statement which has been referred to has been in the hands of honorable members for a couple of weeks. If the adjournment for a fortnight is agreed to, it will mean that no relief can be granted for some time to those who desire a Wages Board. We are now getting to the close of the session, and we have been told, on fairly good authority, that the 27th of this month will see the last of this Parliament, so far as another House is concerned. If we adjourn this matter, we shall have more important subjects before us during the closing days of the session, and there will be no opportunity of bringing it forward again. This House will not be justified in adjourning con-

sideration of this motion. We have sufficient information before us to enable us to come to a decision one way or the other. We have been told that neither the employers nor the employees desire this Board.

The PRESIDENT.—The honorable member cannot go into that aspect of the matter if he wishes to speak again.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I have some information at my disposal, which I think it is right I should place before the House now, even if it does prevent me from speaking subsequently. I very much doubt the accuracy of the statements that this Board is not required by either side, and I should be glad if the honorable members who have given the House that information will intimate the source of their information. I have been told, on good authority, that the majority of chemists are entirely in favour of this motion, and that this matter was considered by the Pharmaceutical Society, which referred the proposal to a sub-committee for report. This sub-committee consisted of Mr. Lee, of Prahran, and Mr. Pickford, of Armadale. They reported that it was desirable that a Wages Board should be established. I am also informed that the council of the society considered it, and, by an almost unanimous vote, gave their approval to the constitution of a Wages Board. The opposition to this particular motion seems to be exactly the same as that which was before us on a previous occasion. I do not need any great powers of imagination to recall the individuals who have been "lobbying" against the adoption of this motion. In view of the fact that the Pharmaceutical Council, which represents the chemists, not only in the metropolis, but throughout the State, has considered this proposal on its merits, it is extraordinary it should be opposed in this chamber. I am not speaking on behalf of the chemists' assistants generally, but I know there is no body of employees of any description that will object to the constitution of a Wages Board, more particularly when we find that in this industry there are as many as sixty-five females receiving an average wage of 8s. 10d. per week. Surely it is patent to every honorable member that a Wages Board is required for this particular class of worker.

If we do not grant the Wages Board, and in that way deny justice to these employees, another course will have to be adopted. That will mean the matter will have to be taken to a higher Court and entail upon chemists as a body, as well as individually, a considerable amount of trouble and expense. The constitution of a Wages Board is an easy way out of the difficulty. This House has readily supported Wages Boards for unskilled labour, and I cannot understand why there is any objection to a Board for skilled labour. Why do honorable members imagine that men who have had a University education should be allowed to receive less than a labourer's rate of pay? That is a ridiculous position to take up. I hope, in view of the consideration which has been given to this matter by the Pharmaceutical Society, that it will not be postponed.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister).—It is always the desire of the Government to place before honorable members exact information with regard to Wages Boards, and there certainly appears to be a conflict in this particular matter. I think the course suggested by Mr. Brown is the proper one, so that we may ascertain what are the facts; but if he will agree to an adjournment for a week, instead of a fortnight, ample time would be provided to get the information required.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—A week's adjournment is less objectionable than a fortnight's.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—In asking for the matter to be postponed for a week, instead of a fortnight, I have not in mind the idea mentioned by Mr. Beckett about the dissolution of Parliament. I see no reason why the information should not be obtained within a week, and I have no objection to the adjournment for that period.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—With the consent of my seconder, I will agree to an adjournment for a week, instead of a fortnight.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I am prepared to support the adjournment of the debate, unless Mr. Baillieu is able to give the information which is desired. I hoped when he rose that he was going to give us further details. This motion was before the House last year—

The PRESIDENT.—The honorable member cannot go into details.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I am sorry for that, because I want to point out to the Minister that he should give us the information we require before we can vote on this motion.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—I have given the House all the information I had; but I will look for more after what Mr. Manifold has said.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—This is a Government proposal, and the representatives of the Government in this House ought to be prepared to give us all the information we require. In the circumstances, I shall vote for the adjournment of the debate; but the time we have spent so far considering this motion has been time wasted, because the Government have not given us all the information available.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—My colleague has given you all the information he had, but it has been challenged.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I do not see any reason for the Government not having all the information which was obtainable before the motion was submitted to this House. I wish to say most emphatically that I consider it is the duty of the Government to provide honorable members with definite information; and I hope that, on subsequent occasions, they will be prepared to tell us everything that it is desirable we should know.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—We cannot tell what an honorable member is going to say until he has made his speech.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until September 11.

LUNACY ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

The House went into Committee for the further consideration of this Bill.

Discussion was resumed on the following new clause, proposed by the Hon. A. Robinson (Honorary Minister):—

B. Division 8 of Part III. of the principal Act, as amended by any Act, is hereby repealed.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—When the Bill was last under consideration this clause was postponed in order that I might look into the position. We were not told why section 88, the principal provision in Division 8, was originally embodied in the Act. I have found that in

1886 a strong Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the administration of the lunacy department in consequence of some serious complaints that had been made. The Commission, which consisted of members of both Houses, sat for a long time, and examined a great many witnesses. Their report shows that they formed the opinion that the facilities for getting into asylums were very simple, but that the means for getting out of them were very difficult. I think that they went the length of expressing the belief that, if the relations or friends of a very large number of patients had the means to apply to the Supreme Court for their release, the Judges would have no reason for not granting it. As a result of the Commission's report, many changes were made in the law. Amongst other things, section 88, which it is now sought to delete, was adopted. It was stated here the other day that section 76 of the Act provides sufficient safeguard. It was mentioned that under section 76 official visitors had to inspect asylums twice a year. Now, although it may happen that some official visitors may be medical men, the real qualification for an official visitor is that he shall be a justice of the peace. Section 74 provides for the appointment of "not less than two justices to be official visitors." The House cannot rely on section 76 as a safeguard against the undue detention of men and women in an asylum. According to my reading, if section 88 be repealed, there is no provision left in the Act to safeguard the mental patient, and therefore there is no justification for repealing it. As a matter of fact, we are a long way behind the times in our lunacy laws and administration. A comprehensive measure was passed in England in 1890. That provides for very much greater safeguards in favour of the alleged lunatic. Under the lunacy law in England, an order for reception, which is really an order for detention, can only last for a year, at the end of which time a thorough examination of the patient has to be made, as a result of which a new reception order may be issued. The second order may last for two years, after which another may be issued for three years. Subsequently a reception order is not issued for five years. That arrangement has been made because, according to medical evidence, recovery from a mental disease is more likely in

the first year than in the second year, and in the fourth or fifth year there is little chance of recovery at all. Therefore, it is during the early stages of detention that the patients should be thoroughly examined. Although I should almost like to do so, I cannot ask the House, in connexion with this measure, to bring our law into line with the English law, which, I think, is a sound law; but I do think that it would be unwise to repeal the precautionary section inserted by Parliament after considering the exhaustive report of the Commission to which I have alluded. It has been suggested that such a course would mean a saving. The officer who has to make the annual examination is one of the medical gentlemen who would be in attendance whether he made the examination or not, and it was not suggested that professional expenses would be saved. The idea was that there would be a saving in clerical expenses, but even if that were so it should not be considered when the question at issue is the detention or non-detention of a patient in a lunatic asylum. When the Act of 1888 was passed, the late Sir Henry Cuthbert was the unofficial Leader of the House, and he desired to provide for an annual inspection for all time. The House agreed with him. It was near the end of the session, however, and, as the Assembly did not agree with the Council's amendment to that effect, this House gave way. I hope that honorable members will not agree to the new clause, because the provision to be repealed was inserted as a result of the inquiries of the Commission in 1886. In the report of that Commission some astonishing statements were made as to the liability of people to detention in asylums. Easy to get in, difficult to get out—that was the conclusion they arrived at, and they went the length of saying that, if the relatives or friends had sufficient means to appeal to the Court, a large number of patients would be let out.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister).—In his statement the honorable member failed to emphasize an important portion of section 76. He stated that it provides for inspection by an official visitor who is a justice of the peace. That is true, but it also provides for a mandatory inspection by the Inspector-General of Insane, who is the biggest lunacy expert we have in the State. Once in every three months the Inspector-Gene-

ral has to see every patient in the hospitals, and he himself has to enter in a book particulars of what he has seen of the patient, his mental condition, and all the rest of it. There is, therefore, inspection once every three months. All that section 88 does is to provide for an inspection once in three years by some medical officer, and subsequently once in five years. That means two inspections in eight years by some one not as qualified as the Inspector-General, who makes an examination every three months. Surely, on the face of it, that is an anomaly. I have no doubt that the history of section 88 is what Mr. Brown has stated, but he appears to have overlooked the fact that in 1903 the whole lunacy law was overhauled. We then made an exhaustive investigation, and on the best medical advice from the Old Country we secured the services of a thoroughly trustworthy and competent authority on lunacy. That gentleman was appointed Inspector-General, and the Act of 1903 was drafted with his advice. That Act largely amended the old lunacy laws. When the Acts were consolidated, in 1915, the overlapping, which we are now proposing to get rid of, was not noticed. It should have been noticed. We are taking this opportunity of getting rid of an overlapping provision which causes some unnecessary clerical work, and affords no protection whatever to the lunatic patient. That being so, why should we retain section 88? If it afforded the slightest protection for the lunacy patient, I would support the honorable member in his attitude; but if he looks at the Act of 1903, and compares it with the old lunacy laws, he will see that the whole structure was altered. The object Parliament aimed at was to get a thoroughly competent man, and to put upon him certain responsibility. He was put in a position of trust. He can be removed by the Government, but unless Parliament backs up the Government, he must be reinstated, and in that way his position is absolutely safeguarded. He was given the sole control of the staff, so that political influences should not come in, as they had sometimes come in connexion with hospitals for the insane before. In every way our legislation, in regard to lunacy, is for the care of the patient, and it is some satisfaction that the care of lunatic patients in the State of Victoria is certainly better than the care

of lunatic patients in any other State, and the work is done at a lower rate per patient than, I think I am right in saying, in any other place in the King's Dominions. It is done better and more cheaply, simply because we adopted the policy of getting a thoroughly capable man, and put power and responsibility into his hands. There is no real objection to this clause. The protection section 88 affords to the patient is absolutely illusory. Section 76 affords the real, genuine protection to him.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—The Honorary Minister (Mr. Robinson) has really put upon the Inspector-General of Insane the responsibility for the detention, or discharge, of patients. I do not think that is his duty at all. I desire to speak in the most respectful manner of Dr. Jones, because he is an officer with whom I came in contact during my Ministerial career, and of whom I formed a very high opinion indeed. But I would point out to the Committee that it is quite absurd to ask Dr. Jones to examine all the patients in the hospitals of the insane in Victoria once every three months. I understand that there are somewhere in the neighborhood of 4,000 patients in our asylums. There are ninety days in a quarter—sometimes ninety-one—of which there are thirteen Saturdays and thirteen Sundays. I do not suggest for a moment, nor does Mr. Robinson, that Dr. Jones would work on Saturdays or Sundays. I am endeavouring to show the physical impossibility of Dr. Jones, or any other officer, examining all these people. If he worked eight hours per day, and examined fifty patients every day, I think he would be mad himself before three months were passed. It is said, rightly or wrongly, that a period of four or five years is quite long enough to keep any medical men in the active work of an asylum—that after that they get "dotty" themselves. I do not know whether that is correct or not. But I say that to ask the Inspector-General of Insane, who was brought out here at a large salary, and selected as being one of the most capable lunacy experts in England, to sit down morning, noon, and night, every day of his life, and examine mental patients, is too sad and serious.

The new clause was agreed to.

The Bill was reported to the House with amendments.

On the motion of the Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister), the Bill was recommitted for the further consideration of clause C.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister).—Honorable members will recollect that, at the instance of the unofficial Leader of the House, the following new clause was added to the Bill:—

C. The committee of a lunatic shall have and shall be deemed always to have had power to invest any money belonging to the lunatic in any form of investment in which a trustee is authorized by Statute to invest trust funds in his hands.

There was no objection whatever to that. It came as a shock to a good many people in the legal profession to find that there was no statutory power under which any committee of a lunatic was authorized to invest the money of the lunatic. The Master-in-Lunacy, who is quite a different officer from the Inspector-General of the Insane, is desirous that the same power be given to the Master-in-Lunacy, because, strange as it may seem, there is no special provision giving the Master-in-Lunacy this power. As a matter of fact, he exercises his powers of investment in exactly the same way as a trustee. I have an amendment to propose to extend to the Master-in-Lunacy the powers which the clause gives to the committee of a lunatic. At the beginning of the clause the words "The committee of a lunatic" are used. The correct legal phrase is "The committee of the estate of a lunatic." Therefore I move—

That after the words "The committee of" the words "the estate of" be inserted.

The amendment was agreed to.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister).—I move—

That the following new sub-clause be added to the clause:—

(2) For the purposes of section 179 of the principal Act, this section shall be read and construed as if it were enacted in Division 3, Part V. of the principal Act.

The amendment was agreed to, and the clause, as amended, was adopted.

The Bill was reported to the House with further amendments, and the amendments were considered, and adopted.

On the motion of the Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister), the Bill was then read a third time, and passed.

ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The House went into Committee for the further consideration of this Bill.

Clause 2—

In this Act unless inconsistent with the context or subject-matter—

“Consumer” means any person or body of persons, corporate or unincorporate, having an agreement with an undertaker for the supply of electricity;

“Electrical contractor” means any person or body of persons, corporate or unincorporate, carrying on the business of supplying fittings;

“Fittings” includes fittings, lines, wires, cables, apparatus, machinery, devices, or appliances for or used in connexion with lighting, heating, and motive power, and for all other purposes for which electricity can or may be used.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—The two principal amendments that I intend to propose in this clause deal with the definition of the word “fittings” and the definition of “consuming devices.” The new definition of “fittings” will be as follows:—

“Fittings” includes fittings, lines, wires, cables, and appliances for or used in connexion with the installation of electricity on consumers’ premises, but does not include consuming devices.

The object is to make clear that the word “fittings” shall relate only to materials used in installations of electricity on the consumers’ premises, and which are ordinarily regarded as fixtures. The other amendments to be proposed are consequential on these two. The effect of them will be that the Melbourne City Council will be limited to dealing in what are known as consuming devices. That is to say, if any consumer wants electric current, either he or the council must employ an electrical contractor for the purpose. There was a conference between the authorities of the City Council and electrical contractors. They saw me afterwards, and the contractors agreed to the Bill. Subsequently they came to me, and asked for certain amendments to be made. Some of those amendments have been embodied, but there were a few that I did not approve of. They wanted certain words inserted in clause 3. The intention of the Bill is to restrict the council to dealing in consuming devices, as defined. My amendment makes clear what these devices are.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I have a general objection to this Bill. It was brought in, apparently, in consequence of arrangements that have been made between the City Council and certain individuals engaged in electrical work. As far as I can understand the Bill, amended as desired by the Minister, it will result in this—that the City Council can set up a store where all kinds of electrical appliances can be seen, and will be able to sell them to consumers, but will have to call in a contractor, through whom the sale will have to be effected.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—Oh, no.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—One great objection I have is that the Bill is brought in for the benefit of the city of Melbourne, but is to apply to the whole State. In the small country towns there are no bodies that could take up this kind of work. If they go in for electric lighting they will have to call in a contractor to do the wiring. That is not right. If the Melbourne people want this measure, let it be confined to them. I do not see why any country municipality should be hampered in the way proposed. The City Council, under this Bill, will have a store, and will be able to let or hire any articles that they keep. I cannot see why any objection should be raised to the municipalities doing as gas companies can do—that is to say, I cannot see why they should not be allowed to put fittings in houses.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—The object of the Melbourne City Council in desiring this legislation is to encourage the consumption of electricity. When the electrical contractors found that the City Council were going in for this measure they discussed the matter with me, and they agreed to the Bill. They wanted to confine the City Council in one way, namely, that they should not be allowed to purchase any fittings except in the State of Victoria. It is provided in the Bill that the City Council shall provide a reasonable amount for depreciation, and the contractors wanted to have the amount fixed at a minimum of 10 per cent. We did not approve of that. There is, however, very little difference between the contractors and the council. I told these gentlemen that we could not allow them or the City Council to draft the Bill, and that we had to protect the public. I have

been carefully through all the contractors' proposals with the experts of the Department and the permanent head, and I do not think there is any great danger to the public in giving the powers to the City Council that we propose to give. They manage their own electric undertaking very satisfactorily, and have shown handsome profits. I have no objection to limiting the Bill to the city of Melbourne.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—In the Old Country the municipalities have for many years been carrying on business in connexion with fittings and consuming devices. They have, in some cases, gone in for fitting up houses and warehouses, and have made a considerable loss. The London Borough Councils, in 1911, suffered a loss of £97,000. In Woolwich a company started in 1893, and carried on the work satisfactorily. It was subsequently taken over by the council, and the rate-payers have since had to make up a loss amounting to £87,000. The proposal that councils should be allowed to do this work is socialistic, but, on the face of it, there does not appear to be much harm in that. Some gentlemen connected with the electrical business came to see me. I held the view that it was desirable to allow the City Council to have these powers, and, in fact, greater powers. Certain facts have been put before me. It is certainly a fact that the municipalities in Great Britain have not, generally speaking, carried on the business profitably. Where they were simply supplying electricity they made a good profit, just as the City Council have done here. I think they made about £50,000 last year.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—£102,000 gross.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I know they are carrying on the business profitably, but by going into the other business, that they do not understand so well, they may make a loss. That is the experience in the Old Country. I suppose the Minister desires that they shall not get into that unfortunate position, and, therefore, they are to be allowed to deal in fittings and consuming devices, but are to be allowed to fit up and maintain consuming devices only so long as they have an interest in them. The question has been dealt with in Great Britain by Parliament, and it was decided there that it was desirable to make a limitation. In

1912 the Chairmen of Committees of the Lords and Commons in Great Britain drew up a model clause that makes limitations similar to those now suggested. They considered all the circumstances before arriving at their decision. That model clause provides—

(1) The Corporation may, subject to the provisions of this section, sell, let for hire, and fix, repair, and remove, but shall not manufacture lamps, meters, electric lines, fuses, switches, lamp-holders, motors, and other electrical fittings for lighting, motive, or other purposes, and may provide all materials and work necessary or proper in that behalf, and with respect thereto may make such charges, and subject to such terms and conditions as may be agreed upon.

(2) The Corporation shall not themselves execute the wiring of private property, except between the main of the Corporation and the consumer's meter, but they may enter into contracts for the execution of any of the powers of this section, including the wiring of private property, provided that the contractor acts independently of the Corporation in the execution of the contract. The Corporation shall not sell any such electrical fittings except through a contractor carrying on his business independently of the Corporation.

Therefore, I gather that the limitations of this Bill are pretty much on the lines of the suggestions made by the Chairmen of Committees of Lords and Commons in that model clause. Of course, objections may be raised to that. Honorable members may say that that may apply to the Old Country, but in this community—in country towns—the circumstances are very different. I think something may be said from that point of view. At the same time, we must not forget that there are a number of people interested in this particular trade, and we have to hold the balance of justice fairly. These people say that their businesses may be seriously affected. If a man has gone into a business and put capital into it his means of living should not be taken from him by any municipal body unfairly. I suppose the Ministry wish to guard in this particular Bill against that suspicion of unfairness. I am perfectly open to argument in regard to provisions of this sort. But it would be safe, I think, to take advantage of the experience of the Old Country, and accept the proposals of the Ministry. After we have had experience for a year or two we shall see how the measure works. If it is shown that the City Council, with the powers we have given them, have been able to make a profit on

the undertaking further powers could then be granted. I think that there is a great deal of wisdom in the Minister's suggestion.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—The amendment suggested by Mr. Manifold is an important one, as far as country municipalities are concerned. Whilst the Bill is a good one for the metropolitan area, a different position is created as regards many of the country districts. Many of the small municipalities in country districts that have electric lighting will be blocked if they are not allowed to provide the fittings. Why should not a country municipality be allowed to keep a stock and put up the fittings? If they are prevented from doing that electric lighting in country districts will be blocked.

The Hon. J. STERNBERG.—I hope that the Committee will recognise that we do not want to interfere with vested interests in the country. As Mr. Richardson has pointed out, electric lighting plants are in existence in many inland centres. If they have to bring a man from a great distance in connexion with an installation it will increase the expense.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I have listened attentively to the debate, and I am not quite clear as to the attitude of honorable members in regard to the effect this Bill will have. I take it that the purpose of the Bill is to confer a privilege on the present municipal councils by extending their present powers in order to allow them to supply consumers with certain fittings. Is it contended that country municipalities should not be given this power? If that is so, I am opposed to any such contention. Whatever privileges in the way of supplying fittings are given to the metropolis of Melbourne should be extended to country municipalities. I understand that the privilege is to be given to the Melbourne City Council and all other undertakers.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT. — Where does it say so?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—As I understand it, the Bill is not intended to take away privileges from present undertakers, but rather to confer further privileges upon them. Those privileges should be extended to every country municipality that has its own electric lighting system.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—The Bill has been brought in for the purpose of empowering the City Council to embark on the business of suppliers of consuming devices to encourage the consumption of electricity. They have no power to do that under the principal Act to-day. The City Council are not permitted under the present Act to supply consuming devices.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—Are country municipalities not included in this Bill?

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—Mr. Manifold wants to limit the scope of the Bill to the city of Melbourne.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT. — That is not the amendment before the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN.—Clause 2 is before the Chair.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—The legislation was brought forward really at the request of the Melbourne City Council. If we do not give it a general application the representatives of country municipalities will say that we are conferring privileges upon the central authorities that are not extended to the others. That is why we are making the Bill apply generally to the State. If the Committee wishes to amend the Bill in the direction of confining its scope to the city of Melbourne I shall raise no objection, though personally I would sooner see the Bill pass in its present form. I do not think it will do much harm. Places like Ballarat, Bendigo, and Geelong will probably avail themselves of the powers given under the Bill. But it is not likely that small townships would bother about doing so.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—A point will arise in connexion with clause 3 that I think should be explained now. The clause provides, *inter alia*—

Any council, being an undertaker under the principal Act or any corresponding previous enactment, may—

- (a) sell or let on hire fittings;
- (b) fix, maintain, repair, or remove any fittings sold or let on hire as aforesaid.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—The clause, as I propose to amend it, will read—

- (a) Sell or let on hire fittings or consuming devices;
- (b) fix, maintain, repair, or remove any consuming devices sold or let on hire as aforesaid; *et cetera*.

The Hon. E. J. CROOKE.—If I understand the Bill correctly, its purpose is not to take away any of the rights and privileges of a municipality, but to extend them. Clause 5 makes it clear that the right a municipality now has of connecting the mains with the heaters in consumers' houses is to be retained. Personally, I do not see any objection to the Bill.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—According to the Minister's definition, the term "consuming devices" includes practically everything.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—The position is this: The wiring of a building, up to the point when the apparatus has to be fixed, must be done by the electrical contractor. The term "consuming device" simply indicates in a general way what the apparatus is that the council may fix. They can fix any kind of apparatus for light, heat, or power. Suppose, for the sake of argument, you are going to put up an electrical motor, the wiring up to that point has to be done by an electrical contractor.

The Hon. A. BELL.—Why should it be?

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—That is one of the points that have been argued. As a matter of fact, I do not think the City Council contemplate putting on a staff. They would work this business, I take it, very much in the same way as the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works do.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—They have the power under the Bill to put on a staff if they wish to do so.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—Not to do this work of wiring.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—That would block the country districts.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—I move—

That the words "to which this Act applies" be inserted after the word "undertaker," in the definition of "consumer."

The amendment was agreed to.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That the following definition be inserted after the definition of "consumer":—

"Consuming devices" includes apparatus or appliances in which electricity can be consumed for the primary purpose of obtaining light, heat, and mechanical and other forms of power.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I should like to know exactly what this definition covers.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—This proposal has the approval of the Melbourne City Council and the electrical contractors. The Melbourne City Council is limited to dealing in these devices, which include all kind of devices used for lighting, for electric tramways, or electric motors, and for cooking purposes. It includes, in fact, all devices for lighting, for heating, and for power.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—And the City Council can sell or hire any of these things, fix them up, repair them, and take them away. I think the Bill is drawn in such a complicated manner that it would be very much better to withdraw it. These matters are referred to in paragraph (b) of clause 3, and in sub-clause (5) of clause 5.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—One relates to consuming devices, and the other to fittings.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—As I propose to amend the clause, paragraph (b) of clause 3 will read—

Fix, maintain, repair, or remove any consuming devices sold or let on hire as aforesaid.

Certainly any device for the consumption of electricity of any sort, from a 40 horse-power engine to a gridiron, will be included.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—They are given the power to fix all those things?

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—Yes, after the wire has been put in by the electrical contractor.

The amendment was agreed to.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That all the words after "fittings includes," line 11, be omitted, with a view to inserting the following:—"Fittings, lines, wires, cables, and appliances for or used in connexion with the installation of electricity on consumers' premises, but does not include consuming devices."

The Hon. A. BELL.—Would the Minister of Public Works explain what he means by this amendment? I fail to comprehend it.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—We want to make it quite clear that the council is not to be authorized to deal with fittings. The fitting is to be done by the electrical contractor. We wanted to de-

fine the difference between the term "fittings" and the term "consuming devices." This is the definition I am proposing of fittings—

"Fittings" includes fittings, lines, wires, cables, and appliances for or used in connexion with the installation of electricity on consumers' premises, but does not include consuming devices.

Afterwards, in the Bill, when the words "fittings" and "consuming devices" are referred to, it will be a simple matter to see what they mean. As I have already explained, there will be a certain limitation as to what the councils can do.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—Would not this limit the contractor in supplying consuming devices?

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—No.

The Hon. A. BELL.—There are many country towns in which contractors would not be prepared to stock these devices.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—There is nothing to compel them to do so.

The Hon. A. BELL.—I am aware of that. But why should the councils not have the right to supply fittings and consuming devices?

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—They have got the right to supply them.

The Hon. A. BELL.—We are taking that right away. It was suggested earlier in the evening that the power should be confined to the City Council of Melbourne.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—May I suggest that if Mr. Bell desires to amend the Bill in that particular this is not the time to do it. Whether the councils are given power to deal with fittings or not it is surely necessary to define in the Bill what we mean by "fittings."

The Hon. A. BELL.—It seems to be a very complicated Bill.

The Hon. J. STERNBERG.—I do not like the Bill at all. I think it advisable that the Minister should allow it to stand over for a time.

The Hon. A. BELL.—I was about to suggest that if the Bill were withdrawn for the present the amendments might be licked into better shape.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—The Bill has already been before us a month.

The Hon. A. BELL.—That may be so, but a lot of amendments for the improvement of the Bill have been introduced.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—There are only two actual amendments; the

others are really only consequential amendments.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—The amendments are brought forward for the purpose of making the Bill clear.

The Hon. J. STERNBERG.—Clear, did you say?

The Hon. A. BELL.—The Bill is, as Mr. Manifold says, as clear as mud. The amendments may be all right, but they are technical and confusing.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I cannot agree with Mr. Bell at all in this matter. The amendments make the Bill perfectly clear. This Bill is for the purpose of giving the corporation power to supply fittings and consuming devices, as set out in clause 3, and the Minister is now making it clear what consuming devices and fittings are. We have already agreed to an amendment regarding the definition of consuming devices. Now the Minister suggests another amendment that defines the word "fittings." Surely that is a good starting point. Let us know what are fittings and what are consuming devices. I would suggest that the Committee would be acting wisely in passing these plain definitions first of all. They can then make amendments with regard to the powers of municipalities in dealing with these things if they wish to do so.

The amendment was agreed to, and the clause, as amended, adopted.

Clause 3—

Any council, being an undertaker under the principal Act or any corresponding previous enactment, may—

- (a) sell or let on hire fittings;
- (b) fix, maintain, repair, or remove any fittings sold or let on hire as aforesaid; and
- (c) demand and take such remuneration, rents, and charges, and make such terms and conditions as are agreed therefor.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That after the word "fittings," line 4, the words "or consuming devices" be inserted.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I should like to know whether a meter is a fitting or a consuming device?

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—I am not very clear on that point. I should think it would be a fitting.

The Hon. W. C. ANGLISS.—I should think it would be a consuming device.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—A meter is a necessary fitting from the stand-point of a municipality, of course.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—Municipalities are already supplying electricity, and therefore they must have meters. I do not think meters enter into the question at all.

The amendment was agreed to.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That in paragraph (b) the word "fittings" be omitted, and the words "consuming devices" substituted.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—This is a paragraph in regard to which there is a difference of opinion between the City Council and the dealers in these electrical fittings and consuming devices. I think the Committee should understand that the merchants who deal in these manufactures and the sellers of these electrical fittings and devices say that the agreement made between the City Council and these parties was not in accordance with this particular provision. I think the Committee should know that. The manufacturers or sellers of these things want words inserted which will prevent the City Council from dealing with these particular consuming devices after they have become the property of the purchasers or hirers from the council. That is where the difference is between these two interests, and the merchants and dealers consider the matter vital. For my part, I do not. I think the City Council should be allowed to carry on the work in connexion with these things. What the manufacturers and sellers want to do is to allow the municipality to fix, maintain, repair, or remove any consuming device so let on hire or for sale which is the property of the undertaker. They want to allow the council to hire these things out until the articles are paid for, and during that period to allow the municipality to keep them in order, but they do not want the council, after that period, to be allowed to maintain and keep these things in repair, and they say that the council have agreed to this.

The Hon. J. STERNBERG.—Why should they not?

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—Because in that case they say the council will be interfering with private business and interests.

The Hon. J. STERNBERG.—The honorable member must bear in mind that the Bill applies to the whole of the State.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I do not agree, but it is a vital point with them,

and I think it is only fair that the Committee should know that that is the opinion of the merchants and dealers concerned. I think the people interested in this trade should have their views put before the Chamber, and this is the only time during the consideration of the Bill that this can be done in a proper manner. If the Minister would make a statement, I could give my own views afterwards.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—As a matter of fact, the electrical traders wanted a clause inserted to the effect that the council might purchase from any company or person carrying on business in Victoria, but not otherwise. That was not acceded to, because it would be at variance with the principles of the Constitution. The Crown Law authorities said that it could not be done. Then in the next clause they wanted these words inserted, "sell or let for hire such fittings as aforesaid as are purchased in Victoria." I told these gentlemen, and the City Council as well, that I did not hold a brief for any of them, and that when we bring in a Bill we consider the rights of the public. We have to protect the public. This Bill has been considered by the Crown Law authorities, the Parliamentary Draftsman, and the electrical expert of the Public Works Department, and we have arrived at something which we think is a fair thing to the public, to the electrical trade, and to the council. If you are going to give the council a Bill at all, give them something more than a bill of lading, otherwise it is no use passing legislation. Supposing the council put in an electric fan. If it will not work, the man who comes round to inspect it may say that the fan is all right, but that the electric motor is out of order. It was desired that the council should not be able to touch that. If you are going to give the council legislation, give them something they can do business with. I quite agree that when we are passing legislation of this kind, people should have every opportunity of placing their views before the Chamber. I have seen the gentlemen interested, and I know the persistency with which they put their views. I listened to them in my own office, and then I told them what we were going to do. That is now being done by this Bill, and we are being advised by people who know more about the matter than I do.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I am glad the Minister made that statement. All that I wanted was that the Committee should be aware of the views of the merchants and the City Council. I agree with the Minister.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—We will take the case where a householder has a fan, and it is not working properly. If the householder rang up the council, and a man inspected the fan, and said it was all right, but that there must be something wrong with the motor, could not the council attend to the motor?

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—If there were other consuming devices on the premises, and they were out of order, the electrical traders desired that the council, which had not put the other devices in the premises, should not be able to look after them.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—That is the position, as stated by the Minister. I take it that the municipalities should be allowed to maintain and keep in order the consuming devices, but sub-clause (5) of clause 5 prevents their doing that. Then it will mean, as Mr. Manifold says, that if the City Council inspect the fan, and find it in order, but find the wires out of order, the City Council will not be allowed to do the work, and the householder will have to go to a private contractor.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I would ask why we should omit the word "fittings" from paragraph (b), and insert the words "consuming devices"? Why not leave paragraph (b) as it is? If it is amended as proposed, then the trouble in connexion with the wiring, as pointed out, will arise. The municipality will not have any power to do anything with the wiring. If the word "fittings" is omitted, then the council could not do anything to the fan, which is not a consuming device. In some of the country towns, there is no electrical engineer.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—Without looking into the matter, I do not know what effect leaving in the word "fittings" would have on the main part of the Bill. I think it better to leave it as it is.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—The honorable gentleman means that consuming devices may not cover internal fittings?

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—I mean that the paragraph, with the amendment, would apply to internal consuming devices, and not fittings.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—We want entire power to deal with the installation of the fittings for lighting.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—Wiring a building?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Yes, certainly. If the Bill is passed as it is, I should like to know whether we block a municipality from going on premises and doing the whole of the work.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—I have explained that.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—If it does, we ought to report progress, so as to be able to consider the matter.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—A good many years ago, I used to run an electric light plant of my own. One lot of wire was defective, although it worked well when it was first put in. If my fan in such a case as that would not work, and I rang up the council to look at the fan, and the fan was found to be all right, the defect being in some other part, could not the council touch the other part? They should be able to do so.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I should like to explain to the Committee what the Minister might have explained, and what he did explain, to some extent.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I am going to suggest a course which I think will be agreeable to the Committee. If honorable members will allow these suggested amendments to go through, then at the report stage I will ask that the Bill be recommitted, so that honorable members can consider the whole proposition. I think it is only fair that they should clearly understand what is being done. I can realize the difficulty they experience in understanding the Bill in face of these numerous amendments. I have been through the Bill and have seen the effect of the amendments, and can understand the difficulty honorable members feel in the matter. If they will allow these amendments to go through I will ask at the report stage for a recommittal. We shall then have a clean copy of the Bill before us, with the amendments included.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—It will be impossible to deal with the amendments unless we understand the principle involved. I am sure honorable members do not understand the principle involved in amending this paragraph by cutting out "fittings" and inserting "consuming

devices." If that amendment is agreed to, we cannot then alter sub-clause (5) of clause 5 when we come to it. One clause is involved in the other, and if honorable members do not understand the principle involved in this amendment, they will be more confused when they come to clause 5. This Bill is based on the experience of the Old Country. When the Woolwich Council took on retail trading, they made a loss of over £87,000. A Committee was appointed to inquire into that extraordinary result, and Sir Alexander Kennedy was called in as an expert. He advised that the sales and wiring and fittings department should be closed. Mr. Richardson wants the power to wire and sell fittings retained, but I do not think he, and those honorable members who agree with him, quite understand the position. Where municipalities have been able to go in for the sale of electricity and consuming devices the operations have been profitable, but when they come to dispose of fittings they get into trouble. Then we come to the experience of the Willesden Urban District Council. They had the following limitation placed in their Act:—

That nothing in this section 9 should authorize the Council themselves to fix upon any consumer's premises electric light fittings or electric wiring, other than may be required to complete service line, between the Council's supply mains and their own apparatus upon such consumer's premises.

In 1912 a combined Committee of the House of Lords and House of Commons adopted a model clause which included the following:—

The Corporation shall not themselves execute the wiring of private property except between the main of the corporation and the consumer's meter, but they may enter into contracts for the execution of any of the powers of this section including the wiring of private property, provided that the contractor acts independently of the Corporation in the execution of the contract. The Corporation shall not sell any such electrical fittings except through a contractor carrying on his business independently of the Corporation.

There is good reason in the information I have given to the Committee. Honorable members will see that, in clause 5, reference has also been made to the question of fittings.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The point Mr. Richardson has made is a good one. Having allowed a municipal council to sell, let, or hire fittings, we must give them power to repair, maintain, or

remove them if they become defective. The Minister proposes to strike out the word "fittings" in one clause, but he is retaining it in another. We must have uniformity, or else the Bill will be ridiculous. If the word "fittings" is left in, as suggested by Mr. Richardson, paragraph (b) will be perfectly clear.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—I will support the suggestion put forward by the Minister; it seems the best way out of the difficulty. If all these amendments are made in the Bill, and the measure is re-committed next week, we shall then have a complete Bill before us. In view of all the amendments which have been brought forward by the Minister, I defy any honorable member to really understand the Bill. It will save a good deal of time if we adopt the proposal the Minister has made.

The Hon. A. BELL.—I am willing to support the suggestion made by the Minister, but I shall be glad if he will give municipal councils power to delegate their authority in regard to fittings to a contractor.

The Hon. J. STERNBERG.—I should like the Minister to bear in mind that there are a number of small municipalities in this State, and when he brings in the amended Bill, I hope he will see that no injustice is done to them. A number of small municipalities are already supplying electric light, and are carrying out the work satisfactorily. I hope their interests will be protected.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I thought the general idea was that these outside municipalities should have nothing to do with the supply of fittings. Apparently, however, Mr. Sternberg wants to give them more extended powers than we propose in this Bill. I will have all the points referred to by honorable members considered before the amended Bill is brought on again, and see if I can deal with them effectively.

The amendment was agreed to, and the clause, as amended, adopted.

Clause 4, providing, *inter alia*—

(2) Such undertaker shall so adjust the charges to be made by it to consumers for the purchase or hire of fittings or for the fixing, maintaining, repairing, or removal thereof as to meet in the aggregate any expenditure by it under the powers of this Act in connexion therewith (including interest upon moneys borrowed or used for these purposes and a re-

sonable amount to make provision in respect of the depreciation of fittings let on hire, and all sums applied to sinking fund for repayment of moneys so borrowed or used).

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I should like the Minister to explain how he intends to check the charges made by a municipality. The whole of this trouble has arisen on the question of charges. We can understand that a municipality may make quite a considerable amount of money in selling electricity, but when they come to deal with consuming devices and fittings, the position is not quite so satisfactory. It may be possible for a municipality to balance the loss on one part of their trade with the profit on the other.

The Hon. J. McWHAE.—The Melbourne City Corporation would never do anything like that.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—That has been done elsewhere, and it is necessary to guard against it here. I should like the Minister to say how he proposes to see that the charges are adjusted.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I am not quite clear what is the provision in the principal Act, but obviously this is a matter which would come under the notice of the auditors of a municipality.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—It is not likely, but it is possible what I suggest may be done.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—I will have the matter looked into.

The clause was agreed to.

Clause 5—(Relations of undertaker with electrical contractors).

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—The wording of this clause can be improved. There might, and no doubt would, be a dispute as to "the rate ordinarily allowed as trade discount." In all these trades there is a current rate of discount. There is no ordinary rate. It is constantly fluctuating. I therefore move—

That in sub-clause (2) the words "current rate" be substituted for "rate ordinarily" before "allowed as trade discount."

The amendment was agreed to.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—At the end of sub-clause (2) which deals with the allowance of trade discount there are the words "and based on the amount actually received by such undertaker in respect thereof." That means that nothing will be allowed as trade discount unless the account is paid. I should like to know, however, why these words were not in-

serted at the end of sub-clause (3) with regard to the commission.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—I would prefer to take a note of it now, and if the honorable member will let the clauses go through now we can get a clean copy of the Bill, and recommit, if necessary.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I think that the words should be inserted in sub-clause (3) now. I move—

That the words "and based on the amount actually received by such undertaker in respect thereof" be added to sub-clause (3).

The amendment was agreed to.

The Hon. E. J. CROOKE.—I think we are discussing one of the most important parts of this measure. In the Gippsland province eight different townships have been lit by electricity. Some of the installations have been operated as municipal affairs, and others by butter factories. I doubt if in any of those townships there are individuals who come under the heading of electrical contractors. Consequently, if these undertakers are prohibited from doing what they are doing, it will be necessary under this measure to get a man from Melbourne or somewhere else to make any alteration, however small, although the man in the local power-house may be capable of carrying out the work.

The Hon. A. HICKS.—And have plenty of time to do it.

The Hon. E. J. CROOKE.—Yes. I do not know what the conditions are at the present time, and how the work is carried out, but Maffra, Bairnsdale, Toora, Foster, Drouin, and other places are not of sufficient importance to support a man in that particular line of business.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON.—Are the undertakings not run by the municipal councils?

The Hon. E. J. CROOKE.—At Yarram and Drouin they are run by the butter companies. At Bairnsdale and Maffra they are run by the municipal councils.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON.—They have not power under the principal Act to do these things.

The Hon. E. J. CROOKE.—This Bill prohibits their doing them now. Although they may not have the power they would be doing them at present. I would suggest that where there is no man in a place qualified to carry out the work the municipality should be allowed to do it. That would be in accordance with the object of the Bill, which is not to take the

work out of the hands of a man who is qualified to do it.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—In sub-clause (5) of this clause, we are establishing a principle, as pointed out by Mr. Crooke. If I understand him aright, he wants the Minister to put some provision in the Bill which will allow a small country municipality which is generating its own supply of electricity to wire the consumer's premises and supply him with fittings direct, without the intervention of a contractor. In many small country towns there is no man capable of doing this class of work.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—We will consider all these points.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—In sub-clause (6), arbitration is referred to. Will the Minister let us fix who will be the arbitrators?

The Hon. A. W. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—We do not set up any particular tribunal for arbitration; I suppose the ordinary methods of arbitration would be resorted to. I can only promise the honorable member that that point which has been raised, with others, will be considered.

The clause was consequentially amended and agreed to, as were clauses 6 and 7.

The Bill was reported to the House, with amendments.

WHEAT STORAGE BILL.

This Bill was returned from the Legislative Assembly, with a message intimating that they had agreed to some of the amendments made by the Legislative Council, and had disagreed with one of the amendments.

The message was ordered to be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

FISHERIES BILL.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister) moved the second reading of this Bill. He said—The object of the Bill is to rectify certain anomalies in the principal Act, and to tighten up some of the machinery provisions. Except for clause 7, there is very little need to say anything about the measure at all. Sub-clause (1) of clause 2 gives power to remove from the second schedule of the principal Act the name of any fish which it is not desired to protect any longer; while sub-clause (2) makes a slight

amendment in the power to make regulations governing the fishing industry. By section 7 of the principal Act, it is at present permissible to restrict the use of boats and nets in closed waters. The proposed amendment will give power to prohibit boats being left in such waters also during specified hours. Clause 3 extends the powers of section 29 of the principal Act, and makes it illegal to sell, or expose for sale, any fish which it is desirable to protect in the breeding season, whether such fish are taken in Victoria or elsewhere. The fishermen who fish for crayfish in the Straits have asked for this amendment, as they recognise that, under the present ruinous system of marketing fish when they are breeding, it will only be a matter of time when the supplies will become so depleted as to render this fish a rarity in our markets. All fish under the legal length are, under paragraph (b) of section 28 of the principal Act, absolutely barred from sale in Victoria, no matter where obtained. Clause 4 gives power to seize any fish which have been illegally taken. Under the present law, the poacher may set nets in a river, and, if caught, may be fined and his nets confiscated, but he may claim the fish, the sale of which might recoup him for his fines, &c. By clause 5, the same protection is extended to oysters as is given to under-sized fish by the principal Act. It is made illegal to take, sell, &c., oysters under the legal minimum size; and power is also given to the inspector to seize any such oysters he may find. Clause 6 prohibits any person distributing non-indigenous fish in our streams without the approval of the Minister; while clause 7 provides for the issue of trout-fishing licences on the same lines as those in force in New Zealand and Tasmania, and other parts of the world. The trout-fishers of Victoria have asked for this licence for many years, and have expressed their willingness to pay for it. With regard to trout taken unintentionally by a person not having a trout-fishing licence, section 4 of the principal Act exempts from all penalties any person who, having so taken any fish, at once returns them to the water with as little injury as possible. I understand that all the provisions in the Bill have been inserted at the request of the people concerned.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I should like the Minister to agree to the adjournment of the debate until to-morrow, or,

better still, until next week. The honorable gentleman has told us that there is an important principle embodied in the Bill, which is new altogether to the State of Victoria; and before speaking on the motion for the second reading, I should like to go fully into the question, as, despite what the Minister has said, there are several fish protection and anglers' societies which are entirely opposed to that principle.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—Will you let us get the Bill into Committee?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I want to speak on the motion for the second reading. With the consent of the honorable gentleman, I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, September 11.

GAME BILL.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister) moved the second reading of this Bill. He said—This measure is somewhat on the same lines as the Fisheries Bill. The object is to tighten up certain provisions in the principal Act, which are found to be defective, and to confer additional powers. Clause 2 amends section 4 of the principal Act, and gives power to the Governor in Council to remove the name of any bird or other animal from the protected list. At the present time, there is power to add names of birds and animals to the protected list, but there is no power to remove names from the list. There are birds, or animals, which ought to be removed from the protected list either for a time or, possibly, for the whole year. For instance, in some parts of Victoria deer have become a perfect nuisance to the farmers, and it is desirable that they should not be protected. Clause 3 provides for an alteration in the close of the season. The object of this is to prohibit shooting on Sunday, and brings the game law into conformity with the Police Offences Act. Clause 4 is aimed at persons who wilfully trespass on a sanctuary in pursuit of game. Honorable members are aware that there are sanctuaries for the protection of native game, and these are sometimes invaded by persons who call themselves sportsmen who go there for the purpose of shooting native

game and animals. It is provided in section 8 of the principal Act that game may be kept in cool stores during the close season. The idea was to make a supply of game available in the open season; but, as a matter of fact, the provision has proved most undesirable and unworkable. The repeal of the section is, therefore, provided for. Section 9 of the principal Act imposes a penalty on the buying, selling, consigning, or having possession of flesh, skin, feathers, or any other portion of game killed during a prohibited period. It is found that the penalty provided is not sufficient to act as a deterrent. One firm was fined four times last year for a breach of this provision. They go on paying the trifling fine imposed by the principal Act, and evidently make money by breaking the law. It is quite evident that the law must be tightened up a bit, and, therefore, in the Bill provision is made for a heavier penalty. One important provision of the Bill is that which renders a person in possession of egrets liable to a penalty. This will practically make egret plumes unsaleable in this State. That is the only way in which protection can be given to these birds. When the birds are nesting, the trappers kill the mothers to get the plumes, and of course the young birds die. In the United States of America they have dealt with this matter in a very drastic fashion, and no person there is allowed to import an egret. Some friends of mine who happened to be travelling from Liverpool to New York told me of an amusing incident they witnessed. A number of very fashionably dressed ladies appeared on the wharf at New York, nearly every one of whom wore an osprey in her hat. They were accosted by the Customs officers, who took the feathers out of their hats. We must have a provision to prevent any dealing in these birds. They are very valuable, because they destroy the fresh water snail, which is the intermediary host of the sheep-fluke germ. This clause is not to come into operation until the 1st January next. That is done in order to give shopkeepers an opportunity of disposing of any feathers on hand. It is proposed to extend to our native game the protection that we give to imported game. We re-enact the present law and extend the protection to native game that is now afforded to imported game. There is a clause

making it illegal to use a double-barrelled gun exceeding 10 calibre. In the hands of a professional shooter an 8 calibre gun is very destructive. In the interest of genuine sport it is desirable to have this provision. Clause 9 empowers an inspector to demand guns used and native game taken contrary to the Act. Clause 10 gives power to fix the number of the birds, or the size of the bag, as it is usually called, that a man may kill in one day. It is found desirable to amend the law in regard to this matter. As it stands at present the section is of no practicable use, for in order to obtain a conviction for a breach of it, an inspector would have to follow a man round and watch him shoot each bird until he exceeded the number allowed by law. Therefore it is necessary to tighten up the law in the way suggested. Clause 11 gives power to an inspector to obtain a warrant, upon a sworn declaration before a justice of the peace, for the purpose of searching any house for skins, &c., of native game illegally taken. There is a new provision that authorizes the Minister to issue licences to hunt deer, and to take mutton birds and their eggs. Deer have increased so rapidly that they are doing damage to crops, and at present permits have to be issued to allow of their destruction. At Snake Island deer are becoming an absolute menace to the crops. It is necessary to have a regular deer hunt, and sometimes as many as 150 people take part in a hunt, and pay fees for permission to do so. It is much better, however, to issue licences, and a fair amount of revenue will be obtained in that way. Then there should be a licence for the taking of mutton birds and their eggs. As honorable members know, these are a unique species of native game. It is not desired to stop the taking of eggs at present, but merely to regulate the matter, and if and when further protection is found necessary, to reduce the number allowed to be taken. As the law stands at present, the taking of eggs must be either absolutely prohibited or allowed indiscriminately. The new power sought will give authority to the Minister to regulate the matter properly.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—It is some little time since I went through this Bill. There are several points in it that I shall deal with in Committee. I con-

gratulate the Government on the introduction of a measure that will tighten up the law for the preservation of our native game. In some respects, and notably under clause 6, I think the penalties are not half severe enough. I have a note in regard to the special clause dealing with egrets that I should like to have verified. The note suggests that under this clause egrets may be killed out of the close season. The way clause 7 is drafted no person will be punishable for poisoning game unless intent can be proved. I think it is hardly possible to do that, and I think the clause wants to be slightly altered. It is a crying shame the way egrets have been destroyed. I cannot understand how ladies, who are usually so soft-hearted, will decorate their hats with the feathers of these beautiful birds. I remember hearing on one occasion of a consignment of I do not know how many thousands of blue wrens having been sent to Europe. It is terrible the way our birds are being destroyed. If the present rate of the destruction of our mutton birds is continued we may expect that in a few years they will be as extinct as the dodo. As far as we know these birds are peculiar to Australia. None of the breeding places in Australia can compare with the one at Cape Woolamai. All other colonies of the birds are quite insignificant in comparison. People take the eggs and the young birds in a wholesale manner at Woolamai. I think they are sold in Melbourne as smoked ducks. No penalties can be too severe to prevent the destruction that is going on. The principle of licensing is commendable. Certainly for fishing a licence is absolutely necessary where the State incurs expenditure by introducing fish.

The Hon. A. O. SACHSE. — As a lover of the gun and the rod, I thank the Government for introducing this Bill. If we adopted the practice of extending our closed seasons as much as possible, for some years, we should have far more game. We should then be able to have game at the same prices as any other food. There are certain districts, and one quite close to Melbourne, where the deer are so numerous that nothing can be planted. They jump the highest fence, and yet if one wants a little venison the price is very high indeed. There are parts of the State where the kangaroo and the deer do a great deal of harm, and the law

does not allow people to shoot them. We cannot have kangaroo soup except at an enormous price, and venison is practically non-existent. We have crowds of animals, but we have no properly regulated law for hunting them. I congratulate the Government for introducing this Bill, and I think that if the policy which underlies the Bill is given effect to, game and fish will become cheap enough for poor people to eat.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and committed.

Clauses 1, 2, and 3 were agreed to.

Clause 4—

At the end of section 5 of the principal Act, there shall be inserted the following sub-section:

"(3) Any person who wilfully trespasses on any locality (whether Crown land or not) so proclaimed during any period in any year so fixed, in search or pursuit of game, or native game, shall be liable to a penalty of not more than £20, and the fact that such person has in his possession implements for shooting, or is accompanied by dogs, shall be *prima facie* evidence of the purpose of such trespass."

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I move—

That the words "less than £5 nor" be inserted after the word "not," line 8.

The Hon. D. L. McNAMARA.—I hope the amendment will not be carried. I think it would have a very arbitrary effect. This is a matter that might well be left to the discretion of the magistrates or justices who may be trying the case. In some instances a just penalty might be £20; in others a nominal penalty would meet the case.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I quite agree with Mr. McNamara. In many cases the offence might be committed unwittingly, and the offender might be a poor person. The magistrate should be left free to deal with each case according to the circumstances. In any case, if we insert a minimum penalty, I think £5 would be too high.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I withdraw the amendment.

The amendment was withdrawn.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I am not quite clear whether clause 4 will not conflict with clause 7. Clause 4 provides, *inter alia*—

Any person who wilfully trespasses on any locality (whether Crown land or not) so proclaimed during any period in any year so fixed, in search or pursuit of game, or native

game, shall be liable to a penalty of not more than £20, and the fact that such person has in his possession implements for shooting, or is accompanied by dogs, shall be *prima facie* evidence of the purpose of such trespass."

Provision is made later for persons to shoot deer. Surely deer are game.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON.—In section 11 of the principal Act the words "at any time or place" are given. This refers to places which are Crown lands or game sanctuaries.

The clause was agreed to, as was clause 5.

Clause 6—(Increased penalty for subsequent offences).

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Are deer classified under the heading of "native game"?

The Hon. A. A. AUSTIN.—They are not native game.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I do not know what can be classified as native game in this country, excepting, of course, kangaroos and wallabies. Neither rabbits nor hares are native game.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON.—Besides kangaroos and wallabies, there are native bears and other animals and birds.

The clause was agreed to, as were clauses 7 to 11.

Clause 12—(Licences to hunt deer and take mutton birds).

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I quite agree with all that the Minister has stated about the necessity for the protection of mutton birds, but we know that around Cape Woolamai there are a number of residents who look upon the catching of mutton birds as their particular industry. A high licence-fee would press very harshly upon them. No specific amount is mentioned for the licence-fee. Is it the intention of the Government that the licence-fee shall be merely nominal, say, 5s. per annum?

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—Most of the people attracted by the mutton birds come from other places.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—They should pay a special fee.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister).—With regard to the point raised by Mr. Beckett, I can only say that the amount of the licence-fee has not yet been considered. The policy of the Government, however, is against making the licence-fee prohibitive. Take a place

like Snake Island, where the inhabitants have to kill deer in defence of their crops. It would be a shortsighted policy to fix a prohibitive licence-fee for those people to pay. The licence-fee under this measure will only serve as a check. The idea is to insure that the game are killed for a legitimate purpose, either for sport or for the protection of crops against the ravages of deer.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I do not object to a high licence-fee being charged for the right to shoot deer. The farmer whose place is threatened by deer would willingly pay a couple of pounds a year for a licence to shoot them. What I had in my mind more particularly was the case in which families make an industry by collecting the eggs of mutton birds. Tourists smash a great number of eggs when they start to collect them. But children brought up in the locality where mutton birds abound can collect the eggs without breaking them or disturbing the birds. In their case a nominal licence fee only should be charged.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister).—I am certainly in accord with the honorable member's remarks, and I will report them to the Ministry. It is sound common sense that the people referred to should not be asked to pay more than a nominal registration fee.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—There can be discrimination against tourists.

The Hon. A. A. AUSTIN.—I am not a lawyer, and I, therefore, ask the Minister whether the words "to hunt deer" mean to kill deer? I think it would simplify the matter if we deleted the word "hunt" and substituted the word "kill."

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister).—I am satisfied that "hunt" means to do everything one can do in hunting, and hunting usually winds up with a kill.

The clause was agreed to, as was the preamble.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and the report was adopted.

On the motion of the Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister), the Bill was then read a third time, and passed.

The House adjourned at fifteen minutes to ten o'clock p.m. until Tuesday, September 11.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, September 4, 1917.

The SPEAKER took the chair at twenty-five minutes to five o'clock p.m.

RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

VARIATION OF CONTRACTS.

Mr. MCPHERSON asked the Premier—

If he was head of, and the Honorable John Gray was the Secretary to, the Government whose Minister of Railways, on the outbreak of the war, was informed by the Railways Commissioners, in respect to existing contracts, that, in view of additional charges which contractors would be required to bear for freightage, war risk, &c., the basis on which any allowance should be granted would be considered in the light of the surrounding circumstances?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—I was head of the Government, and the Honorary Minister, Mr. John Gray, was Secretary at the time. The Minister of Railways was the honorable member for Prahran. I have a copy of the memorandum. It is dated 16th November, 1914, and is as follows:—

Advertising to the telegram which has been addressed to the Honorable the Premier by the Honorable the Prime Minister of New Zealand, as to the action which has been taken in regard to orders under periodical stores contracts, which involve additional expense by way of freight and insurance war risk, the Commissioners have the honour to report that, at a Conference which took place yesterday between the Railways Commissioners of Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, and Tasmania, the following resolution was agreed to, viz.:—

"The Conference is of opinion that a proportion, not less than one-half, of the extra charges on freight and war risk insurance should be borne by the Commissioners; but, owing to the varying conditions of contracts, a general rule to this effect cannot be applied—each case should be considered on its merits, and in some cases, no doubt, it will be necessary to pay more than one-half of the extra charges."

It may, however, be explained that so far as ordinary contracts are concerned, it has been arranged for the Department to defray the extra freight and war risk insurance, provided that the contractor satisfies the Department that the charges are reasonable, and that they have actually been paid; but in the case of large contracts in connexion with the electrification scheme, arrangements have been made for the payment by the contractors of half the additional expenditure on account of freight and war risk insurance, and for the remaining half to be borne by the Department.

EXPORT OF FOODSTUFFS.

Mr. SINCLAIR asked the Premier, for the Minister of Agriculture—

1. Whether he is aware that the waterside workers object to handling foodstuffs for export on the ground (among other grounds) that a large quantity of such foodstuffs is consigned to Batavia, or to other Dutch ports, the ultimate destination of which foodstuffs, it is contended, being countries now at war with us?

2. What quantity of foodstuffs has been consigned from Melbourne to Batavia, or any other Dutch port, in the past six months, and what quantity is now awaiting consignment to those ports?

3. Is not the amount of foodstuffs recently consigned to Batavia, and other Dutch ports, unusual?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—As the honorable member is aware, the control and destination of exports are matters outside State functions, being dealt with solely under the Federal Commerce Act and the Commonwealth War Precautions Act. I have a file bearing on this particular matter, and I will lay it on the table of the Library for the information of honorable members generally.

INCOME TAX PAYERS AND PAYMENTS.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Treasurer), pursuant to an Order of the House (dated August 21), presented a return showing the number of income tax payers and payments according to returns for the years 1909 to 1916.

WHEAT STORAGE BILL.

Consideration was resumed of the amendments made by the Legislative Council in this Bill, and of the motion of Mr. H. McKenzie (*Rodney*—Minister of Railways) that the House agree with the Council's amendment to omit sub-clause (1) of clause 16, providing as follows:—

1. The prices to be paid to workmen by the Victorian Railways Commissioners in the execution of any works authorized by this Act to be executed by the Victorian Railways Commissioners shall be the recognised standard rate of wages for the work performed for a maximum number of hours.

Mr. SINCLAIR.—I am totally opposed to the amendment made by another place. The Minister knows very well that a similar provision to this is always inserted in Bills authorizing the carrying out of works, and it ought to be, because it really is a safety-valve against industrial strife.

If we do not have a similar provision here, there will be no protection for the workers who will be engaged in this particular undertaking. The majority of people in this State belong to the working class, and it is the bounden duty of the Government to protect members of that class against imposition by contractors, or anybody else, who may carry out work under the authority of an Act of Parliament. It has long been recognised in this country that the rate of wages provided by industrial Courts should be paid. If we do not have this sub-clause in the Bill, we will be opening the door to contractors to exploit the working class in regard to the wages to be paid to them. I cannot understand why the Government have any objection to this particular provision being included in the Bill. A similar provision is included in the Melbourne Harbor Trust Act. Section 148 provides that—

Every contract for executing works of improvement or otherwise within the jurisdiction of the Commissioners shall contain a condition that the recognised standard rates of wages for the work performed for a maximum number of hours shall be paid by the contractor to his employees engaged in the carrying out of such contract.

Then it is provided in section 149 that—

Any workman or labourer in the employ of the Commissioners shall be paid not less than the recognised standard rate of wages.

Section 150 says that—

Where any work has to be performed by a workman or labourer in the employ either of the Commissioners or any contractor having a contract with the Commissioners, if such workman or labourer is paid in accordance with the prices or rates fixed in the determination of any Special Board under the Factories and Shops Act 1915, or any award made by the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, for the class of work performed by such workman or labourer, it shall be deemed a sufficient compliance with the provisions of either of the two last preceding sections.

I was rather astonished at the admission of the Minister that he had asked his colleagues in the Council to have this sub-clause deleted, more especially as the matter was debated in this House, and there was a general consensus of opinion that it should be included in the Bill. I cannot understand the action of the Minister at all.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I told the Committee that it would probably have to come out, as I had to consult the Commissioners.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—You said you would have a look at it.

Mr. SINCLAIR.—Still, I do not understand why the sub-clause should be struck out. The Government should always be regarded as a model employer, and, in all Bills of this nature, provision should be made to insure to every worker a fair and reasonable rate of pay. I intend to oppose the deletion of the sub-clause.

Mr. ROGERS.—I agree with the last speaker. It appears to me that, in proposing to omit this sub-clause, the Minister is agreeing to a very dangerous proposal. If I read aright that part of the clause which will remain, it appears to me the Commissioners will be able to pay whatever rate of wages they like, but, at the same time, the Government will compel the contractor to pay the recognised rate of wages. If it is fair to make a contractor pay a reasonable rate, it is just as fair that the Railways Commissioners should be forced to carry out work under the same conditions. In previous measures of this kind, similar provisions to that proposed to be omitted have been inserted, and I do not understand the attitude of the Minister. It was not at all unreasonable to provide that every man should receive the standard rate of wages, no matter by whom he is employed. It is no wonder that there is so much dissatisfaction on this (the Opposition) side of the House when proposals of this sort are made by the Government. For the life of me, I cannot see why the Government should not insist on the retention of the sub-clause. I am sorry that the Government are going to accept such a dangerous amendment. It will cause great dissatisfaction.

Mr. A. A. BILLSON (*Ovens*).—I regret that I was not here last week. Consequently, I am not informed as to the arguments submitted by the Minister in proposing to accept the Council's amendment. After the Government have dealt with a Bill of this nature, carefully examined it, thoroughly discussed it, no doubt, at two or three meetings of the Cabinet, and asked Parliament to accept it, it is somewhat surprising that they should, apparently in a very weak manner, agree to accept this amendment of the Legislative Council. It places us in a very awkward position. I, for one, am not going

to support the other place in its amendment. The provision which has been struck out is somewhat similar to what has been inserted in many of our Bills. I quite agree that there should be no necessity, in the first place, to put in such a sub-clause, and that the Railways Commissioners should recognise that they ought to pay the same rates as are paid outside.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—The Railways Commissioners have a Board of their own. The sub-clause would only bring in a Wages Board by a side door.

Mr. A. A. BILLSON (*Ovens*).—I am not concerned with that big problem, which will be discussed at the proper time. Here was a provision deliberately inserted in the Bill.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—It was not in the original Bill.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I accepted it tentatively, and said that if the Commissioners could show a valid reason against it, I would ask my colleague to move for its rejection in another place.

Mr. A. A. BILLSON (*Ovens*).—I think this House should be the higher power. A provision was adopted by the House, and inserted in the Bill, and for that reason I am going to oppose the acceptance of the Council's amendment.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—The honorable member for Ovens is under a misapprehension in saying that sub-clause (1) was originally incorporated in the Bill. Its insertion was moved by the Leader of the Opposition, and it was accepted tentatively by my colleague, who said that he would consult the Railways Commissioners, and that, if they objected, he would have an alteration made in another place. By re-inserting such a sub-clause in this Bill, the House would be doing something that Parliament decided should not be done. Parliament has already said that a Wages Board should not be created in the Department. Sub-clause (1) would bring those engaged on work in connexion with this measure under a Wages Board. As I have said, Parliament rejected the proposal for a Wages Board in the Department, and the Commissioners recommended the appointment of a Classification Board, which the House accepted. That Board has been sitting for some time, and has completed

a great part of its labours. Railway men would get the rate determined on.

Mr. HANNAH.—How will that be if the work has to be done under contract?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Sub-clause (2) of clause 16 provides—

Every contract entered into by the Victorian Railways Commissioners for the execution of any work under this Act, or for furnishing materials, shall contain a condition that the recognised standard rate of wages for the work performed for a maximum number of hours shall be paid by the contractor to his employees engaged in the carrying out of such contract.

That deals with the contractor and the men employed by him. Sub-clause (1) would, therefore, provide for a Wages Board for the men under the Commissioners, and as we have already appointed a Classification Board, the effect of whose recommendations will be a considerable increase in wages, it would be wrong to have two such bodies dealing with the railway employees.

Mr. HANNAH.—I am afraid that there is a little misconception about the position, and that we are likely to be led into serious trouble. The statement of the honorable member for Ovens is quite correct, and I thoroughly agree with him. I did not have the opportunity of being present on Thursday afternoon, when this matter was being discussed, but I am glad to say that I am here to-day to have a word on the question—still smiling, and, I hope, going strong. The Council's amendment is to strike out sub-clause (1) which provided—

The prices to be paid to workmen by the Victorian Railways Commissioners in the execution of any works authorized by this Act to be executed by the Victorian Railways Commissioners shall be the recognised standard rate of wages for the work performed for a maximum number of hours.

It is clearly laid down there that the Commissioners shall pay the standard rate of wages. With regard to the contractor, sub-clause (2), which is to be left in, provides—

Every contract entered into by the Victorian Railways Commissioners for the execution of any work under this Act, or for furnishing materials, shall contain a condition that the recognised standard rate of wages for the work performed for a maximum number of hours shall be paid by the contractor to his employees engaged in the carrying out of such contract.

It seems to me that we are confronted with a very conflicting position. Here is

the very latest that has come from the Railways Commissioners as to the minimum rate of wages and the hours to be observed under contract—

The wages of every person engaged by or on behalf of the contractor in connexion with the fulfilment of this contract shall be paid by the contractor in full in current money of the realm at least once in every fortnight, and shall be not less than the rate of pay prescribed in the determination of any Wages Board constituted under the provisions of the Factories and Shops Acts of the State of Victoria which may be applicable to the avocation in which such person is engaged irrespective of whether the place of employment is within an area governed by the said Acts, and in any instance in which there is no determination as aforesaid, applicable to the avocation in which any particular person is engaged by or on behalf of the contractor in connexion with the fulfilment of this contract, the wages of such person shall not be less than the rate of pay then current in the particular district for a similar class of work, always provided that the wage paid to a labourer shall not be less than 8s. per day of eight hours.

That is an eight-hours' day for 8s. Is that the standard rate, either in the country or in the metropolitan area? Let me read the provision which applies in the case of contracts under the Public Works Department—

The minimum rate of wages shall be paid by the contractor for the various services to be performed under this contract, and must conform to the rates determined by the Wages Board of the State, or the Arbitration Court. In the cases of trades in respect of which there are no Wages Boards, the rates must conform to the ruling rates in the metropolitan district.

Is there any objection to men performing work in the country, in connexion with this Bill, receiving the same as is paid for similar work in the metropolitan area? It seems to me that there is a likelihood of a serious conflict, and we should see that the Bill does not go through in its present condition. Because a determination is in existence, the Railway Department has to pay 10s. 4d. a day to carters' labourers, and 10s. 8d. to builders' labourers. If we agree to the present proposal, it will enable the Railway Department practically to allow contractors to pay low wages for the work done, and there will be a repetition of the struggle which caused many weeks of idleness at Geelong.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—It is provided in sub-clause (2) that contractors shall pay the standard rate of wages.

Mr. HANNAH.—But are we going to have a large number of men employed in

country districts who will not be definitely under a determination? We, who control the conditions under which these men sell their labour, should see that the whole thing is clearly laid down, and that there is no ambiguity. There will be men engaged on work in connexion with this scheme in some of the most remote parts of Victoria. They may be working under exactly opposite conditions to those engaged a couple of hundred miles away. This House should provide that the contractor should pay a fair and reasonable wage. There is hardly an honorable member who would be prepared to knowingly leave the door open, as I think it will be left open, if the Council's amendment is agreed to. In the case of a man on the bottom rung of the ladder, the other place is always prepared to intervene, and take advantage of the situation; but if it is a question of a man receiving a minimum of £1,000, you will not find that House striking out any regulations or conditions in a way which would interfere with that. In connexion with this amendment, we should be unanimous in our determination to disagree with it, and, at any rate, retain those safeguards which will protect the labourer throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Mr. BAILEY.—The Government have taken up an extraordinary attitude in connexion with this provision. Originally the clause provided for an average minimum rate of pay of 9s. a day. When the Bill was drafted, the Government accepted the principle of a minimum wage. Then the sub-clause submitted by the Leader of the Opposition was accepted by the House as a substitute for the provision I have mentioned. The other place has omitted that sub-clause, and the Government now ask the House to accept the Bill without any provision whatever for the fixing of a minimum wage for the men doing this work.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (Rodney).—You know the Railway Department has a minimum wage.

Mr. BAILEY.—The Bill as originally introduced, provided that the Railways Commissioners should pay an average wage of 9s. per day of eight hours. The attitude of the Government is unfair and unreasonable. The men who will be employed by the Railways Commissioners will be

engaged for special work. They will not be the men at present employed by the Railway Department, and governed by the Board the Minister referred to, but men who will be brought in from outside to do special work. Why should not the Railways Commissioners pay these men the recognised standard rate of wage to compensate them for the particular work they have to do?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (Rodney).—The men the Railways Commissioners employ will practically all be railway men.

Mr. BAILEY.—That is the assurance given to the House by the Minister, but what objection could there be to the Railways Commissioners having to pay the same wages to men engaged in constructing silos as contractors would have to pay if the work were done by them? I hope the House will not accept the amendment of another place. If a contractor would have to pay men the standard rate of wages for performing certain work, then, in all reason, the Commissioners should be bound to pay the men the same rate of wages. For that reason, the amendment proposed by the Legislative Council should not be accepted. The men who would be brought in to do the work would not have the safeguards that the present employees of the Commissioners have at all. The Commissioners could pay whatever wages they like. I hope the House will not accept the amendment of another place.

Mr. HOGAN.—I trust the Minister is going to do something to alleviate the situation. I am not prepared to make any speech on the matter at this stage. I thought the Minister would make some statement.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (Rodney).—I cannot speak again. I have spoken twice—once by leave.

Mr. HOGAN.—The Bill originally provided that an average wage of 9s. per day should be paid. As it has been amended by the Legislative Council and this House, even that minimum wage provision has been struck out.

Mr. LEMMON.—It will mean 8s. per day now.

Mr. HOGAN.—It might mean anything now.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (Rodney).—The Railways Commissioners have a Board to fix the wages.

Mr. HOGAN.—In the Bill, as introduced, there was provision for the pay-

ment of a minimum wage of 9s. per day. That is the minimum provided for the men engaged in railway construction—

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—There is no danger of the Commissioners paying less than the minimum wage.

Mr. HOGAN.—Sub-clause (1) of clause 16 provided originally—

The prices to be paid to workmen by the Victorian Railways Commissioners in the execution of any works authorized by this Act to be executed by the Victorian Railways Commissioners shall, upon the average, be equal to a wage of 9s. per day of eight hours.

As a result of the amendment made by this House, and the subsequent amendment of another place, even that protection has now been struck out of the Bill, and the measure in its present state is worse than the original proposal brought forward by the Government. Surely the Minister does not desire that?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—The minimum wage is now 9s. per day.

Mr. HOGAN.—What I want to point out to the Minister is that if the Council's amendment is agreed to, the effect will be not only to strike out the sub-clause put in the Bill at the wish of this House, but to strike out the Government's original proposal with regard to the payment of a minimum wage. Therefore, I ask the Minister, if he will not disagree with the Council's amendment, to at least restore to the Bill the provision guaranteeing that the men who will do the work of erecting the silos will be paid a minimum wage of 9s. a day. The men who will do this work will be what are described in the Railway Department as "highly-skilled artisans and labourers."

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—There will be no doubt about their being paid a minimum wage of 9s. per day.

Mr. HOGAN.—I do not suppose there is, but we want to guarantee their interests. There are different interests represented in this House. The Minister knows that we (the Opposition) are here, primarily, to guarantee the interests of the working people of this country, and we want to insure that their interests will be safeguarded in this Bill. In addition to that, many of us wanted to insure that the interests of the farmers would be safeguarded in the Bill, and we fought for that, as members on the Ministerial side of the House must admit. In return for having made a fight to secure the inter-

ests of the farmers, we ask that those members should, in fairness and equity, assist us in insuring that the interests of the men engaged to construct the silos, will be safeguarded. I ask the Minister to agree to that, but I go beyond the Minister, and ask every reasonable man in this House to agree to the same thing, and to disagree with the amendment of the Legislative Council. I read the report of the debate in that House on this point, and I disagree entirely with what was said. I do not think one could expect that members there would have any sympathy with the working people, and they showed that they had no sympathy with them. Instead of giving them any guarantee of preserving their rights, they would take away the last vestige of rights that the working people possess. Not only was the amendment which was carried in another place moved by Mr. Manifold, but the Minister of Agriculture said that if Mr. Manifold did not move it, he would move it himself. I believe it was at the instigation of the Minister of Railways that the Minister of Agriculture desired to omit the sub-clause.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—That is so.

Mr. HOGAN.—I want the Minister to recognise that we have a sacred duty to perform in regard to safeguarding the interests of the men who will do the work of erecting the silos, and we would be recreant to our responsibility in this Chamber if we allowed the Bill to go through without a guarantee of that kind being provided in the Bill. It is all very well for the Minister to say that the Commissioners will pay a decent wage.

Mr. HANNAH.—They have not done it.

Mr. HOGAN.—We would not be sufficiently alive to our responsibility if we trusted them to do it. It must be provided for in the Bill. The representatives of the agricultural industry in the House, of whom I am one, would not trust the Railways Commissioners or the Wheat Commission to charge only a reasonable rate for the storage of the wheat. They wanted that to be provided for in the Bill. If we should trust the Railways Commissioners or the Wheat Commission to pay proper wages, it is equally fair to say that we should trust them to make a reasonable charge for storing the farmers' wheat. We decided that we could not trust them to charge a fair rate for storing the wheat, and that is a good

reason for inserting a provision to insure that a fair rate of wages shall be paid. I do not know whether the Minister has become what is described as "snake-headed" over the matter, and refuses to bend or budge, but if he is in his usual tolerant frame of mind—I do not want to throw any bouquets at him—I think he will agree that the amendment of another place is one we should not agree with in the interests of the men who will do the work of erecting the silos. The Minister has said that he cannot make another speech, but surely he can give some intimation that he is going to make some reasonable provision.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—The men who will be employed by the contractors, and those whom the Commissioners employ, are safeguarded by their own conditions.

Mr. HOGAN.—They are safeguarded by something they have got outside of this Bill, but we want them to be safeguarded by something in the Bill.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—You could not have two authorities controlling the wages in the Railway Department.

Mr. HOGAN.—At present the only thing the men are safeguarded by outside of this Bill is that they will not work for less than the prescribed minimum rate of wages. They have no Arbitration Court award or Wages Board determination prescribing that they shall be paid proper wages for doing this kind of work.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—Men are doing exactly the same kind of work for the Commissioners.

Mr. HOGAN.—I do not think they are doing exactly the same kind of work. The men engaged in railway construction work have a minimum rate of wage guaranteed to them under Act of Parliament. It is laid down that the minimum wage paid to them shall be 9s. a day. As that is the position in connexion with the construction of new railways, what sacrifice would the Minister make by putting a similar provision in this Bill. That is the least we could ask him to do, and I ask him what objection he has to doing it?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I told you that it is because it would bring in a second authority to control the wages of the railway men.

Mr. HOGAN.—The Government brought in that authority before.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—That authority is there now to deal with this aspect of the matter.

Mr. HOGAN.—It appears that the Minister is adamant. I suppose he is getting his back up.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—No, I want to see the men safeguarded, and I am perfectly satisfied that they are safeguarded.

Mr. HOGAN.—We are perfectly satisfied that they are not. We want some additional guarantee. During the last week or two men who have the luck, by nature or inheritance, to be employers instead of employees, have been getting their backs up, and it appears that they are going to insist not only on what is in the bond, but on what is not in the bond. We want to put a provision in the Bill insuring that the men shall be paid what we consider is the absolute minimum rate of wage which should be paid for this kind of work. We must make sure that the interests of the people we represent are safeguarded in this Bill. If we were to abrogate our duty, and allow the Bill to go through, leaving the men to depend on their own resources to secure fair wages, we should be recreant to our trust. We must make sure that the men would not do the work for less than the ruling rate of wages, but it would mean that they would have to make a fight through their industrial organizations. It is much better that we should insert a wages provision here, than that they should have to do that.

However, it appears that the Minister is not disposed to agree to anything reasonable in the matter, and I cannot think of any other argument to submit to get him to alter his attitude. I very much regret that he has taken up such a perverse attitude and will not put any provision whatever in this measure to insure that the workers engaged in constructing silos shall be safeguarded, just as the workers engaged in the construction of railways are safeguarded.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—What do you suggest?

Mr. HOGAN.—The honorable gentleman might even go back to the provision contained in the Bill, as introduced.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I have no objection to its being provided that the minimum wage shall be 9s. a day, if that is all the honorable member wants.

Mr. HOGAN.—I say that is better than nothing. What I want is the pro-

vision which was inserted at the instance of the Leader of the Opposition, and struck out by the Legislative Council. If the Minister will not disagree with the amendment of the Legislative Council, I ask him to restore to the Bill at least the provision it originally contained.

Mr. WARDE.—I hope the Minister will see his way to move some amendment upon the amendment of another place. If the amendment of another place is agreed to, then for some section of our workers there will be no protection at all under the measure.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—The railway conditions apply to these men.

Mr. WARDE.—The Commissioners may be doing work at sidings, where there may be no rate of wages fixed. There may be no Wages Board determination operating for that work.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—There is a Wages Board for railway employees.

Mr. WARDE.—I do not know when that Board will come to a conclusion. There was a Classification Board in the Department under the old system, and they must have been two or three years in existence before they finished their work. Something like twelve months must have elapsed before regulation 58, which contains the essence of their work, was put into operation. So that about three years elapsed between the time that the Board were appointed and the time that their decisions were gazetted. It is nearly twelve months now since the Government undertook to have a new Board appointed. Up to the present that Board have dealt with only two or three sections of the employees. We must remember that the Railways Commissioners' classification provides for 8s. 6d. a day for labourers, and the Government have authorized an increase of 6d. a day. The Board in existence now, representing the Government and the employees, have recommended a minimum of 9s. 6d., and it is presumed that on that basis the classification for the skilled employees will be built up. It will take a long time to do that. If the Government intend to build the silos before next wheat season, there will be, in the meantime, no protection for numbers of men engaged on various works connecting the silos with the railways. The Minister knows that at present 8s. 6d. is the minimum wage.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—No; 9s.

Mr. WARDE.—The Government authorized an increase of 6d. a day. This is not a classification, it is merely an additional 6d. a day given by the Government during the period of the war.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—The Board are dealing with the standard wage.

Mr. WARDE.—It will be a long time before the Board arrive at a determination.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—I do not think so.

Mr. WARDE.—The Board have been in existence for from seven to twelve months, and have not made more than two or three recommendations. They have some hundreds of men to classify. Until they have finished their classification, it cannot be gazetted, and during that time there will be no protection for the men.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—They can deal with this class of work at once if they like.

Mr. WARDE.—They can do a good many things if they like to, but they are not likely to choose to do this. They are dealing with the wages of the various men in the various grades of the Department, and they are not likely to go out of their way, and thus break the sequence of their work. For years we have protected the workers on railways by gradually raising the wage from 7s. to 9s. for construction work. Protection should be extended to these men to tide them over the temporary period—that is, the period that will elapse between now and the time when the Board arrive at a determination.

Mr. LAWSON.—Would it satisfy the honorable member if we put in the provision that was in the original clause?

Mr. WARDE.—That will be some protection. I would sooner see the clause that was in the Bill as it left this House. These men should have the protection afforded by the clause.

Mr. LAWSON.—We have no objection to do that.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney—Minister of Railways*).—By leave, I may say that the Government see no objection to the original clause being included, in order that there shall be some definite amount in the Bill.

Mr. HANNAH.—Could you not draft a clause providing for the wage to be paid at once?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—We cannot do that.

Mr. HANNAH.—Could you not take the basic wage as determined by the Commissioners?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—This provision fixes a minimum of 9s. a day. The Government have no objection to altering the condition in the amendment by inserting the original sub-clause.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—By leave, I must confess that I do not like the original clause, and, therefore, I do not strongly favour its re-insertion. I suggest that after the word "works" we should insert the words "other than railway construction."

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—We had better leave it at what I said, for we do not know where the other idea would lead us to.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—The insertion of an average rate of 9s. is the insertion of something that is behind the times.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—That is only fixing the minimum.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—That is different from the other proposal, which says that the average wage shall be 9s. That possibly means that some men will get more, and some will get less, than 9s. I do not want any to get less. Judging by what has appeared in the press, the Board have come to the conclusion that 9s. 6d. shall be the basic wage. Why, then, should we insert a provision making the average wage 9s.? I prefer not to accept it.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—I must support the view put forward by members of the Opposition in regard to the wage. The matter will be in a very unsatisfactory position if it is left entirely to the Commissioners. I should like to see a fixed rate.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The Minister of Railways has promised to restore the 9s.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—I do not think that 9s. is sufficient for this kind of work.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—That is only the minimum.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—The value of money to-day is very much less than it was four or five years ago. No working

man who has to maintain a wife and family can do it properly if he receives less than 10s. a day. That is the amount I should like to see fixed. We know what we receive ourselves, and we know that it does not go nearly as far as it did four or five years ago. The price of food and clothing is very much greater now than it was a few years ago, and there is not likely to be a reduction in the immediate future.

The House divided on the question that the Council's amendment, omitting sub-clause (1) of clause 16, be agreed with—

Ayes	26
Noes	23
Majority for the amendment				3

AYES.

Mr. Angus	Mr. M. K. McKenzie
Major Baird	„ McLeod
Mr. Barnes	„ Membrey
„ Bowser	„ Menzies
„ Carlisle	„ Mitchell
„ Deany	„ Oman
„ Gordon	Sir Alexander Peacock
„ Hutchinson	Mr. Pennington
„ Lawson	„ Purnell
„ Livingston	„ Snowball.
„ Mackey	Tellers:
„ Mackinnon	Mr. J. Gray
„ McDonald	„ Keast.
„ H. McKenzie	

NOES.

Mr. Bailey	Mr. McLachlan
„ A. A. Billson	„ Outram
„ J. W. Billson	„ Prendergast
„ Blackburn	„ Rogers
„ Clough	„ Sinclair
„ Cotter	„ D. Smith
„ Elmslie	„ Solly
„ Farthing	„ Touchter
„ Hannah	„ Warde.
„ Hogan	Tellers:
„ Jewell	Mr. Lemmon
„ McGregor	„ Tunnecliffe.

PAIR.

Mr. Bayles	Mr. McPherson.
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The Bill was ordered to be returned to the Legislative Council, with a message intimating the decision of the House.

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT BILL.

The House went into Committee for the further consideration of this Bill.

Discussion was resumed on clause 21—

(1) In the application of the Closer Settlement Act 1915 or the Land Acts to any land disposed of to a discharged soldier (including

a discharged soldier who has been permitted to occupy any Crown land in anticipation of the passing of this Act)—

(a) the Closer Settlement Act 1915 shall be read and construed—

(i) as if section 125 thereof were omitted;

(ii) as if in sub-section (1) of section 107 thereof the words "grant or" and the words "or grant" were omitted; and

(iii) as if in sub-section (2) of section 117 thereof the words "one hundred and twenty-five" were omitted; and

(b) the Land Acts shall be read and construed as if paragraph (a) of section 249 of the Land Act 1915 were omitted.

(2) The provisions of this section shall extend and apply to land under section 5 of this Act disposed of to a discharged soldier.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—This clause deals with the much-debated section 69 of our Closer Settlement Act of 1904. I have always felt that to be an extremely necessary provision of the Closer Settlement Act, and I think it of the utmost importance that a similar clause should be inserted in this Bill. The aim of the House generally is to make some permanent provision for the returned soldier. The returned soldier, as long as he is able to work, should be given every opportunity of living in decency and comfort. We have spent much time already during the discussion on this Bill in the endeavour to persuade the Government to give additional advances. In doing that, our idea was to give the returned soldier every opportunity of creating a permanent home, and finding permanent employment under the best conditions possible. That, I take it, briefly, is our aim. Should we not, then, see that our work in this direction is safeguarded? I feel confident, with some knowledge of how section 69 operates in closer settlement, that if this wise provision be not inserted in this Bill, we shall be placing a temptation before the discharged soldier to sell out his holding, probably at an increased price, and consequently much of the money we have risked will not be applied in the direction we desire. I am convinced, from the sporting character and the willingness to take risks that have been exhibited by the discharged soldiers, that they will be tempted to dispose of the land. We desire to bring together as many of these men as possible. But in place of that, unless a clause similar to section 69 is inserted, we shall gradually

lose them as settlers on the land. We know what has occurred under the Closer Settlement Act, through the facilities we have given to those settlers who desire to sell. It is a common thing, under the closer settlement conditions now operating, even with the residential section, for men to be continually selling out at a profit to other people.

Mr. KEAST.—They must hold the block for twelve years before they can do that.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Nothing of the kind. Men who have taken up closer settlement areas are continually selling out now at a profit.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—They sell their leases.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—And they do so with the permission of the authorities.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Would the Leader of the Opposition deny that privilege to the soldier who becomes dissatisfied with his occupation?

Mr. ELMSLIE.—On broad principles, the returned soldier should not be treated differently from anybody else. We must, in considering this measure, keep before our minds that this is an effort to provide a permanent shelter and permanent employment for men who have been fighting our battles.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Is it not a fact that the men would have to remain twelve years on the land before they could dispose of it?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The law is that the closer settler cannot transfer his lease until he has held the land for twelve years.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I am not disputing the law. I am only saying what the practice is.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—How are they doing it?

Mr. ELMSLIE.—It is a case of the man in the stocks, who found himself there although he was told he could not be put in the stocks at all. The settlers are doing it. Men have left the land who have not been there anything like twelve years.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—In certain circumstances, the Minister can permit a sale to take place.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Then we have a loophole there at once.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—The returned soldier should not be able to sell to any one but a returned soldier.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—No closer settlement settler can get his grant until he

has been on his block twelve years. He cannot sell a grant he does not possess. There may be some transfers of leases.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—There are. I am told that in one particular case a man went on the land with practically nothing, and after selling off he left with £800 in cash. That shows that under special circumstances a profit can be made, in spite of the provision regarding the twelve years' occupation. After all, that is not the most important argument that can be put forward against this clause. We know, from experience, that many of these men will come back altogether different in regard to some of their characteristics from what they were when they went away. It has been the experience after every war that the men engaged in it developed a roving disposition. In this particular case we shall find that our men will want in times of peace to revisit the scenes of their struggles. It has been stated by a number of members in this House, as well as by other people who are in a position to know, that our soldiers on their return will be in an unsettled frame of mind, and they will need something which will tie them to this country until they recognise the necessity for establishing homes of their own, and securing permanent employment. If we do not have the compulsory residence conditions included in this Bill, there is bound to be speculation in land. Instead of our returned soldiers going on to the land permanently, many of them will want to get away after a year or two if they are not compelled to remain. We want them to become settlers, because we believe it will give them a better opportunity of earning a livelihood than they will be able to obtain in other walks of life. Most of them are young fellows, and we know that, when we are dealing with trades, we want our boys to be apprenticed, so that they may be fitted to follow a definite calling.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—The argument as to apprentices will not apply, because, if both parties feel that a boy is going to be a failure, they can consent to the cancellation of the apprenticeship.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—By adopting the provisions of section 69, there will be nothing to prevent that being done. We are proposing to settle our returned soldiers on the lands of this State under special conditions. We have every desire to do the right thing, and we must see that our efforts are not frustrated.

We do not want to run any risk of making them speculators in land, instead of settlers. Can any of those who favour the elimination of section 69 say that that section has in any way interfered with the taking up of closer settlement areas? We know that settlers who took up land in ignorance of its provisions have since raised objections, but after the provisions were generally known, it cannot be said that they interfered materially with that kind of settlement. Many closer settlers strongly believe in that section. When once we have given the returned soldier or anybody else a good start under this Bill, we cannot afford to put him in a position in which he will be able to say that he has lost his money in some way or other, and wants another start. If the provisions of section 69 are enforced, it will tend to make the settler form some attachment to his holding. It must not be forgotten that he is asked to reside on his land only eight months of the year.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Could a settler make a success of his holding by residing on it for a shorter period of the year?

Mr. ELMSLIE.—He could not. If we are to believe the stories that are told of the way farmers have to struggle in order to make a success of their operations, it would seem to be necessary to have 48 hours in a day instead of 24. We are frequently told that there is no such thing as an eight-hours day on a farm, and that men on the land have to work from morning till night. We shall not be imposing any hardship by including the provisions of this section, in view of the fact that we desire to make this scheme a success. While we desire them to remain for at least eight months in every year on their holdings, it is obvious that they cannot afford to take four months holiday every year. All their time will be required to make farming a success.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—A man may earn a good deal more during those four months than he will get in the same time from his land in the early stages.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—That may be so, but I am convinced, if this scheme is going to be a success, that the settler will have to devote all his time to his own holding. Ultimately, his efforts will return him much more in hard cash than he would

earn if he were away shearing, for instance. I know the argument will be raised that these men will want to go away from their holdings, so as to earn a few pounds, but there cannot be anything in an argument of that kind. Fancy such an argument being raised, in view of the money that is to be advanced to the settlers.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—The family will be able to look after the farm while he is away.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—My experience is that in the early stages the more time a man spends on his own farm, the better it will be for him. It should not be necessary for him to make a slave of his wife and family. It must not be forgotten, however, that many of the men who will be settled under this law are now single, and, consequently, they will not be able to rely on such assistance as suggested by the honorable member. We do not want to put temptation in the way of these young men to abandon their holdings.

Mr. KEAST.—As a rule, a man who is going to be a permanent settler gets married very soon after getting on to his land.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—If that is so, that is all the more reason why he should stop at home and look after his wife as well as his holding.

Mr. KEAST.—A home without a wife is not much in the country. While away recently I saw a couple of bachelors' homes, and I did not think much of them.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Does not the honorable member think that it will be very much better for the settler who marries to stay at home and keep his wife company?

Mr. ANGUS.—Both of them will have to work under this Bill.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I am afraid that will be the case, unless its provisions are materially altered. I am not inclined to gush over the prospects of success under this Bill, and I shall have less confidence still if the provisions of section 69 are not included.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Section 69 is not essential to insure residence. That is provided for in another section, which is allowed to remain.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Section 69 is the one that provides for residence for a certain

period, and even that stipulates for residence for only eight months of each year. In view of the fact that we are endeavouring to provide these men with an opportunity to earn their living, why in the name of common sense is there any objection to compelling them to reside for eight months in each year upon their holdings? The proposal of the Minister is very objectionable, and I hope it will not be agreed to.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—I desire to see this Bill made as liberal as possible for those men who have been fighting for this country. I have already indicated the direction in which I should like to see it liberalized. I refer particularly to the payment of rent and interest, and the assistance the State should receive from the Commonwealth. I have no desire for the Commonwealth to run this particular scheme, because we have all the machinery to do what is necessary to carry it to a successful issue. If we are to make this scheme a success, we should have what is known as an agricultural bank. If the Bill is liberalized in these directions, the settler should be allowed during the first five years to definitely establish himself upon his holding without paying rent. We are not giving them the concessions to which they are entitled, and I hope, before the Bill is finally passed, that we will be able to deal with the settlers more liberally than seems possible under the present circumstances. We will not be liberalizing this scheme to any extent by leaving out section 69. The main thing in a scheme of this sort is to see that the settler gets cheap land. The conditions imposed by section 69 are not very likely to trouble him in any way if that is done. If a man has been able to get cheap land, and wants to dispose of it, he can always find some one to take it from him. However, that is not the object of any scheme of closer settlement. We do not want to put people in the position of buying land cheaply, and then making a profit out of it by selling it soon afterwards to some one who need not reside on it. The object of our closer settlement scheme has been to take men away from the city, and settle them upon the land, so that they may develop this country. It is absolutely necessary, in order to secure closer settlement, to make residence compulsory. We know there are many districts in this

State comparatively depleted of population because of the absence of some provision for compulsory residence. At the outset of land alienation in this State, no provision was made for compulsory residence, and the result has been that this State has not been developed in the way it ought to have been. The lands were thrown open and men applied for them. The selectors were numerous where the lands were valuable, and were accessible to the people. Then we came to the period when the lands available were comparatively poor. Even in those circumstances the applications were numerous. On the rich land, as well as on the poor land, however, we failed to keep the original selector. Why? Because he saw an opportunity to sell. I do not blame him for selling, nor do I blame the man who bought the land. As a rule the purchaser was a man who wanted a lot of land. If there were ten or twelve selectors in the vicinity a large land-owner who was in a financial position to increase his holding bought those men out when they got their titles. As a result the little homes which the selectors had built disappeared. Nobody lived in them afterwards. They were not required. The land-holder who purchased them did not want them. The schools established in the vicinity for the benefit of the selectors' children were, in many cases, full-time schools. As the large land-holder got to work these schools came down to half-time schools, and, in some instances, they were closed up altogether. That was because there was no provision that when a selector parted with his land the succeeding holder had to reside on it the same as he had done. Those are the facts, and that sort of thing was bad business for this State, so far as filling up the waste places of Victoria is concerned. It was practically driving people off the land into the cities or larger towns. Under a system of that kind we could not hope to develop this country to any great extent. This State has an area of 56,000,000 acres, of which not more than 5,000,000 acres are under cultivation; yet we all know that Victoria is capable of greater cultivation than that. We know also that stock, whether cattle or sheep, have not increased. If Australia is to live up to what it should live up to the number of stock here should, despite droughts, increase from year to year, and the area of land under cultivation should

also increase. But legislation in Victoria, associated with the land, has not been of a character to encourage that. Up to the period of closer settlement there was very little done to bring about development in Victoria. It may be said that areas were thrown open, and that people selected and obtained their titles. Many of them, however, sold out. After that wise men saw the necessity for some reasonable provision for keeping the people on the land. As a result section 69 was adopted, and a very wise provision it is. It does not place any hardship on the person who takes up land under it, because, at any time after a certain number of years, he can dispose of it, but he must dispose of it to somebody who will personally reside there.

Mr. McDONALD.—Can he raise money on it?

Mr. McLACHLAN.—Yes, up to £1,000; but as a settler he could do better if we had an agricultural bank. Settlers will tell you that private banks will not advance to them on account of the title. That shows that in connexion with closer settlement an agricultural bank is necessary. That we have not got. Some day, probably, we will have one. If we are going to take away that which makes for permanent settlement, however, then we are not likely to reach that stage for some considerable time. Even admitting that without section 69 the aggregation of land could be prevented in connexion with our ordinary closer settlement nobody can deny that depopulation would result. When there are twenty blocks there will be a house on each, and people living in it. If section 69 is repealed while aggregation may not ensue, depopulation must follow, because the outgoing settler can sell to a person who need not reside on the land as he has done. I do not say that closer settlement boards have not made mistakes in the past. We all make mistakes. They did the best they could, and they have done well for the settler too. With all the experience which we have had in closer settlement greater care will undoubtedly be taken in the purchase of land. Settlers will have to be satisfied beyond all doubt, and they will have the assistance of local knowledge which they did not have in the past, that the land which they are purchasing is land out of which the settler can make a profit to repay him for his work, and he is entitled to

that. The settlers in Kilmany Park recently had their land revalued. At the outset it was said that the Board had paid too much for that land. That was also said in a good many other cases. The settlers had a hard struggle, and several of them were coming to grief. I remember saying in this House, four or five years ago, that there would have to be a revaluation of this land, but the House laughed at the idea. The revaluation of some of the land has taken place, and Kilmany Park is one of the estates re-valued. Some of the settlers at Kilmany Park said to me, "We are not troubling about section 69. We have got the land at a figure at which we can make a profit out of it, and that is what we are here for, and we are here to stay." They are now satisfied. Other land will have to be subjected to revaluation. If, however, land is bought well then the settler will get on all right. If he gets on all right there will be no difficulty when he desires to leave the district in finding another person to take his place, because he can give him a guarantee that he has made a success of his holding. A settler will never make a success of it if the land is too dear. If the provision of section 69 is not retained in connexion with this Bill it is not doing any good to the soldier, and it is not doing any good to the country. As I have said, we should go to extraordinary lengths as far as the soldiers are concerned in view of all they have done for Australia. That is the feeling of the people generally, and the Bill should reflect that feeling, but the omission of section 69 will not liberalize the measure in any way. If I thought that the operation of that section would be a hardship to soldier settlers, or to any other men on the land, I should certainly vote against it, but I do not think that would be so. There is an agitation in many quarters to get rid of it, and this House is yielding to it. If the House refuses to incorporate section 69 in this Bill, which is a closer settlement measure, it may be taken for granted that it will not be continued in connexion with other closer settlement. It is clear that if the provision is not included in this measure it will go out of operation, as far as other closer settlers are concerned, and I say that that will be a mistake. We are only in our infancy as an agricultural popu-

lation. As I have pointed out, comparatively little is being done with our immense area of 56,000,000 acres. We know that if this State is to make headway we must not only make provision to keep people on the land, but we shall have to teach agriculture in the country. We shall have to teach it to the youth of this country at an early stage, and give them a bias in that direction. That must be done if agriculture is to become the backbone of this State, and the sooner our education system is recast in this direction the better. Until that time arrives there is nothing to prevent the Minister and the Government, or the House, doing that which they believe will help to keep people on the land. Everybody complains of the rush of people to the city. Half the population of Victoria is resident here—700,000 people on less than 100,000 acres of land. If allowance is also made for the population in various other centres in Victoria it leaves comparatively few people on the land. It indicates that there are numerous empty spaces in this State. They are not barren places, but places that should be settled. We know that there is a market in the Old World for the greater portion of the produce likely to be obtained from the land if people are only encouraged to go on it. There is a prospect of a successful future for settling. If the Government do not take the step I have alluded to, the people who take up the land are not likely to do it. As I said before, I do not blame a man for disposing of his land, nor do I blame the large land-owner for buying him out, and aggregating his land. The law allows him to do that. However, that sort of thing went on long enough. It came to the stage when the State said it should stop, and inserted section 69 in the Closer Settlement Act of 1904. It is the only provision that will stop that kind of thing, and the only one that will stop the depopulation of the country that is going on. I think honorable members want to be fair to every man, whether he is engaged on the land, or whether he is engaged in other work. We do know that men who are upon the land are subject to loss by droughts. Many of those who get a living now upon the land have to work very long hours. Many of them have to sacrifice many of

the pleasures that people under more comfortable circumstances are able to enjoy, yet they struggle on, and it is said sometimes that some of these people on the land have done remarkably well. I do not know that they have, but I think that what they have got they have earned. They have done without much which other people have enjoyed. If you give the soldier settlers the necessary roads, the necessary railways, and cheap land—we ought to be able to give them land out of which they could make a living—then I see no reason why a provision similar to section 69 should not be included in the Bill. There are a good many closer settlers in my district. There are some, it is true, who want section 69 eliminated, and there are some who are indifferent in regard to that section. If you were to ask the townspeople in the neighbourhood of those estates whether they wanted section 69 to remain, they would say, "Yes. We are behind this section; the people of the State are behind it, and you will break faith with us if you take the section out of the Closer Settlement Act." I believe it will go out of the Act if its provisions are not put in this Bill. This is a matter of great importance in connexion with the development of this State, and while including the provisions of section 69 in this Bill, we could, at the same time, give to the soldier settlers, who above all men, for what they have done, deserve liberal conditions, the treatment which the people of this State recognise they should receive.

Mr. SOLLY.—The question of "spotted titles," as they have been termed by honorable members who are opposed to the provisions of section 69 of the old Closer Settlement Act, which the Government have not embodied in this Bill, is one that has been debated from every conceivable point of view for a number of years in this House. To my mind, there can be no doubt as to the wisdom of previous Parliaments and Governments, which have insisted that, in order to insure permanent settlement, section 69 should remain, and, in my opinion, it is essential that the provisions of that section should be included in the Bill now before us. Such provisions are, I think, even more necessary with regard to the settlement of the soldiers than with regard to the settlement of ordinary citizens. The one big point that has been made during this

discussion was that made by the honorable member for Fitzroy, and it should be emphasized very strongly indeed. He based his argument mainly upon the statement made by the Minister of Lands, that he had it on very excellent authority that land-owners of this State, recognising the great and good work and noble deeds that have been done by our soldiers, considered that it was up to them to sacrifice some of that which they hold very dear—their land titles—to cut up their estates, and to make their best land available at the lowest possible rates for the settlement of returned soldiers. I think that land-owners who are prepared to do that have shown a very commendable spirit, and I, for one, appreciate it. We can only say, "Good luck" to a man like that, who, as a citizen of Australia, is prepared to cut up the best of his land, and hand it out at cheap rates to the returned soldiers, so that they may be secured from want and poverty in the future. The sentiments actuating such men are noble sentiments, which can be commended by every section in the community. But, having listened to the statement of the Minister, one began to ponder as to what was going to be the ultimate result, and I think the argument put forward by the honorable member for Fitzroy was sound in its basis. The landlord who is prepared to sacrifice his land is prepared to do it in the interests of the soldiers—not in the interests of any other persons in the community—because of the sacrifices the soldiers have made. Would the land-owner be willing to sacrifice his land if he knew that there would be general trafficking in the land that he desires the soldiers to settle on? It is highly probable that, if we omit from this Bill the provisions of section 69 of the Closer Settlement Act of 1904, the land-owners will say, "When the soldier gets the land, there will be an inducement for him to sell at the enhanced price he can get." One of these men may buy the land for £500, and the opportunity may present itself later on to him to sell for £1,000 or £2,000. If the land-owners carry out what was stated by the Minister in charge of the Bill, the soldiers will get the land cheap. The price will necessarily be under the market value, and after settlement takes place, and a few improvements are made, the value of the land will increase above the value at the present time, and there will

be an inducement to a soldier settler to sell out at a price perhaps £1,500 over and above what it actually cost him to go on the land. Therefore, in order to protect the soldier himself, it is essential to have the provisions of section 69 embodied in this Bill. I think the statement of the honorable member for Fitzroy was as logical as any statement he has ever made in this chamber, and I trust that consideration will be given to it by the Government. The Government say that they are anxious that the soldier settler shall be a permanent resident on the land, and also a permanent producer so long as he lives. I am afraid that the whole of the principles of the Bill are embodied in the settlement and financial clauses, and if there is any weakness in either the settlement clauses or the financial clauses, in my opinion, it will result in a good deal of failure. This question has been very gravely considered by the Soldiers' Welfare League, and in a letter which has been handed to me by the Leader of the Opposition, they make the following suggestion—

Add to section 16 of clause 21—

"But in no case shall any consent (where a consent is required of any authority) be given under such respective Acts to the transfer of a discharged soldier's holding, or any surrender be accepted of any such holding save for the purpose of vesting the same in some other discharged soldier upon the same terms as the discharged soldier desiring to transfer or surrender held the same."

That is to say, the transfer of a soldier's allotment could take place only to a returned soldier. No trafficking whatever should take place under any circumstances. I think that would be a proper provision to make in this Bill. Any large land-owners who make their estates available in the way indicated by the Minister will only do it for the sake of the returned soldiers. They do not want any trafficking in the land. I presume they want the returned soldiers to stay on the land. That is the reason they are willing to cut up their estates. The returned soldiers themselves say, "If we get any of this land, it is only reasonable that if any transfer takes place, it shall only be on condition that another returned soldier shall get it." What argument can there be against that? The returned soldiers themselves request that a provision such as this should be embodied in the Bill. It would be a safeguard not only to the soldier settlers, but to those who are prepared to

dispose of their estates in order that the returned soldiers may become permanent settlers. If it were known that there was to be general trafficking in the soldier allotments, I think the land-owners who are now prepared to cut up their estates would not be prepared to do it.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—They might as well do it themselves, and take the profits.

Mr. SOLLY.—Yes. The land-owners might as well do that, and hand the profits over to the returned soldiers themselves. But I presume that the land-owner does not want to do anything but what we want to do. He wishes to see these men entirely out of the grip of poverty and want in the future. The whole object of the Bill is to assist any man who has done his best in the interests of this country of ours, and in the interests of the Empire, and who has been prepared to sacrifice his life for the preservation of that liberty which we enjoy. We say that nothing is too good for such a man, and that, as far as our legislation can do it, we shall see that he shall never know what want is. It appears to me that a large number of improvements have been suggested by the Returned Soldiers Association. The amendments suggested in substitution of some of the sub-clauses of clause 21 appear to have been very carefully thought out by the organization.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—Those are suggested by the Ivanhoe branch.

Mr. SOLLY.—That does not alter the fact.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—It does, because the executive of the Returned Soldiers Association desire the other thing. They desire the elimination of section 69. However, it does not alter the fact that these suggestions are entitled to consideration. The secretary submitted this to me personally, and discussed the whole thing with me.

Mr. SOLLY.—I see that Mr. Walker is the secretary of the Soldiers' Welfare League of Ivanhoe, and he and those associated with him have made these suggestions.

Mr. BAILEY.—Their last provision is very necessary if we want to prevent dummying.

Mr. SOLLY.—I do not know whether the Minister in charge of the Bill is prepared to accept an amendment in this direction.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—That was an amendment that they proposed in clause 16?

Mr. SOLLY.—Yes.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—Of course, we cannot consider it just at this stage, but we could consider it after the third reading.

Mr. SOLLY.—I should like to know whether the Ministry is favorably disposed towards it.

Mr. KEAST.—It is worthy of consideration.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—Yes, it is worthy of consideration, but I have not considered that aspect of the question yet. I shall be prepared to say after the third reading.

Mr. SOLLY.—I would ask the honorable gentleman to give the matter careful consideration, seeing that it has been stated that a large number of land-owners in the State of Victoria are prepared to give some of the best lands for the purpose of soldier settlement at the least possible cost to the State. It has been pointed out that if these lands are accepted by the Government, and returned soldiers go on these lands, which, I presume, are adjacent to the railways and amongst the best lands in the Western District, there will be every inducement for the settler not to remain on his land very long, but to dispose of his holding because of the high price he could get for it in comparison with what he paid for it.

Mr. MITCHELL.—He must remain twelve years before this clause would apply.

Mr. SOLLY.—Perhaps that gets over some of the difficulty. But twelve years will not see the last of this State, and probably will not see the last of our returned soldiers. There are a number of years to follow. What we want to do is not only to make the twelve years of the settler's existence on the land actually secure, but to protect his future for all time. That is the main object of the Bill, I presume, so that the returned soldier who is placed on the land shall never know what it is to be in want.

Mr. OMAN.—To whom will these blocks be transferable on the disappearance of the returned soldier?

Mr. SOLLY.—The point raised by the Ivanhoe branch is that, if returned soldiers dispose of their holdings at any time, a returned soldier shall have preference over anybody else.

Mr. OMAN.—But there will be a period when returned soldiers disappear. To whom, then, will the land be transferred?

Mr. BAILEY.—If there was no returned soldier wanting the land, there would be no harm in selling to any one else.

Mr. SOLLY.—The land would be handed down to the wife or children of the returned soldier. In the event of the returned soldier leaving no issue, I think the proper course to adopt would be to provide that the land should be returned to the State, so that provision could be made for others who desired to settle on the block. I see no difficulty so far as that is concerned. I trust the Minister will give this matter very careful consideration.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—I am making a note of it.

Mr. SOLLY.—I would ask him to embody that provision in the Bill, if possible, as a security against trafficking in the land, which has caused a great deal of centralization in our State. I am sure that it would be one of the biggest factors in securing the interests of the soldier settler, as well as the interest of the State as a whole. I trust that some provision of this sort will be embodied in the Bill if it is intended not to apply section 69.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I am glad that the Government have, after mature consideration, decided to provide as they have done in clause 21. I think that any returned soldier who was prepared to retain section 69 could not be aware of the injurious effect of it upon the ultimate grant that he would receive as representing the years of labour that he will be required to put into that land before he acquires his grant. Section 69, which is now known as section 125, does not apply at all to the leasehold title, which represents a period of from twelve to thirty years, as the case may be. During that time residence is insisted on. I have always felt the difficulty in dealing with titles which are really a contradiction in themselves. They are not a grant of the fee-simple of the land at all if they have in them this objectionable condition. While I am anxious to prevent the aggregation of lands, I have always felt that the provision which insists on the intense culture of the properties during the leasehold period, and the putting on of heavy improvements, with the provision preventing an individual from holding more than one allotment, was sufficient to prevent aggregation.

Mr. BAILEY.—What about depopulation?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—We have not witnessed depopulation taking place where titles of that nature have been issued. Depopulation, no doubt, took place under the old land laws of this State, in which no provisions existed prohibiting a man having more than one holding, and requiring the bringing under cultivation of so many acres of land every year during the leasehold period. Surely there is no logic in saying that the condition of residence should be involved in the ultimate grant of the land, when we know that a grant of land with that condition in it is one that a holder cannot dispose of with the same facility as the grant of land not encumbered with such a condition. It seems to be an injustice to inflict upon the soldier settlers a condition of that kind.

Mr. MENZIES.—Residence is always demanded.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I am aware of that. Residence is insisted upon without the retention of section 125 at all. It is like leg-roping the soldier settler to provide for his treatment in this particular way, because he will not realize the position.

Mr. BAILEY.—If he wants to live on the land permanently, there will be no great hardship.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—We know that many of the soldier settlers will honestly try to make a success of their holdings, but in the end they will find they have made a mistake.

Mr. BAILEY.—They can sell them.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—They will not be able to sell with the same facility as they would without this condition, and they will not be able to dispose of all their years of labour to the same advantage. I feel sure we shall be placing a handicap on the settlers by asking them to take a defective title of this sort. The honorable member for Port Fairy, with his legal training, will know that it is an absolute contradiction in terms to describe such a grant as a title in fee simple.

Mr. BAILEY.—It only restricts the number of purchasers, that is all.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—The honorable member knows very well that such a restriction will depreciate the value of the land. The more the number of probable purchasers is limited, the more the value

of the land is discounted. It is not doing justice to one's knowledge or experience in land matters to say we shall not seriously detract from the value of the land when we limit the number of purchasers.

Mr. BAILEY.—Land has only one true value—that is its productive value.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—That is all very well; but if we limit the area of purchasers, and restrict competition, we must bring about a decline in the capital value, while still having regard to its productivity. I am anxious to have some legislation dealing with this particular matter, because a number of applicants are anxiously waiting to get on to the land. Although the Closer Settlement Board has dealt with a large number of applicants, there are now 300 or 400 men waiting to be dealt with, and it is important that we should have some kind of law on the statute-book.

Mr. MENZIES.—It is important we should have the right kind of law.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—But we must make a start. We are dealing with an entirely new problem, and we have the experience of no other country to guide us. It is necessary to devise some scheme, but it is quite impossible for us to secure one now which will be perfect. I hope we will not think of waiting for the time when we can get a perfect measure. We shall not be able to do that, until we are able to be guided by our experience of this measure. There is no doubt that, when its defects are demonstrated, Parliament will readily make what alterations are necessary. When once we get a measure on the statute-book the Government will be able to deal with the claims which are waiting consideration, and prevent the continuance of the dissatisfaction which exists at the present time, because of the absence of some law under which returned soldiers may secure holdings. The delay is resulting, not only in the soldiers passing through a period of idleness and uncertainty, but in their gradually losing the money which they were able to draw on their return. There is another clause in the Bill which has some connexion with this one, where it is provided that certain land is to be set aside for soldiers' settlements. I do not know how we can possibly carry out such a provision. It will be inevitable that some of the land allotted to soldiers will eventually pass

into other hands. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to prevent soldiers having the utmost freedom in dealing with their holdings, otherwise we will hamper them very materially if, in the course of a few years, they want to dispose of their holdings. I do not think the amendment suggested by the honorable member for Carlton should be adopted. I certainly would not like to see a provision inserted in any law of this State that these blocks can only be transferred to returned soldiers.

Mr. MENZIES.—That might be worse than section 69.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—It would be distinctly worse, and it would be unworkable, because we are looking forward to the time when we shall have no more returned soldiers to deal with.

Mr. OMAN.—There will come a time when no suitable men will be available.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—While such a proposal may appeal to us at first sight, it becomes unthinkable when we consider it. I hope the Minister will consider where we are in regard to an earlier clause in the Bill, and I do not think there need be any objection in my referring to it now. The clause refers to land which is to be set aside for returned soldiers, and retained for discharged soldiers exclusively. How we are to give effect to such a provision I do not know.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—That is only a matter of setting apart Crown lands. The areas so set apart have been withdrawn from civilian application.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Then these areas are to be reserved exclusively for soldiers. If that is so, it does not quite say what it means.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The clause simply means that for certain lands civilians cannot apply.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I do not wish to delay the passage of this Bill. I hope the Committee will not insist upon section 69 being included, because the danger of the aggregation of large estates is amply provided against elsewhere. We must not do anything which would put the soldier in the serious position that he will be unable, at the end of five or six years, when he finds he has made a mistake, to dispose of his holding, with the results of his accumulated labour, to the best advantage.

Mr. BAILEY.—The amendment suggested by the honorable member for Carlton is a very important one, but I really do not know how it can be included in this Bill without interfering with the interests of the soldiers. There might be a time limit, say, fifteen or twenty years, within which the land could not be transferred except to a returned soldier. We have been told that there are owners of land in this State who are willing to place areas at the disposal of the Government for the settlement of returned soldiers. I take it that these land-owners are acting in a patriotic way, but possibly they would not be willing to place their land under offer to the Government unless it were for the sole purpose of settling soldiers. Would they be willing to place their land under offer to the Government if they knew that within a few years' time the soldier may transfer it to a man who has never been in the Forces at all? That is one of the weaknesses of this measure. After a soldier has been on the land for a few years, he can transfer his lease so long as he gets permission from the Minister—no doubt after using the influence of honorable members to get that permission. Honorable members seem to be impressed with the idea that section 69 will interfere with the selling of land; but there is nothing in that section which will prevent any settler from disposing of his land, so long as the person who purchases it complies with the conditions which are imposed upon him.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Would the honorable member lend money on such a title?

Mr. BAILEY.—Unfortunately, I have no money to lend. It is often a great safeguard if a settler cannot go to a financial institution to borrow money. If the Government make the land available at a reasonable price, and finance him in getting his stock and implements, then it is often in the best interests of the settler that he cannot get into the hands of the money lender.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—There would be no objection if he came to you—a decent individual.

Mr. BAILEY.—There would be no objection, because if I had the money available, the settler would get it on decent terms, and not at the rate that some money lenders charge. If a man takes up land under the Closer Settlement Act today, he must comply with section 69; but if a soldier takes up land under this Bill, there will be no provision whatever for his

personal residence. In a short time, that soldier can transfer the land to somebody else. In fact, he may be acting as a dummy for some one. The person for whom he acts as dummy gets a clear title. If he took advantage of the provisions of the Closer Settlement Act, he would not get a clear title. In my opinion, section 69 does not interfere with the sale of land, excepting so far as it restricts the number of purchasers. When there are a number of men tumbling over one another in their desire to buy land, an artificial value is created for that land. The man who wants to go on land for the purpose of making a living out of it, and remaining as a settler, inquires as to the productive value of the land, and that is the true value.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—There is plenty of land for sale to-day, and there are no buyers.

Mr. BAILEY.—That is because of the artificial value which was created in the past. The man who understands farming, and who purchases land for the purpose of making a living out of it, will make inquiries as to its productive value, so that he may become a successful settler. As far as that is concerned, a man would not be restricted by the operation of section 69. It may be true that, owing to the improvements, and owing to the provision of one block one man, aggregation may be prevented in many instances; but the question, as far as the people in the country are concerned, is the depopulation which will be brought about if section 69 is not applied. If the Government mean this to be a closer settlement measure, they should insist on the inclusion of section 69. If people want land on which they do not wish to reside, they can get it from outside buyers; but in the case of genuine settlers whom the Government affords facilities for going on the land, they should be prepared to comply with the conditions laid down by the Government, which has spent millions of money in order that they may be settled.

Mr. McDONALD.—I am pleased that section 69 of the old Act, or section 125 of the Consolidated Act, as it now is, has been excluded from the present Bill. In my opinion, section 69 would have been a very great blot on this measure. There is no provision which has caused so much dissatisfaction among those on closer settlements. The Royal Commission that

inquired into the conditions of closer settlement generally recommended the abolition of that section. After taking evidence from all sources, they found it retarded the settler. I trust we shall have an opportunity of discussing the valuable report presented by the Commission. For some reason, it has not been discussed here yet. I look upon the clause before us as a special one for the brave boys who have returned from the Front, and have applied for land. If section 69 operates in connexion with this measure it will be the means of preventing a number of soldiers from applying for land. They know that settlers are not able to work their land as they should do at present owing to that provision. It has been admitted here that not one financial institution, even the State Savings Bank, will advance money on a title subject to section 69. That places settlers in a different position from their neighbours who purchase land from other sources. If section 69 is included it will mean that soldier settlers who, owing to the drought or other causes, lose their crops or herds, will not be able to raise money on what should be their best security—the land. The honorable member for Port Fairy said he would advance the money if he had it, but there are not many of that way of thinking. If any man here is entitled to own a piece of land it is the man who has fought for Australia and volunteered to do so. To hamper soldier settlers with section 69 would not be treating them as they deserve. I cannot understand honorable members who wish soldier settlers to be treated in the most liberal way insisting on the inclusion of the section. I am going to vote for the clause as it stands because the soldiers who apply for land should get a clear title. They are getting very little indeed under the Bill—nothing like what honorable members would like to see them get, and what they do get should be freely given, and they should obtain a free title to the land which they are allotted.

Mr. LIVINGSTON (Minister of Mines).—A good deal has been said with regard to section 69. I have had considerable experience in connexion with its operation. Honorable members may remember that several years ago the late Mr. Thomsen and myself were deputed by the Government of which Mr. Watt was Premier to investigate the operation of

the Closer Settlement Act. We devoted a lot of time to the inquiries. Both of us had a good deal of knowledge in connexion with land settlement, and we went from one end of Victoria to the other, visiting a great number of estates, and examining some hundreds of witnesses. Although we were not specially asked to report with regard to section 69, it was a curious thing that, wherever we went, the first question asked by the settlers was, "What are you going to do about section 69?" We had to assure them that it was not meant to be a bar to their title, and that the Government had merely adopted it as a means of making them permanent settlers. They had an effective argument, however, from their point of view. Some of them had gone to financial institutions and asked for temporary relief in order to purchase stock and make improvements about the farm, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they were refused. The banks said, "This is not a perfect title. We will have nothing to do with it." Therefore the men had to rely entirely on their own efforts. We know that there are various provisions in the Closer Settlement Act which to a great extent prevent the aggregation of land. Although it has never been proved, it is said that aggregation will take place if section 69 is knocked out.

Mr. HOGAN. — With regard to those settlers borrowing money, none of them has got his title.

Mr. LIVINGSTON. — Even in the case of the ordinary Crown selection various financial institutions will lend even on a licence, independent of a lease.

Mr. BAILEY. — Does not the Government lend them up to 60 per cent.?

Mr. LIVINGSTON. — In many cases that is not nearly enough. Over and over again it has been stated, to my mind without the slightest foundation, that aggregation will take place without section 69. That is purely an assumption. It has never been shown that aggregation will take place, but we do know perfectly well that there is no aggregation to-day in connexion with the first estates purchased under the Closer Settlement Act, to which section 69 does not apply. If aggregation would take place without section 69 it would certainly have taken place on such estates as those where the land was valuable. One of the great preventives of aggregation is the heavy

amount of improvement put on the land. That absolutely or nearly prevents one man swallowing up his neighbour. He has not the money to do it.

Mr. HOGAN. — Have you chloroformed the Minister of Railways while you are getting all this in?

Mr. LIVINGSTON. — I am stating my experience. These settlers desire that section 69 should be abolished. Because of it some of them actually left their land. Of course, I do think that those who did that were rather timid, and, perhaps, did not sufficiently study the position for their own welfare. However, I quite understand the position if the block was badly bought. Bad subdivision is a big curse. Land of fair quality has been bought at a reasonable price, but in all large estates there are certain fringes which the owners would not cut out. Therefore there are certain portions not suitable for closer settlement. I may say that whoever is accountable for some of the subdivisions has done more to injure closer settlement than any one else, because if one man is given the very pick of an estate, and another receives the refuse, the former has a perfectly good proposition, and the latter must go to the wall.

Mr. HOGAN. — Who did it?

Mr. LIVINGSTON. — I do not know exactly who did it in every case. I know some gentlemen who carried out subdivisions, but I do not wish to mention their names at the present time. Certainly the manner in which they did it reflects no credit on them, and many a man rues the day that those men subdivided the estates. Although we were not authorized to report on section 69, still, so great was the objection by the settlers to it, that we asked the Government of the day seriously to consider section 69. Personally, I do not believe that the repeal of section 69 would lead to aggregation. I do not think that the fact that the provisions of section 69 are omitted from this Bill is going to cause aggregation.

Mr. HOGAN. — I want to say a word or two in reply to what the Minister of Mines has said. He has tried, perhaps innocently enough, to deceive some people in the country, if he does not succeed in deceiving members of this Parliament, by pointing out that settlers under section 69 of the Act of 1904 cannot borrow from the banks. But I should like to ask the

honorable gentleman what security can they submit to borrow money on? The closer settlers do not get a title to the land on which they are established until they have been there for twelve years. The Minister is aware of that. Referring to that point, the honorable member for Brighton said that in some cases financiers lend on leasehold. But in this case the settlers under the Closer Settlement Act cannot even offer a first mortgage on a leasehold to a mortgagee, because the Government have provided the land for the closer settlers, and have provided them with the capital to purchase the land, and all that the Government are charging the settlers is interest on the capital. The Government are taking the place of the mortgagee, and are giving far better terms than the settlers could get from any mortgagee, or bank, or financial institution in the country. The Minister knows that, and the honorable member for Brighton knows it. The Government, in addition to providing the settler with land, are financing him. They have a first mortgage, and all they charge him is interest on the first mortgage— $3\frac{1}{2}$ and 4 per cent.—and an additional $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. redemption. That being so, what could a settler offer to any other institution except a second mortgage? But the Government have a first mortgage to the full value of the land, and I ask where is there any money lender in this State—private or public—who will lend money on a second mortgage if there is a first mortgage in existence for the full value of the land?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—There are plenty of leasehold titles where there is no money owing to the Crown,

Mr. HOGAN.—That is not an answer to my question. I ask where is there any financial institution or private money lender who will advance one penny on a second mortgage if there is a first mortgage standing for the full value of the property?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—That question does not touch the subject.

Mr. HOGAN.—It touches the thing right to the heart. All that you can borrow on a first mortgage is two-thirds of the value of the land. If there is a first mortgage for two-thirds of the value of the land, and you try to get money on a second mortgage elsewhere, you cannot get it. I would ask the honorable member for Hampden where a

settler, if there was a first mortgage on his land for its full value, could get any one to lend money on a second mortgage?

Mr. CARLISLE.—Where is the first mortgage?

Mr. HOGAN.—The Government have a first mortgage to the full value of the land. A man goes on the land provided by the Government. He does not require to have one-third of the purchase money, but if you buy land from any private individual, you must be able to put up one-third of the purchase money yourself. Then on a first mortgage you may borrow two-thirds of the total purchase money, upon which you will have to pay a higher rate of interest than the Government are charging the closer settler to-day. But beyond that you cannot borrow if you are dealing outside of the Government. Then this position stands: That the Government, in their closer settlement business, are taking the part of the mortgagee, and giving the settlers an advance to the full value of the land.

Mr. WARDE.—And the improvements.

Mr. HOGAN.—I will come to the improvements directly. They give the settlers an advance to the full value of the land—not to two-thirds of the value, as the ordinary financial institution does.

Mr. CARLISLE.—That is a very cute way of putting it.

Mr. HOGAN.—It is not a cute way of putting it. It is absolutely true. I do not like the interjection of the honorable member for Benalla.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN (Mr. OUTTRIM).—Please do not answer it.

Mr. HOGAN.—I hold that he should not have made such a mis-statement. I do not like a statement of facts, such as I made, to be distorted by the honorable member saying, "That is a cute way of putting it." My statement was an absolutely true statement.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—You know that there are plenty of leasehold titles on which there will be no money owing to the Crown.

Mr. HOGAN.—Apart from Walmer and Eurack, I think these closer settlement schemes started in 1905 and 1906. I am speaking now subject to correction, but I do not think there are any of the settlers under section 69 of the 1904 Act who have yet complied with the twelve years' occupancy qualification to enable them to get their titles. Until they do,

they have no title whatever to borrow upon. They are simply leaseholders. But I go further than that, and say that when the twelve years are up their land is mortgaged to the State—that the State is their mortgagee, and that they have more favorable conditions from the State as a mortgagee than they could get from any outside institutions; and, therefore, the plea that a settler is limited in his capacity to borrow money falls to the ground as a hollow sham, a myth, and a humbug. Therefore, I claim that the Minister tried to deceive people in the country, even if he did not deceive honorable members, when he said the settlers are subject to adverse treatment when they want to borrow money. It is the veriest humbug that any member of Parliament, let alone a Minister, has ever uttered in this Parliament.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—You would not call it cute?

Mr. HOGAN.—It is much worse than that.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—That is much more offensive than saying it is cute.

Mr. HOGAN.—My statement was *bona fide*. The statement of the Minister was absolutely unfair and incorrect. I cannot use the word "untrue," as it is barred just at present. Anyhow I do not wish to use a harsher term than I have used. In addition to the fact that the closer settlers are at present getting money from the Government to the full value of their land, in what way does the Government treat them with regard to the improvements? It will lend them 60 per cent. of the value of their improvements in addition to having already lent them 100 per cent. of the value of the land. I have had a bit of experience of money lenders, not so much on my own behalf as on behalf of other people.

Mr. WARDE.—The soldier settlers will get 100 per cent. of the value of the improvements.

Mr. HOGAN.—I am not referring to the special provisions which have been introduced for the benefit of the soldier settlers. I am speaking of the position of the ordinary settler under section 69 of the 1904 Act. In addition to having secured a mortgage from the Government on the full value of his land—on the full three-thirds value, not the two-thirds value, which is what the money lenders

take into consideration—he is able to get from the Government, and is getting from the Government, 60 per cent. of the value of his improvements. I say that no private financial institution or private money lender in Australia has ever attempted or essayed to offer such conditions to settlers. As I have said, I have had some experience of the practices of money lenders, and know very much what they do. My experience has been gained, not through my own operations, but on behalf of people who have asked me to make inquiries. The modern money lender, although curbed and checked somewhat in his usurious propensities, is still very much of a Shylock—just as much as the law of the land permits him to be. As for any hardship being inflicted upon the settlers by keeping them out of the hands of that greedy crew, well, I dismiss that proposition immediately with scorn. It is put forward that there is a hardship upon these settlers, though the Government will lend them all the money that can reasonably be raised upon their security, and because of that, and because of that alone, they cannot borrow anything additional from private money lenders. That is no hardship. It is a blessing, and, in my opinion, is one of the best features of the Closer Settlement Act. I have addressed myself to the two features I desired to speak upon, and as I have already spoken on the clause, and on the whole question of section 69 of the Act of 1904, I have nothing further to say, but I hope I have succeeded in laying the ghost about the settlers being under a disability, inasmuch as they cannot borrow because of section 69.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—It is assumed by many honorable members that there is a great tendency throughout the whole of this State to aggregate land. That is not proved. The facts are the other way. The honorable member for Mornington some time ago produced authoritative figures, obtained from the Government Statist, which proved most conclusively that up to about 2,000 acres there was a tendency to aggregation, while 2,500 acres was the turning point. From that forward, as the area increases, there has been a diminution right up to the largest areas. The tendency has been for reduction, and not for aggregation.

Mr. HOGAN.—How do you reconcile the fact that the country population is decreasing?

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—That may be reconciled in some other way.

Mr. WARDE.—Was the aggregation in the smaller areas?

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—The increase was in the living areas, and the decrease was in connexion with larger areas.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—At the expense of the 200 and the 320-acre blocks.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—There is not that tendency to aggregate that there was.

Mr. HOGAN.—The Federal land tax prevents it.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—It is a fact that there is a tendency to cut up large estates at present. To hear some honorable members speaking one would think that there was a great desire on the part of large land-owners to increase their estates. They might desire to do so if there were no restriction, but they find that it is not profitable, and they do not do it.

Mr. HOGAN.—They do it through members of their families.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—To discuss that would be to open up a different point. I am referring to the statistics.

Mr. HOGAN.—There is a big land-owner in my district who is always aggregating.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—That does not prove that aggregation is general. If some member of a family secures land it will be his own in time, and that will mean smaller estates. The figures that were given by the honorable member for Mornington are absolutely reliable.

Mr. WARDE.—What do you call big estates?

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Estates containing more than 2,500 acres.

Mr. WARDE.—I think you are right.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Estates over that area are being cut up. It is assumed that section 69 is the only provision that will prevent aggregation. It is assumed to be the most effective way

of preventing it. I think the Wando Vale estate was the first one that was cut up. I made inquiries in regard to it, and if my information is correct there are not as many holdings there now as there were formerly.

Mr. WARDE.—Is that near Casterton?

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Yes.

Mr. WARDE.—I was told that aggregation was going on there.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—There are fewer holdings now than there were, but some of the areas were found to be too small. If there is any aggregation it is family aggregation. The father buys a holding for his son, and so on. The settlers there are nearly all of the same families as at the beginning. In regard to the Walmer estate and others there has been less aggregation, and in that case there is no section 69 to prevent aggregation. The holders can sell just as any outside holder can. Reference has been made to the aggregation of large estates in the early days. In those days the land was sold on the deferred payment system at £1 an acre. If a man were fortunate enough to get a block of good land at that price, and held it for six years, which was the period of the licence, it was only human nature, when he could get £8 or £10 an acre for it, to sell out and go away. Then he went to New South Wales and bought a larger property at a lower price. That man got the land in Victoria at very much below its actual value. At that time the State took the view that, although they were selling land at a great deal less than its value, it was wise to do so in order to get the people to settle on the land. I think a great deal can be said in favour of it, although it resulted in many people selling their land and going across the Murray, where they could select larger areas at a lower price. Now, in regard to our closer settlement, the land is not got at so much less than its value, but in a good many instances the settlers have had to pay more for it than its value.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The soldiers will get land at less than its value.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—I hope they will.

Mr. HOGAN.—If they are settled on the Werribee estate that will not be the case.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—It is not desirable to settle them

on land that cost more than its value. Many of the settlers have land far below its value, but it is land that had to be reduced in price. A great deal more of the closer settlement land will have to be reduced in price because of the high price paid for it. As the Minister of Mines said, one of the worst features was the way the estates were cut up. They were cut up in such a way that men got blocks on which it was almost impossible to make a living, while others had the advantage of getting very good land. The honorable member for Gippsland North made a speech to-night in which he admitted that the abolition of section 69 would not, in his opinion, tend very much towards aggregation, but that it would have the effect of depopulating the land taken up. The reason he gave was that the settlers who held the land would be able to sell to other persons who might not be permanent residents on the land. I do not think that that is a solid argument, because the man who buys the land has to live on it in order to make it productive.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—Would the same thing apply to the soldier?

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Yes. Therefore there will be no tendency to depopulation, for when one man goes off another man goes on.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—That is the object of section 69.

Mr. MENZIES.—But you want to keep the same man on the land.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Oh, no.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Some say that this land will be bought for aggregation, and the Minister referred to that incidentally. The one bar to that is the fact that the land will have improvements of very great value on it. If a man wants to aggregate, is he likely to buy land with costly improvements on it that are of no value to him? He would have to pay an enhanced price for the land on account of the improvements. The man who wants to aggregate can go into the open market and buy any quantity of land at a price that will only be enhanced by the fence round it and not by improvements that will be of no value to him. The honorable member for Brighton said that about three-fourths of the land in Victoria is for sale.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—Why do you fear section 69?

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—There are great objections to it. It is a blot on the title and will interfere with the settler in future years. It is almost in perpetuity. The very fact that it is a disadvantage is shown by the refusal of money lenders to advance money on it.

Mr. HOGAN.—Oh, no.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Why will not the Savings Bank lend money on it?

Mr. HOGAN.—Because the land does not belong to the holder of it.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Money can be borrowed on land that is selected under licence for six years.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—During the six years' licence?

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Yes.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—It may be bought up at any time.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Not at any time. When a man takes land up under licence he can borrow on it. When he gets his lease it is practically a Crown grant, because he can pay the money due at any time. This land has to be held for twelve years under lease, and that is similar to the licence under selection. Surely that is a test of a man's *bona fides*. He cannot transfer during that twelve years without the sanction of the Minister and without a good reason. To assume that the Minister will sanction it is to assume a good deal. I do not think the Minister would permit the transfer unless there were very good reasons why the transfer should be permitted. It is also assumed that section 69 is the only preventive of aggregation. I have mentioned a number of reasons why there is no danger of aggregation. The chief one is that the improvements on land would be valueless to the man going in for aggregation, and he would have to pay for those improvements. Then there is the condition of "one man one block." That is very effective. A man can only hold one block. That in itself prevents aggregation. A man cannot buy two of these blocks.

Mr. BAILEY.—There is nothing to prevent him from leasing a place.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—He has to get the consent of the Minister to lease his block.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—That is easily got, judging from past experience.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—He can only sell to a man who is eligible to become a closer settler.

Mr. HOGAN.—And a man who will live upon the block.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—That is so. A man must conform in every particular to the requirements laid down in the Act before he is constituted a closer settler.

Mr. HOGAN.—The same as the original settler.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—I was asked what objections I had to section 69. One of the objections is that it places a restriction upon the land, and that is a handicap to the man who holds the land.

Mr. HOGAN.—The Closer Settlement Act limits the number of people we will accept as settlers on our closer settlement areas.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—It lays down the conditions. The man who is buying from a closer settler under section 69 must conform to those conditions. At the present time it is very difficult to sell land, although there is the whole population to get buyers from. But under section 69 you have to get them from men eligible to become closer settlers. That is a very great restriction.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—That is the object of the Government in creating a settlement.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—I acknowledge that.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Then the objection of the honorable member for Upper Goulburn is the fact that section 69 does what the Government intended it should do.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—The object that the Government had in view was a good one, but they did not see the other side of the question, and they also exaggerated the reasons for the insertion of the section. For these reasons I intend to support the Government in this matter.

Mr. MITCHELL.—I welcome the inclusion in this Bill of clause 21, but desire to move an amendment upon it. Since the Government recognise that it is fair to give the discharged soldier a clear title, I do not anticipate any objection to my amendment, the effect of which will be to place discharged soldiers who

have, previous to the passing of this measure, held land under the Closer Settlement Act, in as good a position. I move—

That, after the words "including a discharged soldier" (line 4), the words "who has been a conditional purchase lessee under the Closer Settlement Act or" be inserted.

If the Committee agree not to insert the provisions of section 125 of the Closer Settlement Act in the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Bill, then we cannot but agree to give every discharged soldier the same right. That is all my amendment seeks to achieve. There are a number of soldiers—I think, six—now fighting at the Front who have blocks at Shepparton, and who are interested in this matter. That fact is responsible for the amendment I am now moving. The honorable member for Gippsland North and other honorable members have made the assertion that, if they thought the inclusion of a restricted title would inflict a hardship on soldiers, they would vote for this clause. I presume that anybody anxious to avoid inflicting hardship on a discharged soldier is willing to accept evidence as to what constitutes hardship. If honorable members are anxious to ascertain whether the inclusion of a clause similar to section 125 would be a hardship to the settler, the best source to which they can go for their information is the person upon whom that hardship is now inflicted.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—They say it is an imaginary hardship.

Mr. HOGAN.—Fostered a good deal by interested persons, agents, and the like.

Mr. MITCHELL.—At all events, the man upon whom the hardship is inflicted is a better judge than anybody else as to whether it is a hardship or not. I have always been in favour of the abolition of section 125. I listened carefully to the remarks of the honorable member for Warrenheip, and I cannot say that they appear to me to apply in this case at all. As I understand the section, it does not come into operation until after the lessee has paid his full dues to the Government, and is entitled to his Crown grant. The burden of the honorable member's argument was that, while the Government had advanced to the holder the full 100 per cent. value of the land, that holder could not go to a financial institution and obtain advances. That is, of course, admitted.

Mr. HOGAN.—That is the present position.

Mr. MITCHELL.—That is the position until this clause comes into effect. It is when the holder has paid off his liabilities to the Crown, and is in a position to ask the Crown for his grant, that this section applies.

Mr. HOGAN.—I understand he can get the grant after twelve years.

Mr. MITCHELL.—Not unless he has paid off his liabilities to the Crown.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—If you read the Bill you will find that that man can get a loan from the Government up to the full extent of his repayments.

Mr. MITCHELL.—I have not stated anything to the contrary. I am taking the argument that has been put forward as it applies to this clause. Another matter was mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition. What he stated was quite true. I believe that there are in certain cases changes going on. I think everybody is conversant with that fact, and surely honorable members will admit that some changes are necessary. No matter what care is exercised, or what committees may be appointed, soldiers and others will take up land who are not suited for settlement. Surely it is not in the interests of the individual concerned, nor in the interests of the State, if a man has proved himself to be a failure that he should have to remain on the land for a certain time. If it is found, both by the individual and by the State, that the settler is unsuited for the work, is it not far better that he should be able, with the permission of the Minister, to transfer his block to some one who will make a success of it?

Mr. HOGAN.—That is being done now.

Mr. MITCHELL.—The Leader of the Opposition cited one case where a man went on the land with nothing, and after selling out left with £800. I suppose many cases could be mentioned where a man has gone on the land, and has left with absolutely nothing.

Mr. HOGAN.—Does section 69 compel the Government to keep the failures on the blocks?

Mr. MITCHELL.—No. But the Leader of the Opposition was arguing against the Minister having power to permit transfers. I am trying to refute the argument put forward by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—By indorsing it.

Mr. MITCHELL.—I am not indorsing it. The argument of the Leader of the Opposition, as I understand it, was that too much latitude had been given to the Minister in regard to the granting of transfers.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The main trouble in that respect is this: We are here trying to provide land for the returned soldiers. They may get on in the first place, and in the second place the land may be given to men who have never been to the front at all. Other returned soldiers may not be able to get the land. Land should not be transferred from a returned soldier, even if he is a failure, until another returned soldier has the opportunity of taking it up if he wishes to do so.

Mr. MITCHELL.—But the case referred to by the Leader of the Opposition did not apply to the discharged soldier at all. Another suggestion has been put forward—that none of the lands that have been set apart for returned soldiers should be transferred to any person except a returned soldier.

The CHAIRMAN.—I do not see how the question of transferability comes in in connexion with this clause. This clause deals with the residential conditions.

Mr. MITCHELL.—Well, I will not discuss the matter further, though it was discussed prior to the Chairman taking the chair. I have often made the remark that, if I were convinced that this clause would lead to aggregation, I would vote for section 69 being retained. But I have long ago come to the conclusion that its deletion would not lead to aggregation. Neither do I think it helps very much to keep the man on the land. If a man is going to be a failure as a settler, section 69 will not keep him on the land. It may keep him there a little longer than he would otherwise stay, but afterwards he will have to leave the land. As regards depopulation, it may have a slight effect. We must acknowledge that a good deal of depopulation is going on in the country centres, but I do not think section 69, or the want of it, can be held answerable for that. It is the unfavorable conditions in the country as compared with city life, in the minds of the rising generation, that is the cause of the present position, and the solution is to be found in that direction.

Mr. CARLISLE.—Under this provision of yours, does the soldier who is already a closer settler get the benefit of the repeal of section 69?

Mr. MITCHELL.—Yes, that is the effect.

Mr. CARLISLE.—A little while ago the honorable member for Warrenheip resented a remark I made that he was putting the thing rather cutely. I want to show the view I took of it. He says that the Government, in regard to closer settlement, gives a man land, and has a mortgage over it for 100 per cent. of the value. I do not think that is a fair way of putting the case. The Government does not have a mortgage on it at all. The land belongs to the Government in the first place, and the Government gives it to the settler on a purchasing lease, and that lease certainly becomes of more value as the payments are made. We come to the time when all the payments but one are made. An equity of nearly 100 per cent. then belongs to the closer settlement holder. Surely that is a negotiable security. But putting it in the way the honorable member for Warrenheip stated it, the position looks quite different. He speaks of there being a mortgage over the land of 100 per cent. That is quite different from selling land on a purchasing lease to some one else. As soon as the lessee pays one instalment he has a certain equity in that land, which is, to some extent, of value as a security on which to borrow money, if he wants to borrow. I can understand that a settler on a closer settlement block who brings up a family, and who has paid off all the instalments except one, may want to raise money with which to start a member of his family. His land is certainly a valuable security for this purpose if section 69 does not apply. But section 69, as the honorable member for Upper Goulburn has said, makes the Crown grant of much less value than it would be without that provision. Even in the case of a purchasing lease, the fact that section 69 is going to apply to the title reduces the value, and prevents institutions from taking it over, because it is not convenient to foreclose under those conditions.

Mr. MENZIES.—And the condition would come in at a time when the equity was of the most value.

Mr. HOGAN.—It is not a hardship to the settler that an institution cannot foreclose on the block.

Mr. CARLISLE.—When a settler wants money for something, it is not much satisfaction to him to know that he cannot get money because of that provision.

Mr. HOGAN.—He can get money from the Government, as the honorable member for Fitzroy has stated.

Mr. CARLISLE.—My experience of the settlers' dealings with the Closer Settlement Board was that they had considerable difficulty at times in getting advances from the Government, and sometimes could not get advances at all.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—You have had no experience in connexion with this Bill.

Mr. CARLISLE.—I have had a good deal of experience of the working of the existing Act, because, whenever the settler is in trouble, he comes to the member of Parliament for his district to help him.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—There is a change of policy in regard to that.

Mr. CARLISLE.—But it does not affect the general principle. What good purpose does section 69 serve? It does not prevent aggregation. There is the other provision, to the effect that one individual can hold only one block.

Mr. HOGAN.—The good it serves is that it keeps the settler on the block that the Government have provided for him. The honorable member wants to provide for a system of absentee ownership.

Mr. CARLISLE.—It restricts the number of buyers if the settler wants to sell.

Mr. HOGAN.—It restricts it to a person who must live on the block. The honorable member is in favour of the absentee. That is the man who is opposed to section 69.

Mr. CARLISLE.—Talking about absentee ownership, does the honorable member consider that the owner of £2,500 worth of closer settlement land is going to be an absentee? Is it likely? It is quite absurd to think that there could be aggregation with the provision that one man can hold only one block.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—Depopulation is the contention.

Mr. CARLISLE.—That is another question. There may be a possibility of depopulation. It may apply in one case in a hundred; but that is nothing.

Mr. HOGAN.—What do you hope to realize by the repeal of section 69? Is it

that a man may be able to hold a block without living on it?

Mr. CARLISLE.—That the land will be a negotiable security. Then if a man wants to sell he will have a better chance of getting the full value than he would with section 69.

Mr. HOGAN.—Sell to some one who is not compelled to reside upon it.

Mr. CARLISLE.—A man can hold only one block, and you will not get a man to buy a block if he cannot live on it.

Mr. HOGAN.—There are any number of such cases in my district—of men purchasing land and not living on it.

Mr. CARLISLE.—Not blocks worth £2,500.

Mr. HOGAN.—They are buying blocks even as small as ten acres, and living in the township.

Mr. CARLISLE.—Wherever there is a township you will find people buying land about it. They cannot hold more than a certain quantity. If they hold a closer settlement block, that limits them right away.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—All that is admitted.

Mr. MENZIES.—Up to the present I have always voted for the retention of what is known as section 69. I have been deeply impressed by the evidence submitted to the Royal Commission on Closer Settlement. The more I have examined that evidence the more I have come to the conclusion that the section hardly realizes the end which I thought it had in view, and that is the prevention of the aggregation of land. I cannot see that it does that. Section 129 provides that no one shall be the beneficial owner of more than one closer settlement allotment. The honorable member for Warrenheip stated just now that he knew of men who bought up allotments of land. I think they would find it exceedingly difficult, under the Closer Settlement Act, to do that.

Mr. HOGAN.—I said they were doing that at present, and that the men who bought the land did not intend to live on it.

Mr. MENZIES.—A man out of residence could have a beneficial interest in one block only under section 129. I agree with those honorable members who said that, in connexion with closer settlement, the best security against aggregation or speculation of that sort is the

character of the improvements which must, of necessity, be put on small holdings. I fail to see how any sane person would speculate in land of that sort where such substantial improvements must be put on so small an area. What always actuated me in the past in regard to section 69 was that I was afraid it might be defeated. I know, from actual experience, that a man can buy the lease, certainly not the Crown grant; and although, under the conditions, the improvements must of necessity be carried out within the term of six years, yet a man may have all the conditions practically carried out within the six years, so that the restriction very largely disappears. Under section 69 I can see clearly that, while it is provided that only a man who is eligible under the Act can have the land transferred to him, still, if he is a purchaser, say in the seventh year, all the improvements must have been effected by his predecessor, and therefore it makes the area of buyers very wide. The only thing I could see in its favour—and I think it might be consistently urged in connexion with this measure—is that it secures that the man who goes on to the land shall remain on the land. I believe we can dismiss the aggregation idea. I think, therefore, that the Act sufficiently secures, at any rate, that there shall be a successive tenancy, which will insure to the State, in regard to the man who goes on to the allotment, all that we hope concerning the original tenant.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—My argument is that it makes for depopulation.

Mr. MENZIES.—In what way?

Mr. HOGAN.—The lessee can sell to a person who need not reside upon the land. It is a common thing for people, such as storekeepers, to buy land which is under ordinary settlement conditions, and not reside on it. The same thing would occur in connexion with closer settlement land. Shopkeepers, or people in a good financial position, would buy land for a paddock.

Mr. MENZIES.—Does the honorable member know the price that would have to be paid for land that has been planted out? As a rule, on an irrigation block, the extensive improvements are in planting out. Take the case of land at Meringie or Mildura. Who would dream of purchasing one of those allotments to convert it into a paddock?

Mr. OMAN.—The sworn evidence that was taken overwhelmingly disproved that.

Mr. MENZIES.—I know, from my actual knowledge of closer settlement, that that would be a rare case indeed.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—What, then, has the honorable member to fear from the retention of section 69?

Mr. MENZIES.—The argument against section 69 is that, as soon as the equity in the title begins—that is in the thirteenth year—the title is not so good, if a man requires to raise money, as it would be if it had not that limitation in it.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—We all admit that.

Mr. HOGAN.—I do not.

Mr. MENZIES.—The point I am making is this—that we shall fail to secure, after a lapse of twelve years, all the benefits I at one time hoped we would obtain, and now we are putting something into the title, which, after the twelfth year, when the equity is growing more and more valuable, will be a permanent disability. For these reasons I have altered my judgment in regard to section 69.

Mr. GORDON.—I want to say a few words in support of the amendment, which, as I understand it, will provide that the man who was a closer settler before enlisting will, when he returns, be placed in exactly the same position as the returned soldier who is taking up land for the first time under this Bill. That is a very fair proposition. In regard to compulsory residence, I am glad the Government have provided in this Bill that soldiers will have a free title after compulsory residence for twelve years, if they are able to pay what is due to the Crown. If they are not able to pay at that period, and continue until the end of the thirty-one years period, they will then get a free title. That is a proper provision to make in this Bill. Let us take the case of a man who has acquired a block of land, and he and his wife and family work hard in its cultivation. Surely such a man is entitled to as good a title as any one in the State. Our returned soldiers ought to have the best titles we can give them.

The amendment was agreed to.

The Committee divided on the clause, as amended (Mr. Mackey in the chair)—

Ayes	27
Noes	16

Majority for the clause ... 11

AYES.

Mr. Angus	Mr. M. K. McKenzie
Major Baird	„ McLeod
Mr. Barnes	„ Menzies
„ A. A. Billson	„ Mitchell
Bowser	„ Oman
„ A. F. Cameron	Sir Alexander Peacock
Farthing	Mr. Pennington
Gordon	„ Purnell
„ Hutchinson	„ Rouget
Lawson	„ Snowball
Livingston	„ Toutcher.
„ Mackinnon	Tellers:
„ McDonald	Mr. Carlisle
„ McGregor	„ J. Gray.

NOES.

Mr. Bailey	Mr. Rogers
„ J. W. Billson	„ D. Smith
Clough	„ Sinclair
„ Cotter	„ Solly
„ Elmslie	„ Warde.
Hannah	Tellers:
Hogan	Mr. Lemmon
„ H. McKenzie	„ Tunnecliffe.
„ McLachlan	

PAIRS.

Mr. Keast	Mr. Blackburn
„ Campbell	„ Webber
„ Membrey	„ Jewell
„ Deany	„ Prendergast.

Clause 22—

For the purposes of this Act, the Land Acts shall be read and construed as if for section 25 of the Land Act 1915 there were substituted the following section:—

“ 25. (1) For the purposes of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act 1917, the Governor in Council may at any time appoint generally, or for any purpose or occasion, any person or persons to be a Discharged Soldiers Settlement Inquiry Board, which shall deal with and report upon such matters as are prescribed by regulations under the said Act, or as are referred to it by the Minister.

(2) Every such Board shall have, and may exercise, such powers and duties as are prescribed as aforesaid, and may hear, receive, and examine evidence, and require persons giving evidence to be examined upon oath; and the chairman of such Board may administer to any of such persons the necessary oath.

(3) Any person who at any such inquiry wilfully—

- (a) makes a false statement;
- (b) refuses to answer any question lawfully put to him by the chairman; or
- (c) gives a false answer to any such question—

shall be liable to a penalty of not less than £10, and not more than £50, or to imprisonment for a term of not less than fourteen days and not more than six months.”

Mr. OMAN.—I want to give notice that at a later stage I will move for the insertion of a new sub-clause. I think it

will be best for it to come in after sub-clause (1). I have not yet had it drafted properly, but I give notice of it in this form—

For the purposes of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act 1917, the Governor in Council shall appoint a Committee of three persons other than the purchasing authority to inspect and report to the Minister as to the value and suitability of any land proposed to be purchased for the settlement of discharged soldiers.

I intend to submit this amendment after the third reading if the Government will give me an opportunity then, but if not, I will press for its being considered now.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. — If the honorable member will circulate his amendment, I will see that he gets an opportunity to propose it.

Mr. OMAN. — The object I have in view is to guard against the mistakes we have made in the past; and just before the negotiations for the purchase of any land are completed, I want it to be inspected by a Board, so that we shall know if it is suitable for settlement purposes. I also desire that we shall take precautions to insure soldiers being placed upon land for which no more than its proper value has been paid, and which is otherwise suitable in regard to soil, location, and means of communication. If the Government will look into this proposal of mine they will see that it is one which can be accepted. It is not on the lines recommended by the Closer Settlement Commission.

Mr. SALLY. — This clause gives a drastic power to the chairman of the Board. An applicant may be asked a question which the chairman has no right to put to him, and if he does not answer it he may be fined anything from £10 to £50, or sent to prison for six months.

Mr. SNOWBALL. — The chairman of the Board could not impose that penalty. The man would have to appear before a magistrate, and would be at liberty to defend himself.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE. — Is there any definition of what is a "lawful question?"

Mr. SNOWBALL. — That would be for the magistrate to determine. No magistrate would convict a returned soldier for refusing to answer an irrelevant question.

Mr. SALLY. — No one knows what the chairman of a Board might do. He might put to a returned soldier a question, the answer to which would incriminate somebody else, and if he refused to answer

he would be liable to severe penalties. It appears to me that it is a most drastic way of dealing with a person who refuses to answer a question which may be lawfully put by the chairman. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition wishes to discuss an earlier portion of the clause, but later on I will move an amendment in the direction to which I have referred.

Mr. ELMSLIE. — This appears to be a most extraordinary clause. It seems to mean the appointment by Act of Parliament of a permanent Royal Commission, or Select Committee, or something of that kind. We have it set out:

For the purposes of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act 1917, the Governor in Council may at any time appoint generally, or for any purpose or occasion, any person or persons to be a Discharged Soldiers Settlement Inquiry Board, which shall deal with and report upon such matters as are prescribed by regulations under the said Act, or as are referred to it by the Minister.

We are asked to appoint a Board to do something that we have not at present the slightest knowledge of. The Government may at any time appoint what is practically a Royal Commission, and we have to hand over to the Minister, or the Department, or perhaps some Board, the power, to prescribe regulations as to the matters to be inquired into. It is a sort of roving Royal Commission without specified duties. We know what Royal Commissions and Select Committees cost, and where in the name of fortune is the money for the purpose to come from?

Mr. MENZIES. — There is a similar provision in the Closer Settlement Act.

Mr. ELMSLIE. — That does not matter, as far as I am concerned. I do not know what action I took with regard to it, or whether it escaped my notice.

Mr. MENZIES. — It reads in exactly the same way.

Mr. ELMSLIE. — It cannot be the same, because this mentions the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Inquiry Board.

Mr. MENZIES. — With that exception it is the same.

Mr. ELMSLIE. — We do not know whether it will inquire into valuations, or what under heaven it is going to deal with. Is it going to be an honorary Board? Anyhow, if it has to travel about the country expenses will be entailed. Provision is made to examine witnesses in all sorts of directions, and the least and most kindly thing that can be said about it is that it is an excrescence which will

mean that a soldier settler will have to pay an increased price for his land.

Mr. CARLISLE.—Provide that there shall be no fees and there will not be much abuse.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—What was the need of appointing the Closer Settlement Royal Commission if such a power as this was in existence under the Act? The members of that Commission gave much of their time to the investigation without remuneration, but all the same it cost a lot of money as far as expenses were concerned. In my opinion, this clause affords an opportunity to dodge a difficulty in connexion with weak and faulty administration by referring a matter to the Board of Inquiry. This is one of the seven boards of which the honorable member for Fitzroy complained. Looking it fairly and squarely in the face I cannot see any necessity for it. We have had no explanation of why it has been included. Is it only here because it was somewhere else?

Mr. MENZIES.—It is taken holus bolus from the Closer Settlement Act.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I am completely in the dark about it. If the Board is going to roam about it may get up to some mischievous tricks. It will certainly provide a fine loophole to enable a Minister to get out of a difficult place. In my opinion, it is an excrescence, and it may be dangerous; certainly it will be expensive, and for the life of me I cannot see what good can come out of the Board. I want to know where the money is to come from to defray what is provided for in this and other clauses. It can only be provided by increasing the price of the land which the soldier has to take up or by some increased grant or vote on the Estimates. Therefore, I offer strong objection to the proposal.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I had no idea that the clause could look so formidable, but I think that an explanation will show that it is a highly desirable proposition. The object is to recast section 25 of the Land Act, which sets out that where land is being made available for selection there must be notification at least ten days before in the *Government Gazette*, after which properly constituted land boards must be appointed to hear, on the date specified, the applications and any objections. Clearly that section is unnecessary in the case of a

number of applications by soldiers. In anticipation of the passing of some such clause as this I have, where there was only one block and a single applicant, asked one of the district officers to come to the Board room and hear the application of the soldier, so that the land might be granted without asking the soldier to wait and without bringing him to town to have the case heard as the law requires. Here we adapt section 25 of the Land Act and take power to appoint inquiry boards—it may be one officer or a couple of officers who may be made available. If there is only one soldier applicant for a block of land which has been set apart for soldiers only, one officer can deal with it without bother, without waste of time, and without expense. Later on, when there will be a number of soldiers applying for one block, then in fairness to all we should have to give full notice of the cases. The object of this clause is simply to make the procedure easy. The penalty provisions at the end, to which the honorable member for Carlton was objecting, are those at present in the Land Act. If the clause is struck out the existing procedure will operate. If honorable members look at it in that way they will see why we have put it in the Bill.

Mr. ANGUS.—I do not realize what good purpose the clause will serve, seeing that there is a similar provision in the Closer Settlement Act.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—There is land which soldiers will apply for which is not closer settlement land.

Mr. ANGUS.—It all shows the necessity for revising our closer settlement law, and how wise it would have been if we had considered the report of the Closer Settlement Commission before we dealt with this Bill.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—It would not have touched this position at all.

Mr. ANGUS.—It might not have done, but it shows how necessary it is to revise the whole system. The honorable member for Hampden has stated that he intends to move an amendment on this particular clause. If the report of the Closer Settlement Commission had been discussed before we dealt with this measure it would have shown abundantly the urgent necessity of having some one appointed by this House, not to purchase land, but to see that a thorough investigation is made concerning land about to be purchased, in

order that the great mistakes made in connexion with closer settlement in the past might be avoided. I feel that the same mistakes will probably be made in the purchase of land for the settlement of discharged soldiers. If ever we required to be careful in the purchase of land it is at this time for this purpose. We have a body of men going on the land with very little, if any, capital. We are risking valuable years of these settlers' lives. It is enough that they should have had to run the risk of losing their lives in our defence. The mistake may be made of putting the men on the land that is quite unsuitable for the purpose. I think that what was in the mind of the Closer Settlement Commission was to avoid in the future the mistakes of the past in the purchase of land for ordinary settlement.

The CHAIRMAN.—How does the honorable member connect his remarks with the clause?

Mr. ANGUS.—Does this not more materially affect the purchase of land for the discharged soldiers? Should we not be more careful in regard to the purchase of land for discharged soldiers, than we were in purchasing land for ordinary settlers? I do feel that this Committee should be very careful as to how it deals with land. We know what occurred in connexion with previous purchases. A boom occurred as a result of the Government purchases, and land of a very inferior nature was purchased for closer settlement purposes. Should we not have some safeguard against that occurring in the future?

The CHAIRMAN.—The clause deals with the power to appoint an inquiry board.

Mr. ANGUS.—I was simply suggesting that we should have another form of inquiry prior to the purchase of the land, instead of having a drastic clause like this to deal with the matter afterwards. However, I will reserve what further remarks I have to make on the subject, because it is doubtful whether I should discuss it on this clause.

Mr. SOLLY.—The Minister's explanation of this clause was not satisfactory to me. I can quite understand the penalty provision in the Land Act. It is provided in section 25 of that Act—

(1) For the purpose of enabling applicants for leases and licences under this Part to have an opportunity of showing the *bona fides* of

their applications, and for the purpose of enabling all objections to the issue of such leases and licences, and to proposed proclamations, alterations, additions, diminutions, revocations, and unions of commons to be publicly heard, and all persons whose leases or licences under any division of this Part, or any repealed Act, deemed liable to forfeiture for any cause except non-payment of the rent, instalments of purchase money, or fees, to be allowed to show cause to the Minister against such forfeiture, it is hereby directed that notice shall from time to time be given in the *Government Gazette* of a time, not less than ten days from the date of such notice, when, and at a place where, applications for leases and licences, and objections to such applications, and to any proposed proclamation, alteration, addition, diminution, revocation, or union of commons, and reasons against forfeitures of any such leases and licences for any cause except non-payment of rent, instalments of purchase money or fees, will be publicly heard by the Minister, or by persons appointed by the Minister to hear the same, and report thereon in writing to him.

I can quite understand a penalty being provided in the case of any person making a false statement under that provision. A person might go there with the intention of lying, and a person who would wilfully mislead the Minister should be punished. But under this Bill the position is different altogether. Under sub-clause (1) of the clause it is provided that there shall be a Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Inquiry Board, which shall deal with, and report upon, such matters, "as are prescribed by regulations under the said Act, or as are referred to it by the Minister." What are the regulations going to be? They may provide anything. Regulations of a most far-reaching nature may be adopted by the Cabinet. Under the power given him the Minister could refer any mortal thing under the sun to the Board to inquire into. A soldier might be called before the Board, and a question, perhaps of an impudent nature, might be put to him by the Chairman of the Board. If he refused to answer, he would be subject to the penalties provided. I say that such a clause is altogether uncalled for in a Bill of this sort. I can see no reason for it. Under paragraph (b) of sub-clause (3) any person who refuses to answer any question lawfully put to him by the chairman is liable to a penalty of not less than £10 and not more than £50, or to imprisonment for a term of not less than fourteen days, and not more than six months. This would make a criminal of every soldier coming before the Board

who did not answer what the chairman might claim to be a lawful question. The Minister has not given a reasonable explanation as to why the Government desire these penalty provisions to be in the Bill. Under the Land Act the position is altogether different. Under the Bill, the Board is to report upon such matters as are prescribed by regulations, or as are referred to it by the Minister, whereas under the Land Act the matters to be inquired into are distinctly laid down. I trust the Committee will not allow the clause to pass. I am particularly opposed to paragraph (b) of sub-clause (3).

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Would you be satisfied if it said "relevant question"?

Mr. SOLLY.—That might be better than the term, "lawful question." I move—

That paragraph (b) of sub-clause (3) be omitted.

Mr. BOWSER.—I understand that the Land Boards will be substantially the inquiry boards referred to in the clause. I would ask the Minister if that is correct?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The idea was to do away with the appointment of Land Boards by calling on one special officer, or a couple of officers, and letting them deal with the soldier applicant at the head office when he appeared.

Mr. BOWSER.—Then we are left without any knowledge as to the terms on which the officer is to make his decision, and as to whether his decision is to be final, or only a recommendation.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—A Board only recommends.

Mr. BOWSER.—On what ground will the officer arrive at his decision? Will it be on the ground of the applicant's length of service, or quality of service at the Front, or on the ground that a married man should have precedence over a single man, or that a man with a large family should have precedence over a man with a small family? In what way will the officer arrive at his decision? This is a very important thing for the discharged soldier. We have no intimation as to the nature of the duties, nor as to how those duties shall be discharged. Then, again, there may be a number of applicants under the share-farming provisions, and it is quite possible that a choice may have to be made from among those men. What authority would decide in that case? We propose to give £150, an al-

together inadequate amount, to enable a person to undertake share-farming.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The Closer Settlement Board will deal with the advance.

Mr. BOWSER.—I am in agreement with the honorable member for Carlton that sub-clause (3) imposes a penalty, for refusing to answer a question put by the chairman, that is altogether out of proportion to the offence. For such an offence the penalty is not less than £10, nor more than £50.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—That is for making a false statement.

Mr. BOWSER.—Paragraph (b) states distinctly "refuses to answer any question lawfully put to him." The Board will have quite sufficient power without that penalty.

The Committee divided on the question that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the clause (Mr. Mackey in the chair)—

Ayes	18
Noes	16

Majority against the amendment	2
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AYES.

Mr. Barnes	Mr. Oman
" A. F. Cameron	Sir Alexander Peacock
" Gordon	Mr. Pennington
" Hutchinson	" Purnell
" Lawson	" Rouget
" Livingston	" Snowball.
" Mackinnon	
" H. McKenzie	Tellers:
" McLeod	Major Baird
" Mitchell	Mr. J. Gray.

NOES.

Mr. Angus	Mr. Sinclair
" Bailey	" D. Smith
" Bowser	" Solly
" Clough	" Touther
" Cotter	" Warde.
" Elmslie	
" McGregor	Tellers:
" McLachlan	Mr. Hogan
" Rogers	Mr. Lemmon.

PAIRS.

Mr. J. Cameron	Mr. Tunnecliffe
" Campbell	" Webber
" Deany	" Prendergast
" Farrer	" J. W. Billson
" Keast	" Blackburn
" Membrey.	" Jewell.

The clause was agreed to.

Progress was then reported.

ESTIMATES.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Treasurer) presented a message from His Excellency the Governor transmitting an Estimate of Expenditure for the months of September and October, 1917, and recommending an appropriation from the Consolidated Revenue accordingly.

The message was ordered to be taken into consideration on the following day.

The House adjourned at eight minutes past ten o'clock p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, September, 5, 1917.

The SPEAKER took the chair at twenty-three minutes to four o'clock p.m.

RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

TENDERS FOR INCANDESCENT MANTLES—
DINING CAR SERVICE.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*) asked the Minister of Railways—

If he will lay on the table of the Library the papers in connexion with the tenders recently called for by the Railway Department for coal-gas incandescent mantles?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Railways).—The papers are here, and will be laid on the table of the Library.

Mr. MENZIES (in the absence of Major BAIRD) asked the Minister of Railways—

If there was a profit on the dining-car service on the Victorian Railways during the financial year ended 30th June, 1917?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Railways).—The answer is as follows:—

No. The loss for the financial year ending 30th June, 1917, after providing for working expenses, and the cost of stores consumed, was £1,017.

PROTECTION FROM FLOODS.

Mr. A. A. BILLSON (*Ovens*) asked the Minister of Water Supply—

1. If he is aware that the great loss sustained by settlers along some of our valleys through the heavy and continuous floods this winter has been greatly accentuated by the neglect to remove snags and straighten and deepen the course of the streams where necessary?

2. If it is not an important part of the duty of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission to attend to all rivers and streams, and see that they are not choked by obstructions?

3. If it is proposed to make a special investigation, with the view of taking action to lessen, as far as possible, the damage caused by floods?

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Water Supply).—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follows:—

1. While the removal of snags from rivers, and in some cases the straightening and deepening their courses, would prove advantageous, the amount of rainfall that has recently fallen has been so excessive, and the consequent flooding so heavy, that it is not believed such works alone could have made material difference to the settlers.

2. When such works have been carried out in the past, it has been by other authorities, or with the consent of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, as provided by the Water Acts, by municipal councils or land-owners interested. If such works were undertaken directly by the Commission it would be necessary to form a Flood Protection District, and to charge, by means of an annual rate, the cost of such works to the land-owners benefited. The Commission is prepared to adopt this course, wherever practicable, if requested by the land-owners of the proposed district.

3. A conference, convened by the Honorable the Minister of Public Works, and consisting of representatives of the Forests, Lands, Mines, and Public Works Departments, the Country Roads Board, and the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, on the problem of stream erosion, has already met, and is now specially investigating the whole subject. This investigation will necessarily deal largely with the question of prevention of damage caused by floods.

DELIVERY OF THE BUDGET.

Mr. ELMSLIE asked the Treasurer—

If he will inform the House when he will deliver his Budget Speech, seeing that the Honorable the Treasurer of the Commonwealth has delivered his Budget Speech for the year 1917-18?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Treasurer).—I anticipate being able to deliver the Budget within five weeks from the present time. Probably it will be a little earlier than that.

IMPORTED GOODS FOR STATE
DEPARTMENTS.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Water Supply), in compliance with an Order of the House (dated October 17, 1905), presented a return of machinery, goods, and material purchased outside the

Commonwealth for the use of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission during the financial year 1916-17.

MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN TRAMWAYS AUTHORITY BILL.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier) presented a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending that an appropriation be made from the Consolidated Revenue, and of fees, fines, penalties, and forfeitures, for the purposes of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Authority Bill.

The House having gone into Committee to consider the message,

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier) moved—

That it is expedient that an appropriation be made from the Consolidated Revenue, and of fees, fines, penalties, and forfeitures, for the purposes of the Bill relating to metropolitan tramways and other undertakings.

The motion was agreed to, and the resolution was reported to the House, and adopted.

DISCHARGED SOLDIERS SETTLEMENT BILL.

The House went into Committee for the further consideration of this Bill.

Clause 23, dealing with the acquisition of land, and providing *inter alia*—

(1) Subject to this Act—

(a) the Board may, for the purposes of this Act, and as provided in this Act, and in Part III. of the Closer Settlement Act 1915, so far as incorporated in this Act, acquire and take for the Crown, either by agreement or compulsorily, blocks of private land in any part of Victoria; and

(b) all land so acquired and taken shall thereupon become Crown land as if the same had never at any time been alienated from the Crown, and may be disposed of under this Act; but if any of such land is not required for the purposes of this Act, it may be reserved, sold, or disposed of, pursuant to the Closer Settlement Act 1915, as if it had been acquired and taken under and for the purposes of that Act.

(2) (a) When, in pursuance of this Act, an offer to purchase any land for the Crown has been made to the owner thereof by the Board, and has not been accepted by such owner within the time notified by the Board to such owner, the Governor in Council may direct that the whole or any part of the land may be acquired compulsorily by the Board;

(b) The Governor in Council may thereupon, by notification published in the *Government Gazette*, declare that the land has been acquired under this Act for the purposes thereof;

(c) A copy of the notification shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament within fourteen days after the publication thereof, if Parliament is then sitting, and if Parliament is not then sitting, then within fourteen days after the next meeting of Parliament.

(3) For the purposes of this section, the provisions of Part III. of the Closer Settlement Act 1915 (except sections 19, 35, and 74) shall, so far as applicable, and with such alterations, modifications, and substitutions as are necessary, be deemed and taken to be incorporated with this Act:

Provided that in the construction of Part III. of the Closer Settlement Act 1915, for the purposes of this section—

(a) any reference in the said part to the notification in the *Government Gazette* mentioned in section 36 of the said Act, or to the publication thereof, shall be read and construed as if it were a reference to the notification mentioned in sub-section (2) of this section, or the publication thereof; and

(b) section 36 of the said Act shall be read and construed as if in the said section the words "and subject to the provisions of Division 13 of this part" were omitted.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—I move—

That the words "blocks of private land in any part of Victoria; and", in paragraph (a), be omitted, with the view of inserting the words "any block of private land in Victoria which is certified by the Minister in writing to be, in his opinion, within reasonable distance of a railway line; and".

The object of my amendment is quite clear. In the past, under our Closer Settlement Acts, there has been a tendency for the Government to accept estates or blocks that have been, to some extent, forced on them. Their attention has been drawn to these blocks, and more or less pressure has been brought to bear on the Minister, and because the land was good agricultural land, and in other ways suitable, he has been prevailed upon to purchase. There is the Colbinabbin estate, in my own district, which contains some of the very best land. At the time that estate was purchased it was a considerable distance from railway communication. The only railway communication was at Elmore, 12 or 14 miles from the nearest part of the estate. The trouble was that the early settlers had very great difficulty in dealing with their produce. The land

was profitable enough, but the roads were sticky and cartage was difficult. This amendment will insure that the Minister will take reasonable care to see that the land purchased is accessible to a railway line—that it is within reasonable carting distance. It will also have the effect of bringing under the attention of the Minister large areas of valuable land privately held and adjacent to railway lines. There are large areas of this character in my district intersected by main lines of railway, and at present producing no revenue to the State. If this amendment is embodied in the Bill, we may reasonably suppose that the Minister will see his way to purchase land of that character, and thus insure, probably, the permanent success of this measure. Otherwise blocks of land may be purchased at a considerable distance from railway lines, and their value may thus be considerably lessened. There is nothing very compulsory about my proposal, though it places an obligation on the Minister to investigate each particular block and its suitability from a railway communication point of view.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I hope the honorable member will not persist with his amendment. I quite understand and appreciate the object he has in view, but he will see that the carrying of the amendment would limit the area over which the Closer Settlement Board could operate.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—We want to do that.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—No doubt that is the distinct design of the amendment, but it will be seen on reflection that it will be undesirable to do that. Speaking generally, the proposition that the honorable member makes, that is, to provide an extra safeguard against the purchase of any properties distant from railway lines, might be said to be a good thing. I agree with him that mistakes have been made in the past, but those mistakes were so apparent, and the results have been so bad, that it is not possible for such mistakes to be repeated. We have had a great many areas of land offered to us away from railway lines, and all the offers have been turned down without consideration, because the Board and the Government believe that for closer settlement purposes you must have the land within easy reach of railways. There may be estates in Victoria where, in order to open up the country and make very desirable

land available, it will be necessary and highly desirable to construct a railway or railways. With that object before us, I can see that the acceptance of the amendment would block the action of the Government. It would spoil the opportunity of getting, perhaps, some desirable properties that might be opened up by railways. For the moment I am not dealing with closer settlement land. We have 300 Mallee blocks available. The land has been subdivided, and is available for soldier settlement. It is also within reasonable reach of railway communication. Already a Mallee railway has been authorized, and its construction is only delayed through want of funds. We have other areas of Mallee land that are not available for settlement at present, and cannot be made available by the Government, because they are remote from railway communication, but if the necessary railway lines were under construction we would make these new areas available for settlement, knowing that the railway lines would make them accessible.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—There is nothing in the amendment to affect that action.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—I should like the Committee to recall the Western District scheme that the late Sir Thomas Bent put before the House many years ago. That was a bold and highly desirable scheme, but it was not carried out. Supposing that we have an area of land like the land under that scheme, and that the Government wish to acquire it and construct railways through it, the carrying of this amendment would block and make such a forward scheme impracticable. It would limit the action of the Board unnecessarily. No Board, with the experience of the past to guide it, would buy land that was remote from railway stations.

Mr. BAILEY.—That has not been our experience in the past.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—We have learned from the experience of the past, and I say this proposal is not necessary. If carried into effect, it might hamper the operations of the Board, and for that reason I ask the Committee to reject it.

Mr. BAILEY.—On clause 23 rests the success or otherwise of the Bill, because we know that if we do not acquire land at a fair and reasonable price this scheme to put discharged soldiers on the land, so far as making them successful producers

is concerned, will be a complete failure. When speaking on the second reading of this Bill, I mentioned a number of facts in connexion with several estates, acquired by the Government in the past for closer settlement purposes, that had been bought at inflated values, and resulted in the loss to the State of a considerable sum of money. I pointed out to the House that the Government had found it necessary, in order to get people to settle on the land purchased under the Closer Settlement Act, to write off a quarter of a million of money. That was a great loss, to the people of the State, and I trust that, in acquiring land under this particular measure, similar blunders will not be made. The Minister of Lands seems to think that blunders that have been made in the past will not recur in the future. I say it is not only possible that they will recur, but that it is highly probable. I do not see in this particular Bill any proviso that will make it certain that the failures made in the past with regard to land settlement will not be repeated by the Government or the Board when acquiring land for the settlement of returned soldiers. In acquiring land, the Minister is to direct his officers to inspect and report on the land. That is in regard to land to be acquired by mutual agreement. I am not now dealing with the compulsory provisions of this clause at all, but am confining my remarks to land acquired by mutual agreement. The Minister shall direct his officers to inspect and report, and on receiving such report the Board shall decide whether or not the land is suitable for closer settlement. Before so deciding the Board may, if it think fit, examine the land. In the past sometimes one or more members of the Closer Settlement Board have examined land before it has been acquired by the State. In regard to a particular estate that was purchased, we are told that one member of the Board inspected the land on a very foggy morning. His line of vision, therefore, would be somewhat limited. He went there for the purpose of seeing whether the land was suitable for closer settlement. The fact that he made his inspection on a foggy morning did not prevent him from recommending the purchase of the estate. Under this Bill, if the Board is of opinion that any estate is suitable for closer settle-

ment it may, on taking evidence from two officers of the Public Service, and two or more valuers—not being members of the Public Service—fix what, in the opinion of the Board, is the value of the estate, and report the same in writing to the Minister. In my opinion, that is where the whole of the trouble arose in the past. Certain local valuers were appointed. Then the Board made a recommendation to the Minister. I am not too sure how these particular valuers were appointed, and I am not too sure whether the Board made any searching inquiries as to the qualifications of the valuers. When the valuers do make a report to the Board, and the Board makes a recommendation to the Minister, sometimes the Minister does not accept its advice, and goes behind the Board. There is grave suspicion of Ministerial influence and also of political influence. That has been the case in several instances where land has been acquired by the Board in the past. Take one statement, for instance. I am now quoting from the Closer Settlement Board's report—

A section 6 case, near Toora, in Gippsland, shows further how the Board may be exploited; 618 acres were offered at £6 10s. per acre. The Minister's officer valued it at £5 15s., the local valuer at £3 15s., and the Board member (Mr. Lee) at £4 per acre. The Board member reported—

"The place is a miniature Allambee, that is to say, a small portion is cleared, while the balance is either original scrub or else scrub which has previously been cut, and has grown up again. . . . In my judgment this is exactly the class of place the Board should not touch, for the reason that on lots 1, 2, and 3 the amount of dead work in the shape of clearing scrub and fern-cutting is greater than any man single-handed could manage. The access is bad at all times, particularly in the winter. All these conditions apply also to the Allambee Estate. . . . My valuation for the property is £4 per acre, and I do not recommend the Board to advise the honorable the Minister to ratify the agreement. If the applicants really want land of this character, there are a number of better-improved blocks vacant on the Allambee Estate, which is situated about 25 miles distant."

That is what a member of the Board reported after his inspection of this particular estate. He said this was exactly the class of place the Board should not touch. After that we find—

The Board declined the offer in view of the adverse reports obtained. A month later the same Board member reported "I saw the Honorable the Minister—

Mr. WARDE.—Who was the Minister?

Mr. BAILEY.—I cannot say who the Minister was at that time—

"I saw the Honorable the Minister *re* this case. He is of opinion that the Board should submit an offer to the vendor. If the applicants are considered doubtful, they should be asked to deposit 12 per cent. of purchase money." The Board member recommended that Mr. Riseley be asked to re-submit at £4 per acre. A week later the Board decided to recommend the Minister to authorize the ratification of the agreements.

Does not that look like Ministerial interference? A member of the Board inspects the property, and reports to the Board that it is just the sort of property they should not touch for closer settlement at any price; that it is similar land to the Allambee Estate—and we all know what sort of land that was. The Board "turns it down." Then the Minister comes in, and instructs the Board to make an offer to the owner, and such an offer is made. The result is that this land is acquired by the Government. The report further states—

One of the purchasers was the vendor's son, who, when the sale was completed, raised some question and declined to proceed. The property has proved unsatisfactory, as the Board member originally predicted.

Another case is the purchase of 155 acres in the Beech Forest district. It was offered at £7 15s., and later was purchased at £6 10s. Half of the allotment is now on the Board's hands, and the settler, who is still in occupation, is only there by assistance from the Board. It is reported in the district that the vendor made a very good sale.

Vendors generally do make very good sales. The Government send their valuers into the district, and get their reports. Then the Minister steps in and purchases the land—

One of the purchasers apparently did not go into occupation, and the Board's funds will now be called upon for the extermination of the rabbits with which the property is infested, the cost of wire netting the area, and keeping down the scrub until the allotment can be sold by auction or otherwise disposed of at its true value.

In a case of 230 acres offered at Benalla the Board member reported—

"The soil varies in quality from a thin white loam to patches of dark stiff loam. The ground rises slightly on the south and east boundaries, and is stony along the foothills. There is considerable soakage from the hills, and the land so affected is rushy and sour. When some small paddocks have been cultivated the land is red with sorrel, and on the grass land the herbage is of poor quality. There is an area of about 40 acres of fair flat on the

western side, broken by small creeks and overgrown with rushes and tussocks. The net return on the amount is not likely to exceed £70 to £90 per annum. I could not recommend the Board to accept the applicant, quite apart from my valuation of the property. Values land at £6 10s. per acre."

The Board decided a few days after the date of this report to recommend the Minister to ratify the agreement if re-submitted at £7 per acre. The Board member gave the following evidence in reference to his recommendation having been overruled in this case:—

Q. You cannot account for why they accepted the other gentlemen's valuations instead of yours?—No. My opinion has always been that the price was £6 10s. per acre.

Q. Is not that recommendation of £7 per acre indorsed by yourself?—It is not a question of what my opinion is at all. If my two colleagues are against me on the matter, that ends it.

Q. You do not consent, but you agree with the majority?—In some cases you say, "Oh, well, I consent. . . ."

The number of allotments under these sections is 291, and already 45 lessees have gone out on some pretext or other, or the Board has forfeited their leases. A further number must follow, judging by the arrears of half-yearly payments that have accumulated.

The Commission stated, later—

Some of the doubtful purchases were made, the Board said, as the result of Ministerial pressure. To this the Minister (the Honorable H. McKenzie, M.L.A.) gave an emphatic denial; and, even if such were the case, the pressure should have been resisted. The fact remains that the Government is now burdened with a number of properties unsuitable for closer settlement, purchased at prices beyond their value.

That is the point I want to make with regard to this particular clause. What safeguards are there in this Bill to satisfy us that the same blunders are not going to be made with regard to land purchased for the settlement of soldiers? The success or otherwise of this land settlement depends on the acquisition of suitable land at its productive value, not at an inflated value. In connexion with the purchase of estates in the past, it has been shown that, as soon as the Government came into a district to purchase land, up went the price of land throughout that district. Now I come to the question of the valuers, on whose recommendations the Board acts. While he was giving evidence before the Royal Commission with regard to the acquisition of certain estates some time ago, one valuer was asked how he arrived at the value of land in any country district, and the most remarkable and, to my mind, alarming answer which he gave was that he went to the district and

looked at the windows of the estate agents' offices, and got an idea from the tickets displayed of the price at which land was selling there, and on that he based his valuation.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—How can you provide a safeguard against that kind of thing?

Mr. BAILEY.—These valuers ought to possess some qualification for the work. I know of a valuer who a few years ago was carrying on business as a draper in a country town, where he failed and compounded with his creditors. In about three months he was engaged in business as a commission agent, and a month or two afterwards he was appointed a sworn valuer under the Transfer of Land Act. Then a most astonishing thing happened—he was appointed Government valuer under the Land Tax Act. What qualification that man had for such a position no one in the district knew. As far as they were aware he had no qualification for it at all, having conducted a draper's shop, and, moreover, he had not been in the district many years. However, some influence was brought to bear, and after he had been appointed a sworn valuer under the Transfer of Land Act, he received an appointment as Government valuer under the Land Tax Act. His position under the Land Tax Act was quite easy. It was not necessary for him to know anything about the value of land at all. He simply called on everybody who sent in a return, and asked for particulars. Those people had to furnish him with the unimproved value of their property, the value of their improvements, and the capital value of the place.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—They were not compelled to do so.

Mr. BAILEY.—But they thought that they had to do it. If he, as the assessor for the Government, put the same values on their land as they had done, who was there to dispute it?

Mr. HOGAN.—A valuer in the Bungaree shire did exactly the same thing. He was absolutely incompetent.

Mr. BAILEY.—The Government should reconsider this particular clause, and see if they cannot do something for the purpose of safeguarding the soldier settlers before any commission agents are in the field, sending out letters to the owners of estates. The other day I travelled in the same compartment of a train as a gentleman who owns 4,000 acres in my

district. He told me that already he has received several letters from estate agents in various parts of the country, pointing out that this Bill is before Parliament, and asking him if he will submit his estate to the Government through their hands. I do not think that there is any necessity for estate agents to come between the owner and the Government. There is plenty of suitable land throughout the country which the Government could find themselves, and they should go direct to the owners without having intermediaries, who would get high commissions. Any benefit derived by the saving of commissions should go towards reducing the price of the land to the soldiers. Sub-section (3) of section 41 of the Closer Settlement Act provides—

In determining the compensation under this Act, the valuation of the land made by assessors, and set forth in the valuation register for the time being in force under the Land Tax Act 1915, may be taken into consideration.

In my opinion, "shall" should be substituted for "may." It should be mandatory on the Board and the valuers to take into consideration the valuation placed by the owner on his land under the Land Tax Act. The owner has to make a statutory declaration as to the capital value and the unimproved value of his land, as well as the value of his improvements. The capital value of his land is the amount which it might be expected to realize if offered for sale on reasonable terms and conditions. If that is the true valuation, surely the Board should take into consideration the amount that he states in his return as the land tax value before they arrive at their valuation. In the interests of the soldiers to be settled on the land, the Government should see that something more than the machinery clauses of the Closer Settlement Act are inserted in this Bill, in order that land may be acquired as nearly as possible at its productive value, instead of our having foisted on us land unsuitable for closer settlement at such a high price that settlers will not be able to make a living on it. At a later stage I intend to propose the insertion of a new sub-clause in the Bill. At present I do not think that there are sufficient safeguards to insure intending settlers getting suitable land at a reasonable price.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—The amendment submitted by the honorable member for Eaglehawk will limit the operations of

the Board to land adjacent to a railway. Is that not so?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—To land within a reasonable distance of a railway.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—In the main, that is a very good proposition, and the interests of the settler are safeguarded to a very large extent, but if the operations of the Board are confined to land within a reasonable distance of a railway, the chances are that the Board will miss many good opportunities of settling men on the land. In Gippsland there is a large area which is very poorly supplied with railways. Gippsland is a large stock raising country. There are men there who hold large areas of country who might, and who from time to time do, desire to part with them. Those areas are a considerable distance from railways. If the amendment were carried, the Board could not operate upon them. If it has a free hand, the Board would be able to do so. They are sheep-grazing propositions, and there will be soldiers who were identified with stock before they went away to fight who, on their return, will desire to pursue the same calling. They will not go in for intense cultivation, and they will require in these more remote parts large areas of land of poor quality compared with the closer settlement land. By purchasing those areas, the Board would be able to settle, and, in my opinion, settle satisfactorily, a very fair number of men who want to go on the land. If that is blocked by the carrying of this amendment, it will retard development. It will give a setback to the country in the way of railway development. While I agree that in the main it is a desirable thing to purchase areas close to railways, I believe that the interests of the country would be very much better served by giving the Board a free hand. As far as mistakes are concerned, it has been said over and over again that the Board will probably make mistakes, as its predecessors did. But these people who go on land in the future will be better safeguarded than in the past, because it is now proposed that there shall be a local committee who will advise the Board. I should think the local committee will have considerable influence in determining whether an estate should be purchased or not, because the members of that committee will have local knowledge, which will be very valuable. Therefore, the mistakes in the future will not be as fre-

quent as in the past. I intend to vote against the amendment.

Mr. HOGAN.—I am one of those who view the closer settlement question with a considerable amount of interest, and I fear that the methods adopted in the past have not produced satisfactory results. I more than fear that—I am sure of it. As the Minister of Lands stated that the machinery which was used in the past is going to be used in the future, I cannot see that my fears are going to be removed. When the Minister made his second-reading speech, he intimated that the machinery for the resumption of land provided under the Closer Settlement Act would be used for the purchase of land for returned soldiers. He said—

If the Board think that the price is anywhere near the mark and the property is suitable, they are empowered, and indeed ordered, under the Act, to engage two independent local valuers.

Mr. ANGUS.—Are the purchases made under the provisions of the Act?

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—Undoubtedly. We are using exactly the same machinery. It is the only machinery that we are empowered to use.

I am not satisfied with the machinery the Government have used in the past.

Mr. MENZIES.—That has nothing to do with the amendment now before the Chair.

Mr. HOGAN.—Yes, it has. I want to insure that different machinery will be used in the purchase of estates in future. The clause now before us deals with the acquisition of land, and I want to present arguments based on our experiences in this direction. It is held by some honorable members that the machinery which has been used in the past has been frightfully ineffective, and I agree with them. The Minister apparently, however, holds another view. When the honorable member for Lowan was speaking on the second reading of the Bill he said—

I am surprised that honorable members should declare that huge losses have been made in connexion with our closer settlement, in the face of the fact that a Minister, with a due sense of his position, recently told this House that our closer settlement scheme has financed itself.

Mr. MACKEY.—I think the Minister's statement requires a good deal of qualification.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—No qualification at all.

Mr. HOGAN.—That statement of the Minister absolutely astounds me.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—It must be pretty strong.

Mr. HOGAN.—I have been under the impression that our closer settlement scheme has been so bungled as to cause very serious losses. I propose to give some reasons for holding that view.

The CHAIRMAN.—Will the honorable member connect his remarks with the amendment now before the Chair. The proposal of the honorable member for Eaglehawk is to omit certain words with the view of inserting the following words:—

"any block of private land in Victoria which is certified by the Minister in writing to be, in his opinion, within reasonable distance of a railway line."

Mr. HOGAN.—I will connect it in this way: One of the reasons why some of the land acquired under the Closer Settlement Act has been a failure is that it was not within a reasonable distance of a railway, and the honorable member for Eaglehawk wants to insure that land to be purchased in the future must be adjacent to a railway line. I intend to support the amendment, and to give my reasons for doing so. For this purpose I propose to go more thoroughly into the purchase of the Allambee Estate than any honorable member has yet done. It is quite time the people of Victoria should know all the facts in connexion with the purchase of that estate. One of the reasons why that estate was a failure was because it was not within reasonable reach of railway communication or of a decent road. If the amendment of the honorable member for Eaglehawk is carried, no estate similarly situated can be purchased for returned soldiers.

Mr. LIVINGSTON.—It is within a reasonable distance of a railway, and it has a good road now.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—Lots of things have happened since it was purchased.

Mr. HOGAN.—We will see what was the position. I propose to quote from the progress report of the Closer Settlement Commission, which says, under the heading of "Notable Failures"—

The estate upon which failure has been most marked is Allambee. An area of over 5,000 acres was purchased at £6 6s. 4d. per acre in 1907. Mr. Gillespie (who was absent in England when the estate was purchased), in evidence, gave it as his opinion that the prospective sale value of this land was not more than about £2 per acre.

Thirteen holders were bought out, and the areas were cut up into thirty-two allotments.

There are no ordinary settlers now, but eleven subsidized probationers, two of whom were original settlers, eke out a living.

When inspected by the Commission—approaching from Warragul—the members had to cut their way in over fallen timber, and the greater part of that end of the estate was in a disgraceful condition. Some of the blocks had been abandoned for years, and were overrun with saplings, bracken, and vermin. On approaching the other end of the estate, from Leongatha, at a later date, the drivers refused to take the risk of negotiating the track known as Sagasser's, consequently the members of the Commission had to walk over a mile down a grade that was certainly unsafe for vehicular traffic. One settler stated that the children, to get to school—a distance of little over a mile—had to climb some 700 feet.

In order to dispose of the blocks under conditional purchase lease in recent years, an amount of over £12,000 has been written off the capital value; but, even then, there is no demand for the land.

The Accountant furnished a statement of the financial position of this estate as at 28th February, 1915, which shows that the losses in respect of capital and revenue have been £11,882 0s. 7d., and £7,766 4s. 3d. respectively, making a total loss of £19,648 4s. 10d.

The Secretary to the Board suggested that the estate should be handed over to the Lands Department, to dispose of under the more liberal terms for Crown lands—to make the first loss the last.

I want to give some further information with regard to the purchase of this estate. I find it was bought on the 1st February, 1907, from Cuming and others. The Government paid £6 6s. 4d. per acre for an area of 5,023 acres. It was subdivided into thirty-two allotments, and on the 15th June, 1907, only five months later, it was made available to settlers at £4 11s. 7d. per acre. That meant an admission that the vendor had received nearly £2 per acre more than the Department was barefaced enough to ask settlers to pay for it. Even £4 11s. 7d. was an absolutely exorbitant price, because Mr. Gillespie, one of the members of the Closer Settlement Board, said that £2 an acre was an outside value for the land. The Government which allowed such a transaction to be carried through were guilty of a very serious offence, and somebody should have been indicted over it. The honorable member for Hampden, in referring to this matter, said that no Ministerial responsibility could be traced in regard to it.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—They would have been able to trace Ministerial responsibility if it had been a Labour Government.

Mr. HOGAN.—I think they would. I am going to read the evidence of the Chairman of the Board at that time. Even at the reduced price of £4 11s. 7d. settlers could not be induced to take up the land. The sub-Committee of the Cabinet, of which the present Minister of Mines and the late Mr. John Thomson were members, pointed out that on 21st January, 1913, there were then on the estate nineteen vacant allotments, comprising 3,050 acres, which, at the schedule selling price, represented £13,046. Eighteen blocks had been settled, but the settlers had been rendered almost bankrupt in the hopeless task of trying to make a living on land really worth £2 per acre for which they were charged £4 11s. 7d. The blocks were abandoned. More settlers had since abandoned their blocks. I have waded through the evidence given by Mr. Cumming, who was Chairman of the Board when this estate was purchased. I am going to quote some extracts from his evidence given before the Closer Settlement Commission on Tuesday, 19th January, 1915. There were present—Mr. Angus, in the chair; Mr. Rees, Mr. Chatham, Mr. Gordon, Mr. Oman, and Mr. Plain. Mr. Cumming was examined by the Chairman as follows:—

Was Allambee one of the purchases of the Board when you were Chairman?—Yes.

Did you inspect the estate before it was purchased?—Yes, once.

What was your opinion about it when you inspected it?—My own personal opinion at the time was—when I saw it in the daylight—as I said to my colleague, Mr. Duggan, “It is not the place for us.” Mr. Reed was a member of the Board at the time during Mr. Gillespie’s absence in England. He said, “I think we had better have a ride over the place and have a look at it. It is no use going back to Melbourne again without having inspected it.” Mr. Duggan, I might say, was almost of the same opinion as myself. However, we went over the place. Mr. Reed was very anxious to get this property, because he wanted to connect the northern town with the southern town. He thought that was the best way to get a road put through the property. He said, “If the road is put through it will enhance values very much, and will make it a main road right through.”

There was no road through the property at that time. Further on Mr. Cumming was examined by Mr. Rees as follows:—

You said, “This is no proposition for us”?—That was before we inspected it. That was in the morning after breakfast, looking from Cumming Smith’s house.

You said to Mr. Duggan, “I do not think this is any place for us”—you came to the con-

clusion afterwards it was fit for closer settlement?—Well, I was induced very much against my own mind.

Was it induced by what you saw of the property—were you induced by what Mr. Reed said?—More by what Mr. Reed said.

You were still of the opinion, after looking, that it was not fit for closer settlement?—I might say this to put it almost in a nutshell—ever since that property was bought—since I left the Board—I am very sorry we ever bought it.

We are trying to get at why you bought it?—We gave it a good inspection.

We are all wise after the event. Allambee has been a huge failure; what we are trying to get at is why you, as experienced men, purchased that property?—I could not tell you.

There is the puzzle. The Chairman of the Board at the time the Allambee estate was purchased could not tell the Commission why the Board purchased it.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—There was a very persistent agent trying to sell Allambee to them.

Mr. HOGAN.—Later on Mr. Cumming stated that the Government would not allow the Board to purchase suitable estates elsewhere. This must have made an impression on him. He said—

There were times when the Treasurer would not advance money to purchase properties we wanted to buy. We recommended the Government to buy, and the Government would not advance the money to buy two properties which were most suitable for closer settlement and irrigation.

By Mr. Oman.—What were the two?—One was Mount William Estate. The other was Dhurringile, I suppose actually the best property on the Goulburn River. The Government turned it down. A syndicate afterwards bought Mount William, and I think they made £80,000 out of it.

Mr. Cumming was examined by Mr. Plain as follows:—

Was there any influence used by the Minister of that day to induce you to purchase the Allambee Estate?—Well, I do not think any influence was brought to bear upon me.

We have evidence there was?—Only what Mr. Reed suggested—if there was a good road put through it would enhance the value of the property. I may say this: It was the first Gippsland property I ever saw. I may have been misled by the climate, perhaps, and the rainfall.

You said you did not altogether agree with the purchase, yet you signed your name in order that it should be purchased. Do you think you did wrong?—I can say this: Afterwards I could see it was not going to be a success, and I said to Mr. Duggan one day, “Well, Dan, I think we have made a mistake. It is a great pity we ever signed our names recommending the purchase of this property.” We had turned it down, I think, on two previous occasions. The third time we were induced to come and inspect it, and we did.

Mr. OMAN.—The honorable member set out to show that members of Parliament had used their influence.

Mr. HOGAN.—The honorable member is guessing at what I set out to show. I set out to place the full facts before the people of this country, as far as I could get them, with regard to some of the most notable failures under the closer settlement scheme. The examination continued—

Who induced you to inspect the third time?—We got the offer from an agent. I forgot his name.

The agent did not instruct you to?—It was bought through an agent—Wonless.

You inspected the estate three times, turned it down twice, and the third time purchased?—When we turned it down we did not see it at all. I think it was Mr. Murray, I think he was Minister of Lands at the time, or whoever the Minister was, said to me, "Do not be too keen on buying land down in the Gippsland district." I think it was Mr. Murray.

That was the first occasion?—Yes.

Did Ministers change places in the meantime?—Yes. Mr. Murray left the Ministry, and Mr. Mackey became Minister of Lands.

When Mr. Mackey became Minister you were again instructed to inspect?—Yes.

You purchased?—Yes.

Did the Minister give you any reason why it should be purchased?—No.

You refused it because Mr. Murray, as Minister, said to be very wary about Gippsland properties?—Yes.

Then Mr. Mackey comes in and advises you to buy the estate, and you bought it?—Yes.

Mr. WARDE.—The estate was in Mr. Mackey's district, was it not?

Mr. HOGAN.—Yes.

Mr. MENZIES.—That only shows that the Board valued the opinion of members of Parliament.

Mr. HOGAN.—There seems to be a little bit of confusion as to who was Minister of Lands at the time the estate was bought. In speaking on the second reading of this Bill, the honorable member for Port Fairy quoted from the report of the Closer Settlement Commission, and the report appears in *Hansard* as follows:—

"In order to dispose of the blocks under conditional purchase lease in recent years, an amount of over £12,000 has been written off the capital value; but even then there is no demand for the land."

Mr. SINCLAIR.—Who was the Minister then?

Mr. MACKEY.—I was the Minister, but the purchase was actually made under a previous Minister.

I have shown that Mr. Cumming stated that the previous Minister, Mr. Murray, told the Board to be very wary about purchasing land in Gippsland. He stated

in evidence before the Royal Commission that the Board turned down Allambee Estate the first and second time they inspected it, because Mr. Murray advised them to do so, and that the third time they purchased it because of the advice of the then Minister, the honorable member for Gippsland West. The estate was purchased on the 1st February, 1907. Mr. Murray had been the Minister of Lands from 19th February, 1904, to the 15th August, 1906. He relinquished office on the latter date, and on the 17th August, 1906, the honorable member for Gippsland West became Minister of Lands, and occupied that position until 31st October, 1908. On the 1st February, 1907, or about six months after the honorable member for Gippsland West became Minister of Lands, Allambee was purchased. That is the official record. The Closer Settlement Commission did not succeed in establishing responsibility for the payment of £6 6s. 4d. per acre for the Allambee Estate, which Mr. Cumming said he was absolutely opposed to purchasing, and which Mr. Gillespie, one of the other members of the Board, said was not worth more than £2 per acre. In that respect I say the Closer Settlement Commission did not complete the task which was allotted to them.

Mr. OMAN.—You must remember that the Closer Settlement Commission only had the file to guide them.

Mr. HOGAN.—The Commission had all the evidence which I have quoted. That evidence was given in the presence of the Commission.

Mr. OMAN.—We would have written no report if we had found on all the evidence we had given to us.

Mr. MENZIES (to Mr. Hogan).—Evidence is not established fact. A lot of funny evidence is submitted.

Mr. OMAN.—The honorable member for Warrenheip is losing sight of the fact that the old Board may have tried to place the responsibility on others to shield themselves.

Mr. HOGAN.—No. I think the old Board were trying to shield anybody and everybody, and the Commission let it go at that.

Mr. OMAN.—The Commission included two members of your own party.

Mr. HOGAN.—That might be one of the reasons why they went astray. Now

I shall quote from the report. One of the Commissioners asked Mr. Cumming—

Were you at a great disadvantage in purchasing it because you could not get the estate you wanted to buy?—Of course, if we could have bought estates, we would have liked to have bought we would have never bought any of that class of stuff. I have always said this Act would never be a complete success until you had compulsory purchase; that was my opinion when I was on that Board.

He proceeded to give evidence to the effect that the Government refused to allow the Board to purchase Mount William and Dhurringile, and forced them to buy such stuff as Allambee, and other estates. He was asked by the Chairman—

By whose direction were you forced to turn down Mount William and the other estate—Dhurringile?—The properties had to go to the Minister of Lands first; he then sent a valuer out, his own valuer, who made a preliminary report, and then we were instructed to inspect these properties; we inspected them, recommended the purchase, and the Government turned them down; it is on record.

About the time that Allambee was purchased, with such disastrous consequences to the settlers of Victoria, and the whole of the citizens, as the Board were induced to pay £35,000 for the property, which was worth not more than £10,000, they were prevented by the Government from purchasing Mount William and Dhurringile. I shall quote from other evidence regarding Allambee—evidence elicited by the honorable member for Grenville, in examining Mr. Cumming—

When you were near the homestead at Cuming Smith's block you noticed the land on the left side of the road as you went to the junction of the road—the Warragul and the Yarragon roads, along near Campbell's?—Yes.

Did you notice the ground on the left-hand side?—Yes.

What, in your opinion, is the value of that?—Looking over the fence, I could not say—I did not look at it.

You could look over the fence and say, "This is no place for us"?—We went over the property. There is a vast difference in looking at land over a fence as compared with going over a property; we went over Allambee.

Would you be surprised to know the owners would take 30s. an acre?—I did not know that.

Did you come into that property from the south side—from Leongatha?—No.

You have no idea of the road connexion between the property and Leongatha?—No; none whatever.

You never heard it had been offered for £1 an acre to McCarthy, of Leongatha?—Never.

You never heard part of it had changed hands at £1 12s. an acre?—No.

Mr. Hogan.

Were there any Campbells living on an adjoining place when you were there?—I cannot remember the name.

What would you think of a valuation on the adjoining land—on the east, I think—Campbell's valuation of £2 an acre?—I do not remember ever seeing any of the Campbells; I never heard any person say it was only worth £2 an acre.

You practically admitted you were induced against your own mind by Mr. Reed to recommend this property to the Government?—Very greatly.

Against your own opinion?—Yes.

The honorable member for Grenville further examined Mr. Cumming, as follows:—

What do you think of the action of the Government in writing off £11,000—two-thirds of the purchase value?—That is for the Government to say.

You still maintain it was worth the money?—If the Government considered it wanted reducing in value to make it payable to those who are on the land, that would be the best thing for them to do if they can get interest for the money.

If the value had been too high the best way is to reduce it?—I should say so; the selectors have not been successful.

If it had been reduced from £6 4s. to £4 12s. 6d., and is still a failure, do you think they would be justified in further reducing it?—I could not say; it depends a good deal upon the men who go on the land.

Did you take into consideration when you recommended that place for closer settlement what the social conditions of the people who went to live there would be like?—People were living there when we went there.

Were the children going to school?—That I could not tell you.

We were told when we were there that children had to go a mile to school, and to climb up 700 feet in a mile?—That might be; that is a good elevation; I do not know whether they go to school now.

Do you think a place where children have to climb up 700 feet in a mile to go to school is a suitable place for closer settlement?—They would get the advantage coming back, any way; they could slide home.

Is that not the dizzy limit?

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member's time has expired.

Mr. WARDE.—I hope that the honorable member for Eaglehawk will not persist with his amendment. There may be some land in the hands of private owners within 15 or 25 miles of a railway line, and if the amendment is carried the Government will be prevented from acquiring that land, although it may be in every way suitable for closer settlement. The Government could construct a railway to make such land accessible. That has been done before. Land has

been purchased 15 miles from a railway, a railway has been constructed, and the land has been settled. I do not want to see the owners of land adjacent to railways getting the unearned increment, and I do not think the honorable member does either. At the very lowest estimate, a railway would increase the value of the land by £2 an acre. If any one is to get the unearned increment, I prefer that the soldier settler should get it. The Government should resume suitable land at its present value, provide it with railway communication, and charge the cost of railway construction to the land before it is settled. If that were done, the railway could be constructed in most cases at not less than 10s. an acre of the land that would be served. As the Government, in the main, represent vested interests, I do not suppose that they will adopt that policy; their supporters will not let them.

Mr. MENZIES.—That is very cruel.

Mr. WARDE.—I believe what I have said. Every attempt made in connexion with railway construction to throw some of the responsibility on the people who have pocketed the enhanced value has been frustrated by some action of this House. The Government have been forced to certain action by the members sitting behind them. I may mention the Western District proposition as an illustration. It has already been mentioned by the Minister of Lands, and I regard it as one of the best propositions ever submitted to Parliament. The land-owners of that district did not want to part with their land, but they knew that they had no right to prevent the settlement of such rich land. They were alarmed at the proposition to resume about £8,000,000 worth of the best land for closer settlement, and they recognised that the first step towards breaking up the estates was the construction of a railway from Gheringhap to Maroona, or some other point. The land-owners agreed, if the Government did not compulsorily resume the land for closer settlement, to provide the money for constructing a railway because of the enhanced value it would give to the land.

Mr. MENZIES.—What was the fate of the Bill?

Mr. WARDE.—The fate of it was sealed in another place. As I was about to point out, land might be bought at £4 or £6 per acre that possibly would,

under production, become worth £8 or £10 per acre.

Mr. MENZIES.—The proposal for compulsory resumption was adopted in this Chamber.

Mr. WARDE.—The land-owners in the Western District recognised that they would reap an enormous profit by the private sale of their land after the construction of a railway. And that, I think, has been borne out by the result, as the honorable member for Lowan knows. Land that could have been bought at £4 or £5 an acre was sold at £6, £7, and £8 an acre. Some of it that was fit for dairying was sold at a high price. Land-owners in that district will, in the course of time, put hundreds of thousands of pounds into their pockets. If the honorable member for Eaglehawk's amendment is carried it will simply limit the operations of this measure, and will give to the men whose lands abut on the railway to-day the unearned increment, because of the value of that land when cut up into small allotments. I say the Government should buy wherever the land is suitable, and if it is some distance back from a railway they should resume the land or get it under the compulsory system, and construct a railway there if necessary. Both railway and water should be taken there, and charges made on the land. I again say that I would sooner see the soldier get the unearned increment than that it should go to the present land-owners, who have already enjoyed considerable advantages.

Mr. LIVINGSTON (Minister of Forests).—I do not think the amendment moved by the honorable member for Eaglehawk should receive much consideration from this Committee. It would put a limitation on the selection of land, principally in the neighbourhood of railways. There are districts that during the next 20, 30, or 40 years will not get a railway, that would not support a railway, and yet, curiously enough, support the settlers there very well indeed. In some of the hilly Gippsland districts there is land highly suitable for returned soldiers. They could make a splendid living there. But the difficulty is in regard to the roads. It is impossible, as the Railways Standing Committee know perfectly well, to profitably construct railways into many districts. What is wanted are subsidiary roads. The main roads are now being rapidly constructed. If

the amendment were carried it would debar land in those districts being profitably taken up by returned soldiers. If motors are put upon those roads they will do better in many cases than railways would do. In these districts a good living could be made on comparatively small areas if anything like decent roads, and subsidiary roads particularly, were provided. They should not be debarred from settlement by returned soldiers. It would be very unfair to the soldiers, quite a number of whom went from Gippsland, and are desirous of taking up land in that district. They know the peculiarities of the land, and they know its difficulties also. It would be a mistake to debar them from going into those districts because of the absence of a railway. I do trust that the honorable member for Eaglehawk will see his way to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—After the number of eloquent and powerful speeches that have been made—none of which have touched the amendment at all—I will accept the advice of the Minister and withdraw the amendment.

The amendment was withdrawn.

Mr. OMAN.—I move—

That in clause 23, line 46, at the end of sub-clause (2), the following new paragraph be inserted:—

"(d) Nothing in this Act shall be taken to authorize the compulsory acquisition or taking for the Crown of land of an owner who, in the present war, is serving outside the Commonwealth with His Majesty's Naval or Military Forces or with the Naval or Military Forces of the Commonwealth."

I understand the Government will accept this amendment. I think it is a fair proposition that an owner's property during his absence should be safeguarded. I do not intend to take up the time of the Committee, because I believe the amendment is one that commends itself to honorable members.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—The Government propose to accept this amendment. Clearly, it would be a wrong thing to take advantage of any man who is serving the Empire by taking possession of his land during his absence. I have no knowledge of any large land-owners being at the Front, but the new paragraph will apply to any one who is serving the country outside the Commonwealth. I think that whilst he

is fighting at the Front we should say, "Hands off his land."

Mr. MACKINNON.—What is meant by the "owner"? Practically all the sons of the large land-owners are at the war, and have been there during the last two years, and they run the risk of finding when they come back that their fathers' land is occupied by somebody else. Of course, the amendment makes it clear that where a man is the owner of the land his interests would be protected. I would ask the Minister to look into a case that came under my own observation of two young men, one eighteen and the other twenty years of age, both of whom are serving in the British Army. They were too young to enlist in this country, and so they enlisted in England. These young men are in this position: The mother has only a life interest in the estate. The property is vested in trustees, and they come into it when the mother dies. I hope the clause is so constructed that, if the mother dies during the course of the war, the interests of the sons will be properly safeguarded. The hardship I see arising is this: Whilst the sons of the owner of an estate are fighting the land may be taken from the father, and outsiders, men who have the luck to get out of the Army at an earlier date, or men, perhaps, who only went to Egypt, may be found, when they return, in possession of their ancestral acres. That is one of the inequalities I suppose that must arise. I should, however, like the Minister to look into the matter and make provision whereby young men who are entitled to the land shall have an opportunity of protecting themselves, or the trustees shall be allowed to protect their interests, the trustees being the legal owners while they are away.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I do not think we should widen the exemption. But certainly such a case as that to which the honorable member for Prahran has directed attention should receive consideration from the Government.

Mr. MACKINNON.—I am not quite certain whether the clause exactly expresses the idea that this protection is to be given when the war is over as well as during the period of the war. I take it that no person who has been serving with His Majesty's forces would be dispossessed of property, if it were possible to avoid it.

Mr. MENZIES.—I do not think the paragraph is clearly expressed. It is only

during the time of his service that this will apply. It certainly applies to the man outside the Commonwealth who is fighting, but there does not appear to be any limitation of the period. It might apply for all time.

Mr. BAILEY.—He has to be serving.

Mr. MENZIES.—Yes.

Mr. OMAN.—And in the present war.

Mr. MENZIES.—No doubt, but the point is whether it is intended to make this exemption apply for all time.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—Oh, no.

Mr. MENZIES.—As far as I can see there is nothing in the paragraph that sets out any limit to the time during which this reservation would apply.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—When he returns and gets his discharge the provision would cease to operate, and he would become an ordinary land-holder.

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. BAILEY.—I move—

That the following sub-clause be inserted after sub-clause (2):—

(2A) (a) In respect of land compulsorily acquired and taken by the Board under this Act the Board shall pay compensation computed as follows:—

To the capital value of land certified by the Commissioner of Taxes under the Land Tax Act 1915 there shall be added a sum equivalent to 10 per centum of such capital value.

(b) If the land so taken or any part thereof is not separately valued under the Land Tax Act 1915, but is only a part of a larger area which is so valued, the capital value of the part so taken shall be deemed to be such proportion of the capital value of the said larger area as shall be determined to be fairly attributable to the part so taken.

(c) The determination referred to in this sub-section shall be made by a County Court Judge appointed to act as arbitrator by the Governor in Council.

There is a provision in the Bill facilitating the acquisition of land. Instead of it being necessary for both Houses of Parliament to pass a resolution the Board can compulsorily resume land for the settlement of soldiers if it thinks it is in the interests of the State to do so. The purport of my amendment is to facilitate the Board in getting at the value of the land so that it will not be necessary to go through all the machinery in the Closer Settlement Act. It would do away with the trouble of appointing valuers and going to the Supreme Court. In connexion with the acquisition of this land,

I want to obviate the necessity for all litigation, and prevent the adoption of inflated values, so that the land shall be purchased at a fair and reasonable price. We have been told that there are a number of patriotic land-holders who are willing to place their land at the disposal of the Board for the settlement of soldiers. In their case there will be no necessity to bring the compulsory clauses of this Bill into operation. Those clauses will only be brought into operation against owners who will not part with land which the Board considers suitable for the settlement of soldiers, and which the owners are not using to the best advantage. The mere fact of having compulsory provisions will not prevent barter between the owner and the Government, but my amendment does stipulate the maximum amount to be paid for the land, and that is the amount that the owner himself said the land was worth, plus 10 per cent., which I think it is fair and reasonable to add in the case of a man who wants to retain his property. Some honorable members may think that that is a little too liberal, but in my opinion some concession should be made to the owner whose property is compulsorily resumed. Section 42 of the Closer Settlement Act provides—

(1) The value of any land acquired by compulsory process shall be assessed at the sum at which the land, if unencumbered by any lease, mortgage, or other charge thereon might be expected to realize at the date on which the offer was made if offered for sale on such reasonable terms and conditions as a *bona fide* seller might in ordinary circumstances be expected to require.

(2) The value of the land shall be assessed without reference to any increase in value arising from the proposal of the Board to carry out the purposes of closer settlement.

In his land tax return the owner has to state the capital value of his land, and no one should know that value better than he does, because he has been working it, and knows its productive capacity. In section 3 of the Land Tax Act the following definition is given:—

“Capital value,” or “capital improved value,” or “improved value” of land means the sum which the land, if unencumbered by any lease, mortgage, or other charge thereon, might be expected to realize at the time of valuation or assessment if offered for sale on such reasonable terms and conditions as a *bona fide* seller might in ordinary circumstances be expected to require.

The owner bases the capital value of his land on what it might be expected to

bring if submitted to public competition on reasonable terms and conditions. He sends in his return, and signs a declaration that that is the capital value of his land. After he has done that the Government send out their assessor. If the assessor thinks that the owner has undervalued the land, the assessor also sends in a return, and the Commissioner notifies the owner that he has not put a high enough valuation on it. If the owner thinks his valuation sufficient he can lodge an appeal. Therefore, the owner cannot say afterwards that the land is undervalued. He would not be prepared to pay taxation on a higher amount than the land was worth, because he has the right of appeal. I consider what I propose a fair and reasonable way of acquiring land. It obviates the necessity of going to the Court, and prevents costly litigation. It means that the Government say to the owner. "We accept your valuation, but, as we are compulsorily acquiring the land, we are going to give you 10 per cent. more than the value which you placed on it." Even by paying 10 per cent. more than the owner's valuation I feel sure that we will get land at a cheaper rate than if officers are sent out into the country searching for estates. As soon as the Government begin looking for estates the value of land in a district goes up. In connexion with the present method of purchasing estates, the Secretary of the Board, when examined by the Closer Settlement Commission, was asked—

Do you consider the mode of buying estates and the method of valuation for purchasing and subdivisional purposes as now being followed by the Board the best, or by any previous Board?

The Secretary replied—

Other than if we could go into the market and buy unknown as private individuals, yes; but whilst we have to go into the market publicly as a Government Department, I do not see that we could improve our present system very much.

Mr. Kennedy was asked if he could suggest any improvement in the method of acquiring estates, and here is an extract from his evidence—

Yes, let the Board make inquiries on their own, and get right up to the purchasing stage, and have authority to purchase without its being known who is purchasing.

Q. Keeping back the knowledge from the public?—Yes, or any one else; even the vendor should not know. If I were purchasing land to-morrow it is the last thing I would do to let the owner know who was after it.

Mr. Bailey.

Q. You would use common sense and strategy?—Yes.

That means that he would employ some one as an intermediary. It is a remarkable thing how in the country information leaks out. If the Government propose to adopt any other means of purchasing land in the country except that which I have proposed they will not get it at a fair and reasonable value. The Closer Settlement Commission specifically mentions what is known as Moore's land, and in its report it says—

A purchase of about 2,000 acres, part of the Willow Grove Estates, known as Moore's land, shows the tendency for values to ascend when the Board is in the field as a purchaser. Half of this land was sold a short time previous to its purchase by the Board at 36s. per acre, but the Board acquired it at 70s. per acre, apparently without having the usual search at the Office of Titles to find the values at which it had just previously changed hands. When the Commission inspected the estate two out of the three allotments were vacant.

It will be seen from the foregoing evidence that the outside valuers were asked to form an opinion without being put in possession of all the details, and that the Board afterwards claimed to over-ride their opinions on the ground of its superior knowledge.

Here we have an instance of an estate which the vendor had bought for 36s. an acre, being sold almost immediately afterwards to the Government for 70s.; and, as the Commission says, a search at the Titles Office would have disclosed the purchase of the land at 36s. an acre. I want to prevent the possibility of anything like that happening again, and my amendment ought to commend itself to the Government. It does not bind the Government to buy an estate at the owner's valuation, plus 10 per cent., but provides that that shall be the maximum amount the Government shall pay. If the valuers for the Board think that an estate has been over-valued, the Government need not buy it. If the amendment I have proposed is agreed to, we will be assured that no estates will be purchased at a rate considerably higher than their productive value.

Mr. HOGAN.—I intend to support the amendment, and I hope it will be carried. It is a very reasonable proposal, and it will insure what we now recognise to be the first essential to successful closer settlement. That is to say, that land will be secured at its fair value. One of the reasons why our closer settlement scheme has been a failure in the past is owing to

the fact that so many estates have been purchased at excessive values.

Mr. BAYLES.—There are cases where the Government would not purchase estates at the price offered, and they have subsequently been sold for a better price.

Mr. HOGAN.—I have already referred to that, and it only aggravates the bad conduct of the Board and the Government in purchasing inferior land at a high price, while at the same time refusing to buy land offered at a reasonable rate. When speaking a little while ago, I was quoting from the evidence given by Mr. Cumming, and there are still a couple of extracts which I desire to make.

The CHAIRMAN.—I do not think that the evidence is relevant to the particular matter before us.

Mr. HOGAN.—I submit it is. We want to provide new machinery, so that we can secure for our soldiers cheaper and better land than we, apparently, were able to get under the old machinery. I desire to point out some of the evil results which accrued under the old machinery; and in support of my contention I want to quote further evidence given to the Closer Settlement Commission.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member will not be in order at this stage in doing that. When the amendments have been dealt with, he will be in order, because he will then be able to speak to the whole clause. He will not be deprived of his opportunity of speaking.

Mr. HOGAN.—Very well; I will wait.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—The amendment proposed by the honorable member for Port Fairy seems to me to have some merit. The success of this scheme will largely depend upon the valuations which are made of land to be purchased. Wherever closer settlement schemes have proved a failure, not only in this, but in other countries, it is because of the fact that land has not been acquired at its proper value. Valuers often go to a district knowing nothing about the capabilities of the soil, and they are consequently not able to arrive at a true estimate of the value of land. On the other hand, if a man who does know a district particularly well, is engaged, he starts off with the idea that the land in the place in which he lives is superior to any other land. If the valuations made by local men are taken, they ought certainly to be checked. It is well known that when the

Government are out to buy land, a boom immediately takes place, prices are advanced, and land is acquired at a rate which is excessive, so far as its productive qualities are concerned. I suppose the Minister has studied the New Zealand law on this subject, and he will know that the proposal now before us is not new. It seems a fair thing to start with the assumption that the owner of land has placed a fair value on it for taxation purposes; and if we add 10 per cent. for compulsory acquirement, it really seems as if a fair deal could take place, both to the owner and to the Government. It is a good provision to have in our land laws, because it gives an intimation to a land-owner as to what he is liable to if he does not put a fair valuation upon his estate. The amendment will act as a safeguard, and will help to make closer settlement, so far as our soldiers are concerned, a success. It is desirable we should have some instrument of government which will make honest people, who are inclined to be dishonest, particularly when they are seeking to sell land to the Government. If we do not have a provision of this kind, there will always be a danger of land being put on the market at a high price, and a fair thing will not be done to the settlers. I know that estates offered to the Government were declined because it was held that the price asked was too high. I have in my mind an estate belonging to the late Mr. Thomas Skene, which I believe is in the electorate represented by the Minister of Lands. This estate was offered to the Closer Settlement Board, and was refused. It was afterwards sold, at a somewhat higher price, to a private syndicate, which subsequently made a fair profit upon the transaction. The Government would have done well had it purchased the estate at that price, and I believe that was the valuation submitted by the owner for taxation purposes. I think the provision suggested by the honorable member for Port Fairy in his amendment is a desirable one to have in any Act, whether it is put into operation or not, because it would give the Government a wide discretion, and would have the tendency not to keep land values below their proper figure from the point of view of production, and from the point of view of successfully developing this country. The provisions of this Bill, and other Bills, regarding closer settlement

should be laid down upon the best and wisest foundations. If we possibly can, we want to devise means by which we can acquire land at its real, honest value, without the Government being charged unfair or extortionate prices, and without there being any gambling or speculation in land values. When the Government pays out money for land, it expects to get fair value in order that the people who go upon the land may be able to win from the soil that asset which will enrich them and the State, without imposing any future burdens, such as high values and extortionate values always exact from the people on the soil. I support the amendment of the honorable member for Port Fairy, because I believe it to be on right lines. Whether it is operated by the Government or not, I think it is a very wise provision.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I must ask the Committee to reject the amendment, not that I am out of sympathy with the proposed basis of valuation, but, as honorable members all know, the Land Tax Register, as far as Victoria is concerned, is not a completed Register, and it is not a proper guide. It has been arranged, as honorable members know, that the Register, when it is completed, shall be made available for the municipalities and all financial institutions, and that it shall be generally taken as the basis.

Mr. KEAST.—It is a remarkable thing that it has not been ready before now.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—We are all aware of the variations that have been made in the Land Tax Register during the present year, and they indicate that the Register is still lacking completion.

Mr. KEAST.—The State and Federal valuations very seldom agree.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—There are very frequent discrepancies. An attempt is being made to reconcile the differences as between the State and Commonwealth valuations, and to get a Register that will be a standard, and that can be accepted. In order that honorable members may see the futility of the amendment, I ask them to look at its wording. It provides for the payment, where land is compulsorily taken, of the capital value of land certified by the Commissioner of Taxes, plus 10 per cent. The Board have under offer, at the present time, properties with the valuations on the Land Tax Register accompanying the offers. With regard

to one property that has been investigated within the last fortnight, the valuers of the Board have recommended that they cannot advise the Board to accept the property at the land tax valuation.

Mr. BAILEY.—That is not a case of compulsory taking.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The amendment makes it mandatory that the compensation to be paid shall be the amount of the valuation on the Land Tax Register, plus 10 per cent. It can be shown that some of the purchases of the Board just now would be at lower amounts than the valuations shown on the Land Tax Register for the properties. The Government cannot accept the amendment at the present time, first, because the Land Tax Register is not complete, and is not available, and second, because, when it is complete and available, there is at present power in the Closer Settlement Act to use it as a basis. Sub-section (3) of section 41 of the Closer Settlement Act provides—

In determining the compensation under this Act the valuation of the land made by assessors and set forth in the valuation register for the time being in force under the Land Tax Act 1915 may be taken into consideration. This sub-section shall come into operation on a day to be proclaimed by the Governor in Council and notified in the *Government Gazette*, which proclamation may be made when the Governor in Council is satisfied that the valuations of land made by assessors under the Land Tax Act 1915 are available for adoption for the purposes of this Act.

The simple point is that the Land Tax Register is not yet available, and because it is not yet available, we cannot accept the amendment. Therefore, I ask the Committee to reject it.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—The assumption of the honorable member for Port Fairy is that the valuations in the Land Tax Register are reliable. I have always contended—and I have found that practical men throughout the country agree with me—that the valuations in the Land Tax Register are absolutely unreliable. In the first place, they were made a good many years ago, and they have never been changed since.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—There have been variations made this year.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Very slight variations. The State Government has not done as the Commonwealth Government has done. The Federal Land Tax Department requires the land-owners to give fresh valuations every three years. There is some

idea of approximation under that system, but there is certainly none under the State system. The valuations made for the State land tax register are many years old, and were made when conditions were very different from what they are to-day.

Mr. KEAST.—Prices were very much higher then.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—In some cases they were lower. Land is always changing in value, to a very great extent.

Mr. BAILEY.—That is the trouble.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—The honorable member, by his amendment, would apply a valuation that is a fixture to something that is always changing in price. If you do that, you must, of necessity, be wrong in the end, because the value of land is not a fixed thing. There is no standard in regard to it. It goes up and down. Of course, land is worth what you can make from it. That is really what the value should be. When the prices of wool, butter, meat, and everything you get from land are high, then, of course, land is worth money. You never can tell how long that will continue. The prices of the products may go down next year, and then the price of land will go down too. The honorable member for Port Fairy, in his speech, said that the Commissioner's valuation should be taken, plus 10 per cent. Did he mean that?

Mr. BAILEY.—I meant the land-owner's valuation after the assessor had acted.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—What did the honorable member mean? Did he mean the owner's valuation, without any reference to the assessor at all?

Mr. BAILEY.—No; after it had been settled.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—The honorable member said that the man who owns the land ought to know the value of the land better than any one else. I agree with that. Supposing the owner has put down the capital value at £4 per acre, and the assessor has valued it at £3 10s. per acre. If the land is compulsorily taken, which value is to be accepted—the valuation of the assessor, at £3 10s. per acre, or the valuation of the owner, at £4 per acre?

Mr. BAILEY.—Before the valuation is put in the register, the Commissioner notifies the owner of the alteration. In the case you mention, unless the owner appealed, £3 10s. per acre would be the value accepted.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—I know cases in regard to the Federal land tax, in which the owner has been required, at the end of three years, to make a fresh valuation, and, notwithstanding that the assessor has reduced the value of the land, the owner felt that his own previous estimate of the value of the land was right, and again put down the same valuation. In that case he has been taxed upon the Department's valuation, although in his return he has put down his own valuation. How would the matter stand in a case like that—the Department's valuation being, say, £3 10s. per acre, and the owner's valuation standing at £4 per acre? The owner is required by the Department to pay taxation on the £3 10s. per acre basis. He pays taxation on the £3 10s. per acre basis, although his own valuation is higher. Take another case, using the same figures. The Department values the land at £3 10s. per acre. The owner may accept the valuation of the Department, although he is still of the opinion that the land is worth £4 per acre. He may put down in his return a valuation of £3 10s. per acre, seeing that the Department has valued the land at £3 10s. per acre, although his own valuation would be £4 per acre. If we were to take the land tax valuations as a standard, it would be bound to cause considerable trouble, because the value of land is continually changing. Therefore there is no permanency in regard to it. The great delusion in regard to this tax when it was first proposed was that we would have some reliable test for reference. That is not to be achieved by any land tax. The Federal tax approaches somewhat in that direction, but it is not so with the State tax. The Minister stated that the register was not completed. Why is it not completed? Many years have elapsed, and we are still waiting for it.

Mr. KEAST.—It should have been completed two years ago.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—It should have been completed earlier than that. There is a shire council

in my district anxious to rate on unimproved values, but they cannot get anything from the Department to go upon. The register is not completed, and there is no knowing when it will be completed. The shire councils, as well as the land-owners, will be very glad to know when the Department is going to complete it.

Mr. BAILEY.—I did intend to make similar remarks to those of the last speaker. We have had the extraordinary explanation from the Minister that the register is not yet completed. I wonder if the register will ever be completed. Perhaps it may be completed within a year or two. There is machinery in the Land Tax Act, section 17 of which states—

From the returns and valuations (if any) made as aforesaid, and from any other information in his possession, and from any one or more of these sources, the Commissioner shall prepare assessments and enter the same in the assessment roll, which shall show the name and address of the taxpayer, the total improved value, and the total unimproved value of all lands of which he is the owner, and the amount of tax chargeable thereon, and such other particulars as are prescribed.

That section is very clear. It is probably owing to the indifference of the Government that the register has not been compiled. Some day it will be compiled, and when it is, probably the Government may find the advantage of my proposal, if it is embodied in the Bill. The reason I want it incorporated was given by the last speaker, and that is that land values fluctuate very much. When the Government are after estates the value of land goes up considerably, and the poor unfortunate settlers have to bear the burden of the enhancement. It is to obviate that that I want my proposal embodied in the Bill, and I cannot see why the Government will not accept it. They tell the people that they want the soldiers to get good land on reasonable terms, and yet they refuse to accept a clause that will prevent more than the value of the land being paid for it. In the Land Tax Act there is a provision that the valuation of the owner may be taken into consideration. My amendment says that it shall be taken into consideration so far as the maximum amount is concerned. There is nothing to prevent private barter between the owner and the Government, but my proposal fixes the maximum amount. The last speaker stated that no one knows the value of land better than the man who is working it. The owner does not want to

shirk his responsibility to the taxpayers, and puts the true value on his land. The Commissioner of Taxes, in whom the Government have every confidence, after receiving the land-owner's return, and the reports of his own valuers, enters on the roll what he considers to be the true capital value of the land. The Government want to work in with the land sharks who have fleeced the people. It is the poor struggling settlers who have to bear the burden when placed on land that is not worth anything like the price paid for it. I thought that, in connexion with the Bill that is designed to settle soldiers on the land, the Government would stretch a point to safeguard the men who have fought for their country. The Government seem to be just as hard hearted to the soldiers as they have been to our closer settlers. The Minister has not given any reason why the clause should not be accepted. It is the fault of the Government that the register has not been compiled, and to say that because it has not been completed my amendment cannot be accepted is to make a very flimsy excuse. I intend to call for a division, to let the soldiers see who is responsible, if they are placed on land that is not worth the price paid for it.

Mr. ROBERTSON.—I approve of the attitude taken up by the Minister. If it is good to have the principle that the honorable member for Port Fairy desires in this Bill, it ought to be good to have it in the Closer Settlement Act. Our present land tax valuations are by no means perfect; in fact they are imperfect, and it would be unwise to introduce a principle of this kind at present.

Mr. BAILEY.—Do you ever expect them to be perfected?

Mr. ROBERTSON.—They should have been perfected years ago. In some cases the assessments have been made only within the last three years, and the Minister says that they have been altered in many cases during the past twelve months. We know that the value of land fluctuates according to seasons, and so on. Whatever may be the opinion of honorable members in this matter, it would be unwise to embody this principle in the Bill. I do not desire to delay the Bill, nor do I desire that the land for the soldiers should be purchased at an enhanced value. The faults in connexion with the purchasing of land under the Closer Settlement Act were due to those who ad-

ministered it, for there is every provision in the Act to safeguard valuations, and to prevent more than the market value being given for the land. The Minister did right by referring to section 41 of the Closer Settlement Act. He has shown that regard may be taken, in assessing the amount of compensation to be paid, to the amount assessed under the Land Tax Act. It was thought that that was as far as we could go. There are such variations in the value of land that it would not be to the best interests of the State, in acquiring land, to have the honorable member's principle embodied in this Bill. I know that such a provision was introduced in New Zealand, and may be in operation still. Whatever honorable members think, we should not accept the amendment, as drafted. As I read it, it would not allow of the acquisition of land at the land tax valuation. It says that the price paid "shall be" 10 per cent. more than the amount mentioned in the Land Tax Register. If a fair valuation were fixed, the land could not be bought at that valuation, for 10 per cent. more would have to be paid for it. I think the honorable member will be acting wisely if he does not call for a division.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The honorable member for Bulla is making a slight mistake, I think. The point he made, or attempted to make, was this: The amendment says that the value of the land shall be "computed as follows." That is, the owner's own valuation, plus 10 per cent. And then he went on to point out that the Government, if they had an opportunity of purchasing the land at less than that, would not be able to do so on account of this provision. The honorable member for Bulla did not read the amendment which the honorable member for Port Fairy has moved as carefully as he usually does. If he reads it more carefully he will find this—

In respect of land compulsorily acquired and taken by the Board under this Act the Board shall pay compensation computed as follows:—

To the capital value of land certified by the Commissioner of Taxes under the Land Tax Act 1915, there shall be added a sum equivalent to 10 per centum of such capital value.

That is to say, the provision will be applied only where the Government have not been able to make terms with the owner in case of a dispute. And where there is a dispute, instead of going to the Court and having lengthy and expensive litiga-

tion—quite a number of valuers are engaged, and the evidence is brought into the Court—here is a simple and easy method by which the valuation may be determined of those lands which the Government secure by compulsory resumption. Therefore, the point made by the honorable member for Bulla does not apply. In connexion with the principle itself, I would say this: Members on this (the Opposition) side of the House have been fighting for it for a long time. The members on the other (the Ministerial) side do not agree with us that it would be a wise provision. I have never been able to appreciate their objections, because the land-owner knows the value of his own land best, as has been admitted on both sides of the Chamber. He values the land twice a year, once for the State Government and once for the Federal Government, under their respective Acts.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Does the honorable member for Fitzroy say that the owner values his land twice a year?

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—He values it for purposes of State taxation and for Federal taxation. He may only make one valuation, but that is immaterial.

Mr. OMAN.—In some cases a considerable time elapses before a return is put in for the State.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—If we had an up-to-date Government—such as we should have if the Labour party were in power—these difficulties would not arise. The Government in that case would not neglect their duty, and then plead that neglect as an excuse for not doing what ought to be done. It may be a good excuse, but, to my mind, it is merely quibbling. I think the Government should be punished for their neglect rather than rewarded. In connexion with their previous land settlement we all know the terrible suffering that was caused, and the heart-breaking experiences which men who went upon the land have had to endure. Their experience is depicted in reports which have come to us from two or three sources. One was a report drawn up by two members of a previous Cabinet, and another emanated from the Royal Commission on Closer Settlement. No one can read these reports without coming to the conclusion that this House ought, for the protection of its own honour, as well as for intending settlers under this Bill,

to pass such a clause as is proposed to be inserted by the honorable member for Port Fairy. If that be not done, I do not know what protection the discharged soldiers will have. We shall have to depend entirely on the generosity of the Crown for any land that may be available, and on those land-owners who, for patriotic purposes, are making their land available at less than its real value in order that they may satisfy their consciences that they have done something towards repatriating the soldiers who are so worthy of recompense. As regards the land purchased by the Government for closer settlement, I am afraid that all the mistakes we have previously experienced will be repeated unless some method such as that now proposed is adopted to safeguard us in the future. I hope that the Committee will not view this matter in a party spirit, but will recognise that failure will be written over the measure unless we introduce some newer methods by which we can secure to the settler land at a reasonable value in order that he may be able to make a decent living. Surely, every honorable member wishes the discharged soldiers to escape those experiences that previous settlers have gone through.

Mr. KEAST.—Does the honorable member for Fitzroy know what is in the Federal Act?

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I am not interested in the Federal Act; but I am interested in making this Bill as perfect as we can make it. I think that that is the object honorable members on the other (the Ministerial) side of the House should have in view. Instead of that, they are preventing the Government from resuming, at a reasonable rate, areas adjacent to railways which are highly suitable to this particular purpose and which are now being used as sheep-walks. I do wish that honorable members would look at the matter in the light of reason. Let them throw politics aside for once and look at the matter as business men, in which case they must agree to this amendment.

Mr. McGREGOR.—I support the amendment. I think it will be a barometer by which we shall be able to find out the true value of the land that we are going to purchase. Probably, in the past, land has been valued at a lower rate than it was really worth. The effect of the amendment might be to prompt the owners to put on a legitimate value.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—That is the strong objection which is taken to it.

Mr. McGREGOR.—I do not know whether that is the reason for the objection or not.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I know one estate, valued at £3 10s. an acre, that was sold for £17 per acre.

Mr. KEAST.—Whose fault was that?

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I do not know. At any rate, the Government bought it.

Mr. McGREGOR.—If that is the case it shows a remarkable discrepancy between the value of the land for taxation purposes and the real value of the land.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The honorable member for Ballarat East should find out what the Government paid Mr. Chirnside for the Werribee Estate.

Mr. McGREGOR.—That may be an exceptional case. However, the owner of land can have no strong objection if the Government acquire the land for closer settlement purposes and pay him the value he has placed upon it, plus 10 per cent. I think the amendment will prove beneficial to the discharged soldier, and it will be a barometer which will indicate the true value of the land.

Mr. A. A. BILLSON (*Ovens*).—I intend to support the amendment. I am an advocate of the compulsory resumption of land. It has often struck me, as it must have struck other honorable members, that we have had some most peculiar cases before us with respect to valuations which have been made for land acquired for closer settlement purposes. The discrepancy between the valuations made has always struck me as remarkable. Not having any practical knowledge of the value of land, all I have been able to do is to look at the values placed on the land by different valuers. In New Zealand, where a similar system to that now proposed has been in operation for many years, no objection, so far as I know, has ever been raised to this principle. It seems to me to be manifestly fair to ask an owner to put his own value on the land, and to accept that value, plus 10 per cent. If we desire to get land of a suitable quality, land that can be adapted for the purposes of settling the returned soldiers, surely we should aim at providing some satisfactory means of getting the land at its fair value. We ought to be more concerned in regard to the returned

soldiers than in regard to anybody else. These men have offered their lives on behalf of the Empire. They are coming back, and we have expressed our desire to give them every opportunity of making homes for themselves. We feel that these men deserve every encouragement, and that encouragement should start from the very foundation—that is to say, the land upon which we propose to settle them must be suitable land, and not over-valued. If they have to carry any unnecessary burden they will be striving all their lives to make a decent livelihood. I can see no valid objection to the amendment, and I shall be surprised if the Committee reject it. I think it should appeal strongly to every member of this Committee, and I hope that we shall insure its inclusion in the Bill.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—I rose before to discuss the question of valuations, but I did not express my attitude in regard to the proposal of the honorable member for Port Fairy. I have always been one of those who have felt that it is necessary, in order to make the purchase of estates for closer settlement successful, that there should be the power of compulsory acquisition. We should have the power to take estates from owners who do not desire to sell, and whose lands may be most desirable for the purpose of closer settlement. Without this power a settlement may be blocked, and even the growth of a city checked. That was practically done for many years. I agree with the honorable member for Port Fairy that the man in the best position to know the value of the land is the owner. To give him 10 per cent. more than his own valuation appears to be a very fair proposal, especially when the land to be acquired is required for the returned soldiers. Of course, an owner may be compelled to sell property on which he places a sentimental value. He is turned out of his home.

Mr. BAILEY.—He can retain £4,000 worth.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—At all events, I desired to explain my position, and say that I intend to support the amendment.

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. BAILEY.—Sub-clause (3) provides—

For the purposes of this section the provisions of Part III. of the Closer Settlement Act 1915

(except sections 19, 35, and 74) shall, so far as applicable, and with such alterations, modifications, and substitutions as are necessary, be deemed and taken to be incorporated with this Act.

I move—

That after “35” the words “41 to 58 inclusive” be inserted.

That amendment follows on that which we have just carried. It merely does away with the machinery sections with regard to the Supreme Court appeal and other things which in view of the new sub-clause just inserted will not be necessary.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (Minister of Lands).—I hope that the honorable member will not persist with this amendment, because it will wipe out the whole of the machinery created under the Act to deal with the allotment of compensation for land compulsorily taken. The Committee has affirmed the principle of compulsory taking, and surely it wants to retain the Supreme Court appeal, both for the Government who is the taker of the land, and for the owner whose land has been taken. The sections which it is proposed to omit are those which provide for that appeal.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I am surprised at what the Minister asks. After affirming the desirability of compulsorily acquiring land for which the owner's value, plus 10 per cent., will be paid, the Minister asks us to stultify ourselves by giving the owner the right to go to the Supreme Court. That would involve delay and heavy expenditure. It would practically mean trying to make a case against the established legislation of the country. It would be self-stultification in the highest degree if the Committee entertained for one moment the extraordinary, absurd, and inconsistent proposition of the Minister of Lands.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—There would be many cases where the Government would not give the value in the Land Tax Register, plus 10 per cent.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—We are not asking the Government to do that.

Mr. HUTCHINSON.—The amendment does.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—If the honorable gentleman understands this proposition as I do, he will see that it is not based on the fundamental idea that the Government has

to go running around the country acquiring every estate. If the Government desires to obtain some particular land which is eminently suitable for settlement, a proposition will be made to the owner in an ordinary reasonable way, and if an arrangement can be made with him, well and good. If not, the Government has the power to acquire the land compulsorily at the price in the Land Tax Register, plus 10 per cent. It is quite a discretionary power which is given to the Minister, and to say that there are going to be disputes which will necessitate going to Court, well, to put it mildly, it is bunkum. I hope that the Committee will not stultify itself in the way proposed by the Minister.

Mr. BAILEY.—The attitude of the Government in connexion with this matter is farcical. The Committee has just accepted a provision that in compulsory acquisition the price paid for the land shall be the value certified by the Commissioner of Taxes, plus 10 per cent.

Mr. OMAN.—Which is £2 an acre on £20 an acre land.

Mr. BAILEY.—I can understand the honorable member objecting to land-owners getting a little above their own valuation. Although the new sub-clause which I proposed has been adopted, the Minister asks us to retain the provisions which operate when land is compulsorily acquired under the Closer Settlement Act. Section 41 prescribes how the compensation shall be estimated. We have already decided how the compensation in this case will be arrived at. Section 42 states how the value of the land shall be estimated. Section 43 provides for the production of the lease where the lessee claims greater interest than as a tenant at will. Section 44 deals with the claim for compensation, section 45 with the time for making the claim, and section 46 with the procedure when the claim has been received, and so on. Sections 41 to 58 embrace all the machinery which we would require if the new sub-clause had not been adopted. I think that the Minister should look into the matter. If the Government insist on the retention of those sections, the whole thing would be farcical, and the provision which the Committee has accepted would have no force at all.

Progress was reported.

VOTES ON ACCOUNT.

The House having resolved itself into Committee of Supply,

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier) moved—

That a sum not exceeding £1,318,138 be granted to His Majesty for or towards defraying the following services for the year 1917-18, namely :—Legislative Council—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £192; Legislative Assembly—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £1,619; Parliamentary Standing Committee—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £144; Refreshment Rooms—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £298; The Library—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £144; The Library, State Parliament House—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £223; Victorian Parliamentary Debates—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £783; Chief Secretary's Office—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £1,785; Chief Secretary's Office—Pensions, &c., £3,404; Chief Secretary's Office—Grants, £1,200; Board for the Protection of the Aborigines—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £782; Explosives—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £732; State Accident Insurance Office—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £348; Fisheries and Game—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £659; Government Shorthand Writer—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £115; The Governor's Office—ordinary expenditure, £56; Herbarium—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £177; Inebriates Institution—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £571; Marine Board—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £684; Mercantile Marine—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £113; Observatory—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £491; Premier's Office—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £622; Training Ship—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £1,042; Agent-General—Staff and office, £900; Audit Office—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £2,292; Government Statist—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £3,251; Hospitals for the Insane—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £30,550; Neglected Children, &c.—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £30,218; Penal and Gaols—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £10,122; Police—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £57,400; Public Library, &c.—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £4,236; Public Service Commissioner—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £501; Department of Labour—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £3,780; Education—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £168,881; Education—Pensions, &c., £116; Education—Works and buildings, £7,000; Education—Endowments and grants, £13,900; Attorney-General—Salaries, £11,215; Attorney-General—Pensions, &c., £35; Attorney-General—Ordinary expenditure, £3,428; Solicitor-General—Salaries, £8,556; Solicitor-General—Ordinary expenditure, £4,188; Treasury—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £3,852; Treasury—Transport, &c., £750; Treasury—Unforeseen expenditure, £750; Treasury—Allowances to Railway Department, £1,334; Treasury—Grants, £18,500; Treasury—Pensions, &c., £77; Treasury—Exceptional expenditure, £5,000; Taxation Office—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £2,531; Taxation Office—Salaries and ordinary expenditure,

£4,495; Taxation Office—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £193; Curator—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £730; Government Printer—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £15,120; Government Printer—Exceptional expenditure, £150; Government Printer—Advertising, £250; Survey, &c., Crown Lands—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £14,085; Intelligence and Labour Bureau—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £2,551; Public Parks, &c.—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £100; Public Parks, &c.—Grants, £500; Botanic, &c., Gardens—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £1,704; Extirpation of Rabbits, &c.—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £5,447; Works and Buildings, £300; Works and Buildings—Exceptional expenditure, £100; Public Works—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £6,767; Ports and Harbors—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £8,028; Public Works—Works and buildings, £11,930; Mines—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £3,985; Mines—Furtherance of mining industry, £4,692; Mines—Exceptional expenditure, £1,000; State Forests—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £11,617; State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, £19,500; Agriculture, Administrative—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £1,385; Agriculture—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £8,482; Stock and Dairy—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £3,090; Export Development—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £5,490; Public Health—Salaries and ordinary expenditure, £11,610; Railways—Working expenses, &c., £715,000; Railways—Pensions, £3,697; Railways—Railway Construction Branch, £992; State Coal Mine, £45,801. Total, £1,318,138.

He said—In July last Supply was granted for two months. That Supply was exhausted on the 31st of August, and I am now asking for Supply for the months of September and October pending the passing of the Estimates. The Leader of the Opposition asked me earlier in the evening when the Budget would be delivered. I told him that it would certainly be delivered within five weeks, and possibly a little earlier.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—In connexion with the vote for Public Health, I should like to draw attention to what I believe to be a rather serious matter from a purely public point of view. It may be within the knowledge of honorable members that some controversy has been going on in regard to the establishment of a certain industry at Richmond. The Richmond City Council granted permission for the establishment of the industry, but it was vetoed by the Board of Public Health. I am not in a position, nor do I propose, to say who was right or who was wrong; but it seems to me that this is a time when it is essential, and indeed imperative, that the establishment of new in-

dustries in our State should be fostered and encouraged. I understand that it is proposed, at some future time—how long the time may be I do not know, because the matter has been spoken about for years and years—to establish an area at Laverton for noxious trades, but we do not seem to be making very much progress in that direction. We have noxious trades in various places. I understand that the new industry to which I have referred would mean the employment at once of about 100 men, and they would be engaged in a branch of business or trade that for years past has been done by our enemy, Germany. It has had the monopoly of this trade. We have been sending sheep skins away, and getting them treated in Germany, and there would be now a splendid opportunity of doing our own work in this matter in our own land. This trade, that we should establish here, will at once give employment to a large number of men, and with its extension and development employment will be found for a larger number; and we should also have the knowledge that we had taken away from our foe this particular industry, and had got it established here. Through the squabble that has arisen, and the action of the Board of Public Health, in vetoing the establishment of this industry, it is going away to the East. The industry is being established there, while, through thickheadedness and delay in matters of this sort, we are allowing a very large industry to slip from our fingers. I think it behoves us to be up and doing. Even if the industry cannot be established at Richmond, the men who are willing to embark in it a large sum of money ought to be given every facility in order that they may establish the industry elsewhere. It is no use talking of the opportunities we will have after the war, and of the fields there will be for us to exploit in the way of the establishment of industries which, in the past, have been carried on in Germany, for the manufacture of our raw materials, which are afterwards brought out here in a manufactured form, if we allow an opportunity of this kind to pass by. Here is a concrete instance of an industry that could be established here; but an outside body, which has no power to frame any policy, or to afford any facilities, has blocked the

establishment of this industry. Upon the Premier and the Government devolves the duty of encouraging the establishment of industries, and of removing as speedily as possible any obstacles in the way of their establishment. In a great sheep producing and wool growing country such as this, we do not know what would follow in the train of the establishment of such an industry as I have referred to. We do not know what would happen in regard to the by-products, and it is safe to say that the establishment of this industry on such a scale as is contemplated would, of necessity, lead to the establishment of other industries, which would result in the production of more manufactures, and give more employment in this State. I am one of those who fear, by the present indications, or want of indications, that unless we stir ourselves more than we are doing at the present time, we are not going to take advantage of the undoubted opportunity for a wide extension of our manufacturing industries in this State. We will be face to face directly with the necessity of providing an immense amount of money to meet increased interest charges. That applies both to the Commonwealth and the State. We will have immense burdens in that direction, and if we do not on all occasions seek to increase our local production, we are going to be in a nice mess. It seems to me that the establishment of this industry would be a very big step towards the increased production that every one recognises is necessary. Increased production is talked about on the platform and in the House, and written about in the newspapers, but if we look round we see very few evidences of it. At any rate here was a genuine and *bona fide* attempt to establish an industry. The local council gave their sanction to its establishment by thirteen votes to two, and yet the Health authorities came along, said they knew more about the matter, and prevented the industry being established.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—You would not have liked to see the factory started there, would you?

Mr. ELMSLIE.—I am not arguing from that point of view at all. But it seems to me that the gentlemen who have the capital, the knowledge, the experience and the desire to start this industry should be provided with every facility to enable them to do so. If it is thought

that it would be noxious in Richmond, they ought to be given the opportunity of establishing the industry somewhere else. They are at a dead-end now. The Board of Public Health has said, "You shall not establish the industry in that particular place." They are disheartened, and the chances are that we are going to lose what would, in the very near future, be a valuable new industry. I bring this matter under the notice of the Premier in the hope that he will take immediate steps to see if the road cannot be made smooth enough to allow these gentlemen to operate in the direction I have indicated.

Mr. A. A. BILLSON (Ovens).—This afternoon I asked the Minister of Water Supply certain questions with a view of ascertaining what was the particular province of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission in connexion with dealing with our rivers and water-courses, and I must say that I was not very much impressed with the reply which the honorable gentleman gave me. I am quite aware, as the Minister pointed out, that in the Water Act provision is made for the creation of flood protection districts, and that the Commission may create those districts, and take the necessary steps for rating the property in the districts. But that is not what was in my mind, and I venture to say, with all respect, it was not what was in the mind of Parliament at the time the Act was passed. If one thing has been claimed with greater force than any other in this State, it has been that attention should be given to keeping our rivers as clean and as clear as possible. We know that they are frequently obstructed as a result of trees falling into them, and severe erosion upon the banks.

Mr. SOLLY.—And dredges as well.

Mr. BOWSER.—What about the dredges?

Mr. A. A. BILLSON (Ovens).—I am going to tell honorable members what the dredges have done. I want to know upon whose shoulders rests the responsibility of dealing with the rivers? In reply to the interjection of the honorable member for Carlton, and the interjection of my honored and respected leader, the honorable member for Wangaratta, let me say that I travelled down the Ovens Valley last Friday after rain had been falling for some forty-eight hours, and the only part of the Ovens River that was carrying the

whole of the flood waters between the two banks was the mile of the Ovens River that was dredged above Myrtleford. The whole of the rest of the Valley was flooded from side to side. The only part that was clear was the part that had been dredged, because it had been made deeper and wider, and there was no obstruction there. The people who are resident in the district, and who know its peculiarities, are now asking the Minister of Public Works that the Government themselves should undertake the dredging of that river, not for the purpose of seeking gold, but for the purpose of straightening its course, and deepening it in order to lessen the possibility of flooding.

Mr. SALLY.—The dredges destroy the whole course of the river, and the honorable member knows it.

Mr. A. A. BILLSON (*Ovens*).—I know absolutely nothing of the kind, and that statement is not borne out by the facts. The honorable member paid a flying visit to the district. I have been familiar with the district for fifty years, and I know all about it. I knew the district long before dredging was ever dreamt of. If honorable members want evidence, let them ask the people in the Buffalo Valley, in which there was never a miner's pick placed, about the matter, and they will say that the erosion was ten times greater in the Buffalo Valley during the recent floods than in the Ovens Valley. I know constituents of mine who have lost as much as £1,000 in the value of land eroded, and stock and produce washed off their land. That is in a district where there was never a pick in the land. Enormous erosion has taken place in the Boggy Creek, in the district of the honorable member for Wangaratta, and there has been no mining on that creek. If I had with me a journal that is published by one of the leading auctioneers in the North-Eastern District I could show what erosion has taken place in creeks and streams on which there has been no mining. I did not rise to discuss the question of dredging, but when that question arises I shall be prepared to stand my ground. I rose for the purpose of ascertaining on whose shoulders the responsibility for looking after these streams rests. We have evidence of the erosion to streams and of the extensive damage caused through huge trees falling into the streams. We naturally ask if there is any authority on whom the responsibility

rests of attending to such matters. All our rivers, streams, lakes and lagoons are vested in the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, and so it is upon that body that rests the obligation of looking after these streams. I think the view of Parliament would be that that body should attend to this important work, not by the constitution of flood protection districts and the levying of rates on certain people, but by dealing with the matter as a work of national importance. I am quite convinced from what I have seen and from the information conveyed to me by people living along the valleys that much loss would be avoided if some authority took this matter earnestly in hand. It is a very important question, and the Government will be performing a great national duty if they deal with it. I understand that some investigation is being made at present, or is contemplated. It is realized that something should be done. If it is not intended to do something, I now ask, in the interests of the settlers along the valleys, that an investigation should be made as soon as possible, with the object of preventing the people in these localities from suffering loss.

Mr. COTTER.—I desire to join with my leader in his complaints against the Board of Public Health in regard to the tannery at Richmond. The average idea amongst the people is that the fellmongery trade is an objectionable trade. Some of the other States long ago demonstrated that when such a trade is properly carried on it is not objectionable and is not noxious. That trade has been removed from the list of objectionable trades in New South Wales. In South Australia it is worked in conjunction with meat establishments, showing that if conducted on a scientific basis it may be carried on with very little or no objection from a health point of view, and with satisfactory results as a revenue-producing concern in the State. This matter came before the Richmond Council in January last, and it was hung up until March to give those for and against an opportunity of making their views known. The council received a petition signed by more than 500 residents in favour of the proposal, and there were two petitions received against it, one containing about forty names and the other about fifty. The bulk of the 500 petitioners are residents of Richmond, whilst the bulk of the

other petitioners are residents on the Hawthorn side of the river.

Mr. MENZIES.—They get the stinks.

Mr. COTTER.—Not necessarily. The residents on the Hawthorn side of the river did complain. The Richmond Council discussed the matter until late one night, and by 13 to 2 decided to allow these people to do skin tanning. The firm were prepared to spend £33,000 in erecting an up-to-date tannery. The licence to carry on this trade is a yearly one, so that it has to be renewed from year to year. It must be apparent to honorable members that this firm would not be prepared to spend £33,000 and run the risk of having their licence revoked, unless they felt that they could do a fair thing to the public and their employees. The tannery site is not in my electorate, but in the electorate of the honorable member for Abbotsford. This firm is one of the best of employers in the State, and they are prepared to spend this money and to do the fair thing. They want to arrest trade that has been going to Japan and Germany for many years. I remember, when I was considerably younger, that Mr. Trenwith, when he first stood for Richmond, was asked "Are you in favour of an export duty on sheep skins?" Many metropolitan members have been asked that question and have answered it in the negative. Here we have a firm prepared to carry on this work without an export duty, and a Government institution steps in to prevent them. I am not complaining of the Chief Secretary. I had the honour to introduce a deputation to him. We have not received his reply, as far as I know, but he was very courteous to us, listened carefully to our case, and promised to take the matter to the Cabinet. I believe that the Cabinet will deal fairly and openly with it. It is a remarkable thing when the Liberal party are talking so much about the importance of extending our national industries that a Government institution should try to drive this industry out of the country. The trade has been going to Japan and Germany, and the manufactured article has been returned here for us to buy. Here we have a firm prepared to spend £33,000 in erecting an up-to-date establishment to carry on the business in an unobjectionable manner, and the Board of Public Health say they will not allow it.

The Richmond City Council, to whom the application was originally made, agreed to the licence. I may point out that five men who had voted for the licence for this tannery had to seek re-election in August, and four out of the five were re-elected. The fifth man represented a district where the tannery was not a burning question. The man who represented the eastern ward of Richmond was returned by the people who reside in the neighbourhood where the tannery is to be erected. It seems an extraordinary thing that the Board of Health, which, I believe, is the most obsolete institution we possess to-day, should have stood in the way. This institution wakes up periodically, and does something. But, as a rule, when it wakes up its actions only irritate the public and bring down upon it severe criticism from outsiders. It seems an extraordinary thing that representatives who come down to the Board of Health from Ballarat and Bendigo, and places altogether outside the district where it is proposed to have a tannery, should decide against the tannery, notwithstanding that the people among whom it will be placed desire that it shall be erected. I am not directing attention to this matter because the tannery would be in my constituency. It would not be in my constituency. But I should probably make just as strong an appeal, if I were as conversant with the facts, whatever locality might be interested in it. The tannery people are prepared to erect an up-to-date plant, and as far as the tanning of skins is concerned, owing to the use of acids, the objectionable smell associated with tanneries in the past is now eliminated. If a tannery is put up it will be necessary for application for a licence to be made every year. There is no secret about the tannery I am referring to. It is Kennon's tannery, at the back of Hawthorn-bridge. If they are prepared to put up a tannery with up-to-date appliances, and in no way objectionable to the residents, it does not appear to be reasonable that men sitting on the Board of Health, who know nothing about the matter at all, should be able to veto the proposal. I hope that the Chief Secretary will interest himself in the matter. I do not know what authority he has, but the facts I have mentioned are well worth bringing under the notice of honorable members. I have a document in my

hand which gives some particulars of the recent application for a licence. It says:—

In the case in question, however, the council took from the 16th of January to the 13th of March to make full inquiries, and at each council meeting, lengthy discussions took place, the final meeting lasting till midnight. A motion in favour of the applicants was eventually carried by 13 votes to 2. Under modern conditions, the offensive nature of fell-mongering as conducted in the past has been entirely abandoned, and the introduction of science and chemicals has now transformed this once noxious trade into one of the most healthy of industries.

I am not prepared to accept all that, of course.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—They bottle up the smell and sell it as eau-de-Cologne.

Mr. COTTER.—It is absolutely essential that the works should have a plentiful supply of cheap, fresh water. An area has been set apart at Laverton for noxious trades. From the experience I have had on the Housing Commission, however, I am not prepared to agree that Laverton is the most suitable place for that purpose. But I am not discussing that point just now. The Minister says he proposes to take the noxious trades to Laverton, and people say that the chief objection is the want of a plentiful supply of water. In connexion with the tannery industry a great quantity of water is required for salting and scouring. Experts tell us that the water used in the process has a purifying effect.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—Some people say the same about water into which sewage has been poured.

Mr. COTTER.—I do not want the subject to be treated in a jocular spirit. I am discussing it in all earnestness. It is a question in regard to which we should have a straightforward answer as to what will be done. The Board of Health should be told that they cannot have the last word in every matter of this kind. I have a decided objection to the Board of Health deciding whether national industries shall be conducted in our State or not. That is what the question amounts to. In the past this class of work has gone out of the country altogether. It is not every employer who is prepared to grapple with it. There is no question of introducing a fresh industry into the district. There are two tanneries there already. There is also a soap works, Lewis and Whitty's, and the factories are all close together. It is not intended to destroy the beauty of the locality in any

way. The proprietors are prepared to give the Government or the Board of Health a guarantee that there will be no objectionable features in connexion with the industry. They are prepared to conform to the conditions required, and to come up annually for their licence. That is a guarantee that the firm intend to so conduct themselves as to keep within the precincts of the law. Notwithstanding all that, the Board of Health, sitting in their palatial offices in Queen-street, have decided against the tannery. I suppose we shall soon have honorable members talking about starting fresh industries. Here is a firm prepared to spend £33,000 in establishing an industry in regard to which no assistance is asked from the Government, and we find a Government institution stepping in to prevent them. I hope that the Chief Secretary will make a statement as to what the Government intend to do in the matter. I think the time has come when the Minister should show that he is above the Board of Health, and will tell the members of the Board that he is not going to allow them to act as autocrats.

Mr. PURNELL.—I wish to support what the honorable member for Ovens said in connexion with our running streams. At Geelong we have a fair stream, the Barwon, but we are faced with exactly the same difficulties as those referred to by the honorable member for Ovens. On that river, which is periodically flooded, we have quite a number of industries. I can assure the honorable member for Richmond that if he sent the tannery he has been speaking about to Geelong we would not trouble the Board of Health, and, in addition, we would provide a fine site for it. The flooding of the Barwon causes a good deal of anxiety and loss to the owners of industries established along its banks. If the proper authorities could be induced to take the straightening of the banks in hand it would help the industries. I hope that at the right time the proper authority will deal with this matter, and consider the question of making the running streams available for industries.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—When committees established for the purpose of considering certain questions present reports to the House, it seems to me that those reports are invariably shelved. In my opinion, there should be an opportunity of considering such a report, or a statement should be made on behalf of the

Government as to what action it is proposed to take in connexion with it. There are some very important recommendations in the report of the Public Accounts Committee which was presented last week. In every report submitted by that Committee more or less important recommendations have been made. In some cases the adoption of the recommendations would result in a saving of money, and there are also suggestions as to alterations in procedure, such as that in connexion with the book-keeping methods of the State. I wish to draw the attention of the Treasurer or, in that honorable gentleman's absence, of his factotum, to the report presented last week. The only difficulty is that I do not know who his factotum is. There are four lonesome individuals on the Treasury bench, who seem to be obsessed with nothing in particular.

Mr. MCLEOD. — How can we be obsessed with anything when you are speaking?

Mr. PRENDERGAST. — I am not quite sure whether that remark is intended to be a joke, but it seems to have a Caledonian flavour. The honorable gentleman jokes "wi' difficulty." Those Ministers do not seem to mind some of these matters being relegated to obscurity. The report to which I have alluded contains important references to the payments by certain institutions for auditing. They are paying outside auditors, although the work is also being done by the State for nothing. For instance, the University of Melbourne pays an outside auditor £130 a year, the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board £50, the Country Fire Brigades Board £22, the Exhibition Trustees £25, the Melbourne Harbor Trust £84, and the Geelong Harbor Trust £25. Judging by the continual demands which they are making on the public, some of those institutions are in a chronic state of "hard-upness." If that is so, why are they spending money on outside auditors when the State is making a complete audit for them for nothing? The State cannot accept the work of any outside auditor, but has to examine the complete accounts itself. In connexion with those institutions the State is compelled by Act of Parliament to make an audit. That being so, it seems to me that it is wasteful on the part of such bodies to pay private auditors for the work, because the State does it thoroughly and well. The

expenditure on the State Audit Office is between £15,000 and £16,000, and if the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee were adopted the fees obtained by that office would be increased by £750, which is no small item. That increase in the income of the State would be brought about without loss to the bodies who pay it, because there is no necessity for them to have a double audit of their accounts. A single audit is quite sufficient for other bodies or institutions, even although it is highly necessary that their accounts should be accurate in every particular. We find that the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works are content with the audit which is made by the State Audit Office, for which it pays the Government £280 a year. The same applies to the Mint, which pays £25 a year; the Tramway Board, £400; the Victorian Railways, £516; and the Victorian Wheat (Pool) Commission, £184; whilst 111 small waterworks trusts in different towns throughout Victoria pay in the aggregate £425 a year. In giving evidence the State Auditor-General (Mr. Bruford) claimed that the staff of the Audit Office is a competent one. He described how it is constituted, and, judging by the qualifications of the officers, the Committee felt that it is a competent staff. Mr. Bruford supported entirely the attitude which the Public Accounts Committee have adopted. It seems to me that there is more responsibility about a State audit than a private one. Mr. Bruford considered that the Audit Office should be paid for the work of auditing the accounts of such bodies as the University of Melbourne, the Fire Brigades Boards, the Harbor Trusts, the Mildura Water Trust, the Exhibition Trustees, the Country Roads Board, the Springvale and Fawkner Cemeteries Trustees, the Marine Board (Pilotage Accounts), the Heatherton Sanatorium, and the Victorian Coal Miners' Accidents Relief Fund, and that all State industrial undertakings which furnished an annual balance-sheet, such as the State Coal Mine, the State Shipbuilding Yard, the Maffra Beet Sugar Factory, the State Accident Insurance Office, the Government Cool Stores, the Newport Timber Seasoning Works, and the State Farms should be debited with the cost of auditing their accounts. I do not see that there is anything unreasonable at all in that. The

work, which is done for nothing at present, should be paid for. At one time I thought it was only a question of book-keeping. I had the idea that the auditing of the Treasury accounts by the Auditor-General was merely a matter of transferring the cost from one Department to another. The fact is, when the Audit Office is not paid for such work, the Department concerned is getting the benefit of a certain amount of labour which is not debited against it at the end of the year. Look at the Government Printing Office. It seems to me that work done at the Government Printing Office for another Department should be charged to that Department. Then it would not be stated that the Government Printing Office is a huge non-paying concern. The cost of printing for other Departments should not be placed on the shoulders of the Government Printing Office. I hope I shall get some satisfaction from the Government with regard to the recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee in connexion with the auditing of a number of institutions. The Committee have recommended—

That all the public bodies or institutions mentioned in paragraph 5 of this report, and other similar bodies or institutions which may be constituted hereafter, pay the State for auditing their books and accounts when such work is done by the State Auditor-General or his staff.

That there be a uniform charge made for such auditing, the rate to be £2 2s. per day when the work is performed by the Chief Clerk or inspecting officers of the Audit Office, and £1 1s. per day for assistants, plus travelling expenses on the Government scale in each case.

Another recommendation of the Committee is in connexion with the instructions that are given to the Auditor-General to prepare balance-sheets on certain specific lines. The Committee consider that these instructions limit the usefulness of the Auditor-General's Department, and that it is not advisable that such directions should be given. The recommendation we made on this subject is as follows:—

That an Act be passed by Parliament stating that, notwithstanding anything in any Act contained, the State Auditor-General, where directed by any Act, or by any instructions given under the provisions of any Act of Parliament to audit or examine any accounts, balance-sheet, statements of receipts and disbursements, or to prescribe the form of balance-sheet, shall audit the books and accounts, and debit the public body or institution with the cost of audit, and report thereon to the Hon-

orable the Treasurer; and a copy of such report shall be forthwith forwarded by the State Auditor-General to the Committee of Public Accounts, which shall lay the same before the Legislative Assembly, with or without comment.

It seems reasonable that accounts which are audited by the Auditor-General should come before the Public Accounts Committee, and then if that Committee think it necessary to make any comment upon the statements made in these reports they can do so. This recommendation is made in the interests of the safety of public accounts. It provides for openness in the transactions of these public and semi-public bodies, and that is very much to be desired. The Committee have also pointed out that if their recommendations are acted upon the Department will receive an additional revenue of £750. At present it is earning about £1,800. The Department costs about £15,000 or £16,000 a year, and if the recommendations we make are adopted it will mean that the revenue will be brought up to £2,500 per annum. We have shown in our report that the University of Melbourne pays an outside auditor £130 a year; the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board, £50 a year; the Country Fire Brigades Board, £22; the Exhibition Trustees, £25; the Melbourne Harbor Trust, £84; and the Geelong Harbor Trust, £25. Under existing arrangements the Auditor-General has to audit the accounts of these and other bodies, and there is not the slightest reason why the Department should not be paid for the services rendered. In connexion with the preparation of balance-sheets, the Committee think that the Auditor-General should have no special instructions, but if the Government want any special information, it can be supplied separately. It is due to the Committee that more notice should be taken of its reports than has been the case in the past. As a rule, our recommendations are adopted unanimously at the meetings of the Committee, and we think that when the reports are presented to Parliament some notice should be taken of them. Without wishing to be dictatorial in any way, I may say that, as Chairman of the Committee, I intend to see that these reports are treated with due respect. It is only right, after we have gone to a lot of trouble in examining witnesses and preparing reports, that

we should have some recognition of our labours, and that the Government should indicate whether they intend to adopt the recommendations we make or not. If the recommendations are adopted, then nothing need be said, but if the Government decline to act upon them, it will be necessary for members of the Committee to bring them before Parliament. I notice that amongst the votes a sum of £1,042 is put down for salaries and ordinary expenditure of the training ship. I should like to be informed what has become of the *John Murray*?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—She has been commandeered by the Federal Government.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—I should like to have details of the transaction, and I should also like to know what is the position of the *Dart*?

Mr. KEAST.—She is somewhere between Melbourne and Tasmania at the present time.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—The information given me by honorable members may be correct, but I prefer to get it from the Minister, and I hope the Chief Secretary will make a statement about those two vessels.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I desire to bring before the Treasurer and the Committee the extraordinary situation in connexion with our income tax, as disclosed by the return laid on the table recently from the Income Tax Commissioner, in answer to an inquiry from this House. It seems peculiarly appropriate that, at this time, the Treasurer should take notice of the extraordinary position that exists in connexion with income tax administration, and that he should see whether a more equitable distribution of the income tax over the community will not, to a large extent, relieve him from the cares and worries that sit so heavily upon his brow at present. It appears to me that if our income tax was fairly distributed over the whole community there should be no need for a super tax, or anything of that kind. The return laid on the table discloses certain facts in connexion with the incidence of our income tax. When we passed the Land Act in 1910 a provision was inserted exempting the owners of real estate of an unimproved value up to £5,000 from the necessity of making a return in respect of their income, and from the obligation to pay any income tax. That is, farmers and graziers occupy-

ing and working properties of an unimproved value not exceeding £5,000 were exempted from the payment of income tax.

Mr. HOGAN.—That is on the income derived from the land.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—From working their land.

Mr. KEAST.—They pay £337,000:

Mr. BAILEY.—They pay a very big freight tax.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I do not want to be reminded of anything, because we all know the facts. The honorable member, in his anxiety about the farmers and graziers, will not mind the facts being known. The community, who are paying the income tax, and who are ready to pay, should know the facts in regard to the contribution to that fund, particularly when we recognise that practically our education expenditure absorbs the whole of our income tax.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—More than that—the probate tax, too.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—The probate tax and the land tax as well. Anyhow, it is of vast importance that it should be known how we stand in regard to the contribution by the various activities of our State to this income tax. The return shows that, whereas in 1910 the farmers and graziers represented 19 per cent. of the total taxpayers, they have dwindled to 3.2 per cent. by the operation of the provision I have mentioned.

Mr. OMAN.—The honorable member supported it.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—It does not matter, who supported it. It is not a party question. If it becomes necessary to lay the blame on any honorable member I would lay it on the honorable member who interjected, because it is known that this provision had to be put in the Land Tax Act to secure the passing of that Act. But now, when we are going to bear a heavier burden of taxation in the future, though perhaps not this year, it is time to consider whether we should not abandon the practice I have referred to.

Mr. KEAST.—Does not the honorable member think that the farmers pay enough now?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I would ask the honorable member not to be impatient. I am drawing attention to the facts, and I am confident that once the facts are known the Treasurer will realize that it is

his bounden duty to effect an adjustment.

Mr. KEAST.—He knows it well enough.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—The Treasurer may have known it in an unoffcial kind of way, and have felt ashamed that such a condition of things should have been allowed to exist. It is right that we should request him to look at the fact officially, and ask whether he thinks it right to allow this condition to exist. The farmers and graziers in that year represented 19 per cent. of the total taxpayers, and they contributed 12 per cent. of the total tax. By the operation of that exemption they have been reduced to 2.2 per cent. of the total taxpayers, and only contribute 4.3 per cent. to the total income tax.

Mr. PENNINGTON.—During the bad years.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—During the bad years, strangely enough, there was no falling off in their incomes, so that does not affect the matter. However, passing over those years and coming to the present day, I want to show the effect of that exemption, and to indicate how unfair it is to the community that a large section should be practically exempt from the burden of taxation in that respect. That return includes not only the incomes derived from the lands they are working, but also their incomes from personal exertion. That is shown by the fact that the figures for 1915-16 give the total taxpayers as 671,561. The report shows that, whereas the primary producers represented about 20 per cent. of the total taxpayers in that year—

Mr. ROBERTSON.—What year?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—1915-1916. The last report published is that for 1915-16, and it shows that the primary producers had fallen to 6.71 per cent. of the taxpayers, and that their contribution had been proportionately reduced.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—You have the figures. What is the difference in the amounts?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—The return shows that, whereas they contributed 12 per cent. to the total income tax paid, they now contribute only 4.3 per cent.

Mr. ROBERTSON.—For what years was that?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Right through the period since this exemption was placed in the Act.

Mr. ROBERTSON.—What is the last year given?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—1915-16. I have the figures for 1916-17 from another source.

Mr. OMAN.—What is the total amount of tax paid?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—That is no guide.

Mr. OMAN.—I should like to have the actual figures.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—The total of incomes has increased largely. I am giving the proportion of tax paid.

Mr. OMAN.—Let us have the figures.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—The figures are shown in the return. The amount has been reduced from £38,614 to £31,683.

Mr. OMAN.—There is not a corresponding reduction.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—The Treasurer will recognise that that is no guide as to the incidence of this tax, because the contribution to the income tax is largely increased.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I am afraid that honorable members on this (the Ministerial) side of the Chamber are not agreed on this subject.

Mr. PENNINGTON.—Have you a statement of the land tax paid by the same individuals?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—We know that that is fixed by the Act.

Mr. PENNINGTON.—How much is it?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—If the honorable member will look at the Land Tax Act, he will see how small it is. This is the point I want to draw the Treasurer's attention to in the midst of this Babel of interested interruption. The most striking anomaly in connexion with this matter is that, whereas the owner of land working it himself is exempted from payment of income tax, the tenant farmer and grazier has to pay income tax.

Mr. OMAN.—Only proportionately.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—He has to pay income tax on the whole income; there is no "proportionately" about it.

Mr. McLEOD.—He does not pay land tax.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—He does pay land tax. The honorable gentleman knows that every land-owner puts the land tax on to the rent, and the tenant has to pay the land tax in the end. The tax is passed on every time.

Mr. KEAST.—Sometimes you don't get your rent. How can you pass the tax on

then? For a couple of years I did not get any rents at all.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! The time allotted to the honorable member for Brighton is passing, and other honorable members are using it.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I think attention has only to be drawn to this anomaly for it to be remedied. It is an iniquitous thing that this condition should prevail in connexion with our income-tax administration, and I think the Treasurer must recognise that. It is unjust and unfair to say that the owner of a piece of land working it himself shall be exempt from income tax, but that the tenant grazier and farmer must pay income tax in connexion with the income from a property of similar value next door. How can any one justify such a thing as that? It is unjustifiable in any way one looks at it. Take a property having up to £5,000 unimproved value. Taking the average of the returns, that property would represent about £12,000 improved value. A 5 per cent. return would represent £600 income. The income tax on that would be £20 16s. 8d. The land tax on such a property on the scale we have in the Act is £10. We know that practically the whole of our large orchards are under £5,000 unimproved value, yet the large incomes being drawn from those orchards pay no income tax at all, if the orchards are worked by the owners. The incomes of some of these people run into £1,500 and £2,000 a year. A tenant running an orchard of similar value has to pay income tax on the whole income.

Mr. BAILEY.—That is the unfair part of it. The tenant ought to get the exemption.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Certainly, if there is an exemption at all, it should apply to the tenant.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—It applies only to the owner.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I think honorable members will realize that there should be no exemption.

Mr. BAILEY.—No; there should be an exemption.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—The honorable member for Port Fairy has a few land-owners in his constituency who are affected by that suggestion, and his judgment is immediately affected. He says there should be an exemption.

Mr. HOGAN.—The honorable member is not fair. It is a plank of the Labour party's platform that there should be an exemption of £500 in the land tax.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—An exemption of £500 unimproved value; but we are dealing with something larger than that.

Mr. HOGAN.—The honorable member for Port Fairy was not trying to placate his supporters, but was advocating a plank of the Labour party's platform.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—That does not apply to the Labour party's platform. It is not the income tax; it is the land tax.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—In connexion with the fruit-growing industry, take the Mildura farms. The unimproved value of the land in that rich fruit-growing district ranges from £5 per acre. In some cases it is under £5 per acre, yet the returns from those farms run into £1,500 a year. The owners pay neither land tax nor income tax, because the unimproved value is under the land-tax exemption. We have an exemption in respect to land tax up to £250 unimproved value. Most of those orchards are of an unimproved value of less than £250. The honorable member for Dandenong is smiling. He has not looked into the facts. I have done so.

Mr. KEAST.—Your facts have been all wrong to-night.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I am dealing with the facts contained in a return that comes from one of our own officers. With regard to the Mildura land, the unimproved value is about £5 per acre. These lands are producing very high returns by fruit culture. The holders of the lands are escaping land tax, and income tax, too. That is a fact that no one surely can look at with satisfaction when we are trying to distribute over the whole community, as fairly as we can, the burden of taxation we are bearing at the present time, and will have to bear in the future. I commend to the Treasurer's attention this serious and unfair condition of affairs in connexion with the incidence of our income tax.

Mr. OMAN.—The honorable member voted against any exemption in connexion with the land tax.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—That does not touch the matter at all.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I do not think the honorable member for Brighton

was in the House when the Land Tax Act was passed.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—I was, and I pitied the Treasurer of that day for having to stultify himself in order to get the vote of the honorable member for Hampden.

Mr. OMAN.—I voted for no exemption under the land tax.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—There is an exemption for farmers and graziers up to £5,000 unimproved value. The honorable member supported that. I want to draw attention to the relative position of town and country owners in regard to the income tax. The farmer, or grazier, having freehold property of the unimproved value of £5,000 is exempt. The town factory owner, or property owner, who is using his land for income-producing purposes has to pay land tax and income tax, too. Surely that is a condition of affairs that cannot longer be allowed to continue.

Mr. CARLISLE.—The owner has a tenant who pays the tax.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—That is childish. It is no answer at all. There are as many property-owners working their own properties in the city as there are in the country. I think this anomaly only needs to have attention drawn to it to induce the House to see that it is remedied, and to strengthen the Treasurer's hands in righting a condition of things that should never have been allowed to exist. I earnestly hope the Treasurer will take action in the matter now his attention has been drawn to it.

Mr. MENZIES.—Would you allow anything in the country for living conditions?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—It would probably be necessary to make a larger exemption to the city owner than to the country owner, because the conditions of life in the city involve the city owner in larger expenditure.

Mr. MENZIES.—Would you allow the same conditions to apply to town and country lands?

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Certainly, the same conditions should apply to the tenant-occupier as to the owner-occupier of any land in town or country. I think the honorable gentleman will see the fairness of the proposition I have submitted.

Mr. LEMMON.—I desire to take this opportunity of calling the attention of the Minister of Railways to the method adopted by the Railway Department in

the selection of apprentices. One must take the opportunity when it presents itself, for we do not know whether we shall have another opportunity this session.

Mr. KEAST.—You never can tell.

Mr. LEMMON.—Yes; that is what the widow said when she was asked why she always curtsied at the mention of His Satanic Majesty. I shall just explain the method that the Railway Department adopts in selecting candidates for apprenticeship. From time to time the Department put posters out and advertise through the press for candidates in the various trades such as blacksmithing, carfitting, and so on. As a rule there are three or four times as many applicants as there are positions, and the boys have to go before the Selection Board. This consists of two or three officers of the Department. The boys are simply known to the Board by numbers, and the Board determines what boys shall be retained for examination and dismisses the others. This means that half of them are turned adrift by the Board. Is it possible for any individuals to be able to judge a boy's capacity as a mechanic in this way? I do not assume that there is any undue influence, but I assert that this system is a continual source of heart-burning to a number of parents in my district and in other districts, who are anxious for their boys to get an opportunity of learning a trade.

Mr. McGREGOR.—But not outside Melbourne.

Mr. LEMMON.—There are railway workshops in Ballarat and Bendigo, and the proper ratio of apprentices should be selected in those districts.

Mr. McGREGOR.—The country boys should have as good a show as the city boys.

Mr. LEMMON.—Quite so. The Postal Department have two optional subjects in their examination for junior mechanics. They allow the boys to take up sheet-metal work or wood work. The boy who does well in either subject gets preference over the boy equal to him in general education. After full investigation that Department came to the conclusion that it was absolutely necessary, in order that the boys should be competent mechanics, that they should have some ability in manipulating tools and material. The boys that go through the junior technical schools are infinitely

better fitted to become competent mechanics than the boys who have not done so. The particular point I want the Minister to carefully consider is the Board of Selectors. That Board ought to be done away with, and I hope the honorable gentleman will do away with it. Mr. Mullett, the Government Printer, who is a very competent man, says you cannot judge a boy by his appearance. A boy that looks quite incompetent may turn out to be a good artisan when given an opportunity. A case came under my notice in connexion with a junior technical school. There were eight lads that the English master considered should be sent away from the school because of their lack of ability, but on the practical side they turned out to be so capable that the whole of them were engaged by a manufacturing jeweller and watchmaker, who congratulated the school on their work. I remember another case in connexion with the Working Men's College. There was a boy whom, I suppose, nine men out of ten would have turned down, and yet when he got his chance he proved himself, and he is now one of the leading draftsmen in the city. He would no doubt have been turned down by the railway Board of Selectors.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—The system is bad.

Mr. LEMMON. — Absolutely bad. Parents go to great pains in having their boys trained. They send them to technical schools and do the best they can for them, and then they find that these boys are rejected by the Board of Selectors. After selection the boys are sent up for medical examination, and then they have to submit to a general educational examination. That is putting the cart before the horse with a vengeance. The general education should be the first consideration. If there is to be any weeding out, let it be done in that way, and not on the appearance of the boys. I believe this method was followed in connexion with the British Navy, but now other tests are used. It was foolishly introduced in connexion with our Australian Navy, but has been modified to a considerable extent. Where there is the possibility of favoritism we should take every step to prevent it. This method is not adopted by the Postal Department, nor in connexion with our Public Service. Fancy candidates for appointment in the Public Service having to go before a few individ-

duals who would have to say whether they should have an opportunity of competing or not! Yet this system has been in operation in the Railway Department for years. I hope the Minister will cut out the selection authority, as it is useless and dangerous, and creates a great deal of heart-burning amongst the parents. The other methods adopted by the Department are fair. We should have equal opportunity for all our boys, but that cannot be the case with this Board of Selection. I had a conversation with the late Mr. Commissioner McClelland, prior to his unfortunate illness, and he told me that they were going to modify this procedure. He knew the objection I have raised from time to time in connexion with the subject. Workshops are being opened at Ballarat and Bendigo. We have technical schools there, and we ought to have an education test for the mechanical apprentices. If a proper system were introduced we should get infinitely better apprentices than we get at the present time.

Mr. KEAST. — I am glad the honorable member for Williamstown has brought this question up. It is a matter to which I have given consideration for some time, and I had intended to bring it under the notice of the Premier. Several lads from my electorate, and places further on, appeared before the committee referred to, and boys who had had a training in that particular subject were passed out altogether, and boys who had had practically no training at all were accepted. I agree with the honorable member for Williamstown that there should be a test examination. However, what I rose particularly for was to back up the request made by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. The Committee has presented some very fine reports to this House on different occasions. Those reports are, as a rule, not dealt with by this House. The last recommendation made by the Public Accounts Committee when I was its chairman was one to appoint a finance commission to go right through the offices and make recommendations. The Premier made a statement recently showing that the Commission had made important recommendations, whereby a saving of close upon £90,000 could be effected. We brought down another report quite recently, and if the recommendation contained in it is carried out there will be

extra revenue available for the Treasurer of £750. We know that the Treasurer is out to save every shilling that he can. I should like to bring under the notice of the Minister of Forests the fact that at Gembrook we have 40,000 acres of forest land. The saw-millers applied to the Forests Department for sites for a number of mills. These mills will give employment to about 100 men. But the difficulty is—and the Minister knows it—that a length of about 5 miles of tramway is required to be extended into the forest. It will bring in a big revenue, and contribute to the Railway Department some £4,000 a year on what is now a non-paying line. Applications have been made for the rails required for the extension of the tramway. The Minister is sympathetic. The Railways Commissioners say, "If we have the rails, you can have them," but when I go to the Construction Branch I am told, "We have only 2 miles of rails, and we cannot give you them." I was wondering whether it would be possible for the Minister of Forests and the Minister of Railways to confer, with a view to making the rails available. Timber is going to waste every day in this district. If a fire occurs half of it will be burnt. Here we have a means of securing employment for 100 men, and a railway revenue of at least £4,000 a year, and yet, for want of rails—the cost of which will only be about £500—we cannot proceed further. I hope that the two Ministers concerned will confer, and that the rails required for the continuation of the tramway will be supplied. I listened with some dissatisfaction and regret to the remarks of the honorable member for Brighton. He wants to put a further tax on the farming community of this country. The farming community cannot afford to be more heavily taxed than they are now. The farmers have been "up against it" for many years in every direction. They have to pay, first of all, the State Land Tax. Many of them also pay the Federal Land Tax, a substantial increase in freights and fares, the Country Roads Board Tax, and in some places in my district they have also to pay a water rate, varying from 1s. 6d. to 4s. in the £1. There has been an increase in wages, and an increase in the cost of agricultural implements, and they cannot afford the imposition of further taxation. The honorable member

for Brighton is quite wrong when he says the market gardeners and orchardists of this State ought to pay extra taxation. I live at Hawthorn, and frequently see between 50 and 100 carts going past my house at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning.

Mr. ELMDSLIE.—Whatever is the honorable member for Dandenong doing at that time in the morning, that he should see the carts?

Mr. KEAST.—I am going home from this House, sometimes. I do a good deal of travelling, and get home fairly late. However, that by the way. I consider that the market gardeners and orchardists are paying as much in taxation as they can afford to pay at the present juncture, unless it is taxation necessary to winning the war. The honorable member for Brighton did not prove his case. Any attempt to impose taxation on the man in the country as against the man in the city is a great mistake, because the city is dependent upon the country.

Mr. BAILEY.—A few weeks ago I referred to a matter of very great importance, not only to my electorate, but to the whole State of Victoria—that of providing foodstuffs for the people. I mentioned before, when speaking on this subject, that thousands of tons of fish are allowed to go to waste. They go to waste because the fishermen, although they have the opportunity of catching them, do not catch them. If they did catch them there would be a glut in the market, and the fishermen would not get sufficient remuneration for their labours to enable them to live. In other words, they have to regulate their catch. They put a limit on it. If they did not do this they would not only glut the market, but they would find themselves deeply in debt in consequence of the freight charges and commission they would have to pay. The fishermen of Port Fairy, as I mentioned on a former occasion, fix the day's catch at a limit of sixteen baskets to the boat. As soon as they have caught the sixteen baskets of fish they come in, and the fish is sent away to the market. It frequently happens that if they liked to go on catching fish they could bring up the catch without difficulty to over 100 baskets per boat. The difference between the sixteen baskets which have been made the limit of the catch, and the hundreds of baskets of fish that fishermen omit to catch, represent a waste of good food that should go to the people.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—Why do the fishermen not catch all they can, then?

Mr. BAILEY.—I am leading up to that question. The fishermen have their living to get. Fishing is their means of livelihood. If they exceeded their present limit there would be a glut in the market, and they would not get a sufficient return to pay them for their labour. In many cases they would have to pay heavy freight charges, and would get no return at all.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—That is why we have to pay 1s. per lb. for fish.

Mr. BAILEY.—It is not the fault of the fishermen. One reason for the high price of fish is the high rents that have to be paid by the retailers to large property owners in Melbourne. If the Government provided cool stores at Port Fairy, the fishermen could catch as many fish as possible and put them in those stores. A few days afterwards, when, perhaps, the fish had temporarily left the place, or when owing to boisterous weather the fishermen were unable to pursue their vocation, they could send a supply from the cool stores on to the Melbourne market. The people here are crying out for fish, which they cannot get at a reasonable price. Thousands of tons of fish are going to waste, and yet the Government do nothing in the matter. I should like an assurance from the Premier that he will give consideration to my suggestion and see whether it is not feasible. The fishermen think it would be a good thing, and I feel sure that would be found the case. Let me leave that subject for another of a local character. I know that this is not the time to ask the Government to expend large sums of money on public works. All the same, it should not be forgotten that a stitch in time saves nine. At Port Fairy, there is erosion going on, which is gradually eating away the foreshore. Unless something is done, the whole of the foreshore between the bay and the river will in a few years be washed away, with the result that the sea will break into the river and the whole of the harbor work on which hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent will be destroyed, and the harbor rendered a total wreck as far as shipping accommodation is concerned. Some time ago, I made representations to the Government with regard to the matter, and they sent down

an engineer from the Ports and Harbors Branch. He recognised that the erosion was going on very rapidly. He made a most extraordinary suggestion—that the borough council and some of the land-owners should find the money to do the work. It would be utterly impossible for the council to get the money, because to effectively prevent the erosion would entail an expenditure of several thousands of pounds. I do not ask the Government to spend many thousands of pounds at present, but I want them to make a start, and do something in order that further erosion of that beach will be abated. The honorable member for Brighton referred to the exemption from income tax of the owners of land up to an unimproved value of £5,000. What I object to is that the tenant gets no exemption at all. It is the tenant who cultivates the land, and from the produce he has to pay income tax, whereas, if the owner is working or grazing the land, he gets an exemption. That is a most extraordinary provision, and the sooner it is remedied the better.

Mr. ROBERTSON.—The owner pays land tax.

Mr. BAILEY.—It is his land; it does not belong to the tenant.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—But the land tax is invariably added on to the rent.

Mr. BAILEY.—There is no doubt the landlord takes into consideration the land tax which he has to pay. It is a very unfair thing that the tenant does not get some exemption under the income tax. The Labour party stands for an exemption of £200, and some exemption should be allowed in the case of those farmers. At any rate, I am not going to put more taxation on farmers, particularly on those living at a distant place. Owing to the increased railway rates, an additional 2s. 2d. a ton has to be paid by growers of potatoes and onions in the district around Koroit. I am going to strongly resist the putting of any more taxation on those gentlemen.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—That is about 2d. a hundredweight.

Mr. BAILEY.—I am going to resist any further impost on the producers of this country.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—It is getting near the elections.

Mr. BAILEY.—I have always been consistent in my advocacy of the interests of

the producers. If more honorable members on the Ministerial side of the House, who say that they believe in safeguarding the interests of the producers, tried to give effect to their belief in a practical way in this House, the producers would have a far better time.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—You stuck to the Government all right.

Mr. BAILEY.—I did not. I voted against the Government.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—We each voted to keep them in once, and we each voted to put them out once.

Mr. BAILEY.—I voted twice this session to put the Government out. If the Government had had to depend on my vote, they would not now be on the Treasury bench. I now wish to refer to a matter which affects honorable members generally. When the House is not sitting we do not get access to the parliamentary Library after 4 o'clock. When the House is sitting we have not time to look up books or pursue any studies, because in the interests of the State we are supposed to be in this chamber. Why should we be debarred from obtaining access to the Library after 4 o'clock when the House is not sitting? On days when the House assembles in the afternoon we have not time to come here in the morning, because we have our departmental work to attend to. As soon as the officials leave the Library at 4 o'clock, we are denied access to it.

Mr. McGREGOR.—They work very long hours when the House is sitting.

Mr. BAILEY.—I am not advocating that the librarian should have to stay there after 4 o'clock on non-sitting days. At all hours of the day and night there is an official in charge of these buildings. When the librarian leaves, why can he not hand the key of the Library to that official, so that if any honorable member wants access to it he will be able to get into the Library? Surely there is no fear of honorable members stealing anything from the place? When we go into the Library now, the officials are not always watching us to see that we do not pocket anything.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—If the honorable member wants the matter rectified, there are members of the Library Committee to be appealed to. There are two

members from the Opposition side of the House on that Committee.

Mr. BAILEY.—The Library Committee have dealt with the matter, and they decided to go on in the same old way, locking members out of the place after 4 o'clock when the House is not sitting; therefore, I am once more appealing to the Premier with regard to it.

Mr. SNOWBALL.—We cannot pass a vote of want of confidence in the Library Committee.

Mr. BAILEY.—Surely this House is not ruled by the Library Committee. The Government ought to be over it, and if the Library Committee has not sufficient confidence in honorable members to allow them to go into the Library after the House rises, I hope the Government will see the sense of directing that the change I desire should be made.

Mr. McGREGOR.—I particularly want to impress upon the Minister of Railways the necessity for making some alteration in regard to the engagement of apprentices. The present system ought not to be tolerated any longer, especially in such a Department as that of the Railways. When an advertisement appears in the press inviting applicants for work at Newport and elsewhere the boys who desire to become apprentices and who have had a good deal of practical experience are not given a fair chance of engagement. They have to pass an examination and to appear before some officers, with the result that they are often passed out. I have had many conversations with the Railways Commissioners urging them to abandon the present stupid procedure. I should also like to point out that under the existing system, boys residing in the country have not much chance of getting an equitable share of the positions offering by the Railway Department. Just now the Commissioners are refusing to allow boys to come from the country to the city to take any temporary employment, because they have to give them, whilst away from their homes, an increased rate of pay.

Mr. LEMMON.—That is provided in the regulations.

Mr. McGREGOR.—If the regulations are going to prevent boys living in the country from having an opportunity of obtaining a fair amount of work at Newport or elsewhere in the city, they should be amended.

Mr. LEMMON.—Then according to you, they ought to abolish the regulation providing for increased pay.

Mr. McGREGOR.—I think it is right the increased pay should be given. Who wants to have it abolished? The point I wish to make is that the Commissioners, because of the necessity of paying boys from the country more than those from the city, will not engage boys from any part of the country. The result is that boys in the metropolis get prior consideration and an unfair proportion of the employment which is available.

Mr. WARDE.—The Railways Commissioners are continually being told that they must make the railways pay.

Mr. McGREGOR.—That is quite right, but surely it is not expected that they will make them pay at the expense of boys living in the country, who are likely to be better qualified for the work that is offering than those who reside in the city.

Mr. BAILEY.—It is very difficult for a country boy to get a position at Newport.

Mr. McGREGOR.—Of course it is. The principal injustice is that notwithstanding the fact that these boys have been some years in the service, they have to be paraded before officers and may be passed out, not from any want of qualification, but on account of their appearance, or for some similar reason. There are many persons who would not reach a high standard in any competition for physical beauty, but who are nevertheless well qualified for the work they desire to be engaged in.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I recollect a case of a man, about 20 years ago, who applied for admission to the Police Force, but was rejected because he had red hair.

Mr. McGREGOR.—I hope the Minister of Railways will without further delay see that an alteration is made in this system, and provide for a more equitable arrangement by which merit will be appreciated.

Mr. SOLLY.—This will be a good opportunity for the Chief Secretary to make a statement as to the policy of the Government in regard to the boys who were formerly on the *John Murray*. Last session, when the Estimates were under discussion, the Government intimated that they were trying to dispose of the *John Murray*, accepting the advice that was

tendered from members on both sides of the House. According to statements which have appeared in the press, the *John Murray* has been sold, or is about to be sold, to the Federal Government. Some of the boys have been put on the *Dart* and others have been dealt with in another way. I have no idea what are the Government's intentions in regard to these boys, and I think we should be informed. It has been stated, also, that the Government propose to use the *Dart* for trading purposes between Victoria and Tasmania. Some of the old salts I have talked with say that this vessel is not fit for that trade. Honorable members know that at times the weather is very rough in Bass Straits, and it takes a good boat to hold her own. The *Dart*, I am told, is totally unseaworthy for this trade, and it would be a dreadful catastrophe if she should be lost. The Government might announce their intentions on this matter also. There is another matter I wish to bring under the notice of the Minister of Public Instruction. I shall be glad if he can see his way to reinstate the two follow-up nurses. After it had been decided to have children attending our State schools medically inspected, two nurses were engaged to see that children were given the necessary treatment. The results of the medical examination disclosed what an excellent policy was adopted by the introduction of this system. It was found that over 50 per cent. of the children attending the State schools were troubled with some defect of the teeth, the nose, the ears, or the eyes, and the reports which were presented from time to time after the examination had been instituted disclosed a vast improvement in the condition of the children as a result of parents following the advice which the medical officers gave. The children can, according to the officer's report, pay more attention to their work, and the quickness with which they carry out their school lessons and their general effectiveness after the treatment has been applied is very marked. We in Victoria have neglected, to some extent, doing this work in the thorough manner in which it is done in other States. According to the last report of this work in New South Wales, which has a population similar to our own, twelve medical officers had been appointed. Besides these, there were half-time dentists, who visited the schools and

examined the children's teeth, and advised parents what should be done. Even free dentistry was provided, in order that the children should have a chance of overcoming physical defects that might show in the near future. These examinations are carried out in New South Wales in the most thorough manner by the medical officers. In Victoria, with a population, as I say, similar to that of New South Wales, we have never had more than four medical officers appointed, and necessarily our examinations have been slow in proportion—not that our medical officers are not as enthusiastic as those in New South Wales in carrying out the work. I give them every credit for what they have done, but honorable members will realize the difficulties they experience in dealing with 200,000 children. It will be seen that it will take several years before the whole of the work can be accomplished. The result is that only some 60,000 children have been examined during the six or seven years since these medical officers were appointed. To show how slow we are in this work compared with New South Wales, I may say that in 1914-15 New South Wales medically examined no fewer than 76,000 children. The officers not only medically examined the children, but advised the parents as to what the children were suffering from. They went still further, and helped, as far as they possibly could, in remedying the evil effects of the defects from which the children were suffering. There is also a travelling hospital to visit the various country centres, so that any boy or girl, no matter what part of the State they may reside in, or what school they are attending, can be seen on the spot by the medical officer, who, after examination, advises the parents what should be done in order that the children may become fully grown men and women. What I am complaining about more particularly at present is that references to this matter in our State were practically cut out of the report of the Education Department for 1915-16. We have had repeatedly in that report exhaustive statements—not too full, but sufficient—to show what was being done here, and to enable a comparison to be made between our State school children and those in the other States which carry out a similar policy. This year, so far as I can gather, we have just a brief mention of this all-

important work. It appears on page 10 of the 1915-16 report. It is as follows:—

Medical Inspection.—The scope of the medical inspection of school-children has been temporarily curtailed by the enlistment of two members (men) of the school medical staff. The measure of inspection accomplished, however, and the dissemination of information on personal and domestic hygiene have quickened the interest of parents and teachers in the physical well-being of the children. The appointment of bush nurses has proved a boon to some remote localities beyond the reach of medical aid. There is now a fairly complete school organization for physical culture in the form of military drill and exercises, swimming, games, and competitions. This should make for physical development and act as a preventive of some bodily ills.

That is the only reference made to the subject in the Education report of this year. We should have the fullest possible information in regard to the examination of these children. The importance of this matter is shown by the number of rejects we have had from time to time amongst the men who desired to enlist. Owing to physical defects numbers of men have not been passed by the medical officers for the purpose of defending our Empire against our enemies. It is more than probable that, if they had had medical advice when they were young, these men would have been of a better physical standard than they are. At all events, it goes without saying that the medical profession believe that this examination should take place, and have no hesitation in advocating it. So long as we in Victoria have only two or three medical gentlemen appointed to do this work, we are a long way behind in efficiency. According to Dr. Sugden, before he went to the Front, it was impossible for the medical staff to cope with the urgent cases that required examination, because there were not sufficient officers on the staff. I would ask the Premier, as well as the Minister of Public Instruction, to recognise that they are acting on a policy that is wrong in every particular if they are cutting down this expenditure for the purpose of economy. I do not know whether that is being done or not.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—There is a difficulty in getting medical men in these times.

Mr. SOLLY.—Surely there are a sufficient number of medical men in the State

to carry out this work. You could get some of the advanced students.

Mr. MCLEOD.—We cannot get the medical men we require in the Health Department and in the Lunacy Department.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—So many have gone to the Front.

Mr. MCLEOD.—The Infectious Diseases Hospital advertised for one for months, and then they had to borrow one.

Mr. SOLLY.—I think the honorable gentleman will recognise the urgency of the matter, and the necessity for these examinations taking place. According to the report of the Education Department for 1913-14, the vision test of the children attending the elementary schools showed that 11.5 per cent. were extremely bad; that in hearing 8.5 per cent. were bad; that the percentage of children with nose and throat ailments was 15.6, and the proportion with dental defects 55.8 per cent. That is, over one-half of the children attending the State schools who had been examined had their teeth in a bad condition. It is all-important to the future well-being of the children that they should receive attention. I should like to know if the Government will get more medical officers appointed, in order that this work may be carried out with greater rapidity than at present. The figures supplied by the Education Department two years ago showed that about 70 or 80 per cent. of the children attending primary schools will go through the whole of their school course before they will be reached with the present number of medical men employed. The Government are only playing with one of the most important problems that any State can take up if they are going to continue in the same manner as they have been doing for years past. There was no excuse for them up till two or three years ago at any rate, because they could then have obtained medical officers. There were any number of medical men available to do this work, but the Government, even when they had the revenue, were too niggardly to appoint sufficient medical men. Last year, I understand, two nurses were discharged because there was no money available for them. Those two nurses mainly performed their work in the metropolitan area. They were dismissed from their employment because

there were no funds. I do not know what we are coming to when we dismiss two nurses such as we had engaged. The nurses are really the connecting link between the medical officer, who makes the examination, and the parents whose duty it is to see that any defects that the child may suffer from are treated in accordance with the medical officer's instructions. If the parents do not treat the child according to the medical officer's instructions, the nurse at once reports to the medical officer, and something is done to relieve the child of the defect it is suffering from. Under the circumstances, I cannot understand the Government dismissing two nurses. Surely there are sufficient nurses in the State to carry out this work. I am surprised to hear that the Government could not get three or four medical officers—men or women, as the case might be. We have two lady doctors in the Department at the present time. Surely the Government could have appointed two or three more lady doctors for the purpose of doing this important work properly, rather than that we should continue in the present slipshod manner. I earnestly hope the Government will look into this matter, and see if something can be done in order to bring our State up to the same status as that of New South Wales in this regard. The following is from the New South Wales report for 1915:—

It will be seen that the percentage number of children suffering from physical defects is approximately the same for each of the three years. The slight increase in 1914 was due to an excess in the number of children with carious teeth. The slight fall in 1915 was, to some extent, due to many children being met with in the schools inspected who had previously been examined in other schools, and had obtained treatment as a result of such examination. The close approximation in the percentage figures for each year shows the care taken by the medical officers, and confirms the accuracy of their diagnoses. This will be more evident when it is realized that, owing to changes on the staff, the medical examinations have been made to some extent by different officers in different years.

The report gives the particulars with regard to the whole of the States which have carried out this policy of examination, and it shows that the whole of the children in Australia are in the same unfortunate position, as far as their teeth are concerned. In New South Wales they have appointed half-time dental officers for the purpose of attending to the teeth of the children. I urge the Minister of

Public Instruction to take an interest in this matter. I feel that he is interested in it, because I have spoken to him on one or two occasions about it. If the trouble is want of money, surely the Treasurer will be able to find the necessary means to have the work carried out in a thorough way. It might cost the State £5,000, £6,000, or £10,000. I think that for about £10,000 we could get a sufficient number of medical officers and dental officers—half-time or full-time officers, as the circumstances require—and free dentistry could be applied in cases where the parents cannot afford to pay.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—The Department has set itself violently against dental clinics being established in different districts.

Mr. SOLLY.—If that is so, I hope that the Department will reform itself, and carry out a different policy entirely. If the State were to spend £10,000 or £20,000, so as to have this work done efficiently, surely the money would be well spent. Professional men who have studied this matter say that by the expenditure of £20,000 now in this direction, the State could be saved hundreds of thousands of pounds by the children growing up to be better men and women. I trust that the Government will not be so niggardly as to say that they will not spend any money for the purpose of perfecting this scheme, but that they will carry the work out in such a way that every one will be satisfied. I trust that the Minister of Public Instruction will urge upon the Treasurer that the Education Department must be made highly efficient, at all events as far as the branch of it which deals with the health of our State school children, and also our private school children, is concerned. I trust that the policy of medically examining the children will be carried out to the full extent, and I feel that good results will eventually follow.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—I do not intend at this hour of the sitting to occupy the time of honorable members for the length of time I originally intended to. This may be the last opportunity that honorable members will have this session to refer to the matter I wish to bring under notice—the question of freights and fares, which affects a good many country members and other members. That question will, undoubtedly, be made a burning question very soon. The answer I have to give, if I am questioned on the subject,

and I expect the answer a good many other honorable members will give, if I gauge the comments which have dropped from them from time to time rightly, although no general push has been made in the direction they have indicated, is that the railways in the city, that are running in opposition to the State railways, must be taken over. It would occupy a good deal of time to go into the question in detail to-night, and I do not intend to do it.

Mr. LEMMON.—You are out of order. There is a Bill before the House dealing with this subject.

Mr. McLACHLAN.—There is a Bill before the House having something to do in an indirect way with this matter, but I regret to say that no Bill has yet been presented to this House providing for the State to take over these railways in the city. Until that is done, country members particularly will have the question constantly put to them, "Why are the fares and freights not lowered?" The only legitimate answer we can give is that that cannot be accomplished until the city makes its due and fair contribution to the railway revenue of the State. That will only be brought about by purchasing these lines that are spread throughout the city and the suburbs of Melbourne. It may be a very expensive undertaking, but I feel certain that people in the country are prepared to put up with a little increased taxation, if they are assured that the Government of the day will bring in a measure of this character. It is not a question as to how the street railways are managed, or whether the fares are too high or too low. We want this thing settled, and I think the majority of honorable members are in favour of the State taking over the street railways. It is time that the question was put and answered. If a majority of honorable members are against it then it is settled, but it is certainly unfair competition, having regard to all the circumstances, that the country should in the main bear a heavy burden of extra taxation, whilst the metropolitan area that should be equally responsible for the outlay on these lines, should escape the payment that it would make if the whole of the lines were the property of the State. In a young country like this it is impossible under the circumstances for the State railways to pay. The metropolitan street railways, or some of them

at any rate, are paying handsomely. These lines rightly belong to the whole State, notwithstanding anything that may be said to the contrary, and notwithstanding that metropolitan people claim them as theirs. The metropolitan municipalities and the metropolitan press claim that these street railways are the property of the metropolitan municipalities. I say that they are not, and that morally speaking, having regard to the due development of the State, they are the property of the whole State. If the State had been dealt with properly legislators of the past would never have been guilty of such a blunder. It was practically robbery to give the metropolitan people when the population was only about 300,000 the right to lay down these lines. Because that blunder was made thirty years ago that is no reason why it should be perpetuated. The railway freights and fares will increase or otherwise deficits will occur. The railways have to depend on goods and passengers, and the great majority of the passengers are in the metropolis. Until we get these street railways our State railways will show deficits. That is how the country is handicapped. Country members know that the country is unjustly treated. One good solid push by the country members would result in this wrong being righted. A former Premier thought of purchasing these lines, although he was brought up and politically trained in the city. I mean Mr. Watt. He believed that it was right for these lines to belong to the State. Country members believe it is right. Then let us take action. Let us make an effort in this direction. Increased freights and fares are inevitable owing to the conditions, because it is only by increasing them that the railways can be made to pay. Besides the producer, the railway workers have to be considered, and sooner or later these men must have wages Boards. When these Wages Boards come into existence and the country people have to pay reasonable freights and fares the whole of these lines must be taken over by the State. I hope the Government will take steps in that direction.

Mr. MCLEOD (Chief Secretary).—Some matters have been referred to in the debate that come under the Department of Public Health. In the first place, the Leader of the Opposition and the honorable member for Richmond brought up the question of noxious trades, and the

recent decision in regard to the establishment of a tannery on the banks of the Yarra. This question of noxious trades is a most important one from the point of view of the health of the community. Such trades are a menace to the city, and some day we shall have to deal effectively with them, not only from the health point of view but also from the point of view of the purification of the Yarra. We must take steps to provide a proper place for the carrying on of these trades. The law provides that the Board of Public Health is the Board of final appeal in this matter. If persons who wish to establish such trades do not find their municipality in accord with them they can appeal to the Board of Public Health, which is the final arbiter. Consequently the Minister of Health can do nothing. I fully realize the need for establishing industries in the community. I had an interview with the Board of Public Health, and asked them if they could not arrange to allow some of the industries to be started in the meantime, if it was certified that they were non-noxious, and on condition that they would remove their establishments at a certain time without compensation. That position has to be settled. Of course the state of affairs is unsatisfactory to these trades, for the sword of Damocles is, as it were, hanging over their heads. The local councils cannot refuse the annual licence, unless these trades have been convicted twice of infringing the law, but any person or body who objects can appeal to the Board of Public Health, and thus the licence is open to attacks annually. The Government want to put these trades in such a position that they will have security of tenure, and that they may be able to put the best machinery in their establishments. The Laverton site has been recommended, and we have had it carefully surveyed by an officer of the Board of Public Health. Mr. Cobb, who is a competent engineer, has reported on the questions of water supply and railway communication, and also on the question of getting the material required in and out. The Government feel that it is necessary in the interests of the public that a much wider report should be obtained from men of considerable experience, and we have appointed a Board consisting of Mr. Catani, Mr. Kermode, and Mr. Calder, who are all well versed in sanitary engineering. If their report is favorable, immediate steps will be taken to survey

the site, and lay it out. We require a place where we can have a township site for the people living there. The Board consented this week to act, and they will go on with the work, so no time will be lost as far as we are concerned. With regard to another question raised by the honorable member for North Melbourne, about the cost of audits, I may say that I brought that matter before the Cabinet some time ago, and pointed out that legislation was necessary. I mentioned the matter in the House not long ago. We know that, as regards many Acts, the House has insisted on the audit being done by the Auditor-General. We are not only doing that, but in many ways we are doing a great deal of work for the public that we are not paid for. It is the intention of the Government to make the public and these bodies pay for the work done on their behalf. But it will be necessary to make an alteration to a number of Acts, and that will take some time. With reference to the *John Murray*, honorable members have been urging that the *John Murray* should be sold, and that the training the boys were getting was not sufficient. I agree that the training of the boys has been too limited altogether. The difficulty in regard to the selling of the *John Murray* was this: When the ship was taken over by the Government she was weakened, because her inside fittings were taken out and a series of port holes were cut all round her. A lot of work was required to make her seaworthy. The Commonwealth Government want her. We have to carry out the repairs necessary, and I am not prepared to say what the cost of those will be. We are hoping that the negotiations will work out satisfactorily. With regard to the matter raised by the honorable member for Carlton, I may say that the Government policy is this: We are trying, and I think successfully, to get a site on the seaboard where the boys can be taught, not only agriculture, but gardening, woodwork, and ironwork, and other useful trades, so that they will be equipped with a trade. In addition to that we propose to work the *Dart*. We are talking now about being a shipbuilding country, and we have not any facilities here for training a lad for the sea. Many of the boys trained in the *John Murray* are anxious to go to sea.

Those who have gone to sea have done well. These boys can take trips on the *Dart* and learn sufficient to enable them to follow a sea-going occupation. They will not be turned out fit to become sailors and nothing else. They will have an opportunity of learning some useful trade. Steps are being taken to insure that being done. There has been delay in consequence of the war, the difficulty of getting a Lloyd's certificate, and the cost of fitting the ship up. With regard to the question raised by the honorable member for Carlton about the seaworthiness of the ship, I will have inquiries made. The ship came splendidly last week through one of the biggest storms we have had in the Straits. I do not think, therefore, that the honorable member need have any fear. The Government are as anxious as anybody can be to make her a seaworthy ship. The intention is to make use of the ship if we can, so that she will earn something, and also to give the boys a chance of learning something more of seamanship than they could learn inside the Heads. That is what the Ministry, in conjunction with the Board, intend to carry out.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—From time to time I have asked the Minister of Railways questions in connexion with incandescent gas mantles. My object has been to get the Railway Department to purchase Australian-made, or, failing that, British-made mantles. I asked to-day whether a file would be laid on the Library table. That has been done, and those interested have supplied me with a memorandum on that file. I should like to read this to the House. The memorandum states—

The file shows that the four principal tenders were:—D. Blyth and Co., 66s. per gross; Allen, Ferguson, and Sewell, 67s. per gross; McMicking and Co., 66s. 10d. to 74s. 10d. per gross; Lighting Supplies Pty. Ltd., 84s. per gross.

A memorandum attached states:—

"Mantles similar to those recommended have been under test for some time, and have been found to last three times as long as some of the others quoted for, while as far as size is concerned, the others are unsuitable."

It will be noted that some of the other samples were unsatisfactory, and two of the tenders were for poor grade stuff, but there is nothing to show that every mantle tendered for was tested, nor is there evidence that all mantles were equally tested as regards quality. In other words, how many Welsbach mantles were tested, and how many of each of the other brands? It would seem that for some unexplained reasons, Welsbach mantles have been under test for some time, as though in

readiness for this contract. Although not desirable to say so—because it might do the makers harm—the mantle offered at 74s. 10d. is in every way equal to the Welsbach mantle—offered by Lighting Supplies Pty. Ltd.—if not superior, and it is in every way above suspicion. It is not believed that independent tests would show the results claimed by the railway officials.

This being so, there was no necessity to buy enemy goods, as has been done. J. T. Robin Ltd. are not particularly famed as makers of high class incandescent mantles, and they certainly do not make better quality goods than other manufacturers—if as good.

Lighting Supplies Pty. Ltd. had a big advantage over all other tenderers in that their stocks were landed before prices rose so high in Great Britain. It was locked up by the Government when the Welsbach Company Limited was declared an enemy firm, and only recently released to this new company composed of employees formerly with the Welsbach Light Company Limited. J. T. Robin Ltd. were the manufacturers of the mantles accepted by the Railway Department.

It appears to me that the enemy firms have simply changed their names and reorganized. I do not know whether they still retain their shares and interest in an indirect way. But they have been able to secure contracts and dispose of their goods to the disadvantage of the British tenderers. I am informed that, if independent tests were made, there is not the slightest doubt that the other mantles would prove of equal, if not superior, quality to those accepted by the Railway Department. Rightly or wrongly, there is an idea that it is no use any one tendering against German goods. We have had on other occasions to complain about the use of German goods in the Railway Department. I do not wish to speak upon that subject now. But I do want to again bring under the notice of the Minister of Railways this question, with a view of getting preference for the Australian goods, or, failing that, for British-made goods. These goods should surely have preference over enemy-made goods. I should like to see them given preference over all other goods. At least, we ought to be unanimously of opinion that it is desirable to shut out German goods from the Railway Department, or any other State Department. I feel that the Government are not helping in this matter in such a way as to lead us to believe that they are in earnest. While we have lip professions of patriotism, when it comes to purchasing enemy goods, those goods are purchased every time. The mere fact of giving employees a few shares and

Mr. J. W. Billson.

changing the name during the currency of the war does not make an enemy firm an Australian or a British firm. I hope that some investigation will be made, and that evidence will be taken in connexion with this matter. I know there would be a difficulty, because firms of the kind in question do not fight each other if they can help it. The Germans have plenty of money to enable them to fight in an indirect way. However, I do think we should do all we can to secure preference to British-made goods.

The motion was agreed to, and the resolution was reported to the House, and adopted.

WAYS AND MEANS.

The House having gone into Committee of Ways and Means,

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier) moved—

That towards making good the Supply to His Majesty for the service of the year 1917-18 the sum of £1,318,138 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue of Victoria.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I should like the Minister of Railways to take this opportunity of replying to the statement which I made with regard to the tenders for gas mantles.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*—Minister of Railways).—I understood the honorable member to say that, although the firm to which he alluded is supposed to be British, the members of that firm are not Britishers.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I did not say that.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—All I know is that the firm is represented to me as being a British firm, that is, the firm whose tender was accepted. I do not know whether originally it was a German firm or not. So far as I am aware, and so far as represented to the Railways Commissioners, it is a British firm. As far as the Australian firm which put in a tender is concerned, the honorable member will see by the file that it is proposed to give their goods another trial to see whether the results will be more favorable than when the first test was made. I can say that I am most careful in signing these Orders in Council. I take every precaution with regard to them. On many occasions when I have any doubt I bring the matters before Cabinet. I take the utmost care to see that in every possible

case the Australian goods get preference, and the British goods second preference.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—What I said was that there was a reconstruction of the firm, and that German goods have been unloaded on to the Railway Department by the newly-constituted firm.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—If that is so, I am not aware of it, and I will have inquiries made. I understood it to be a British firm supplying goods in no way connected with Germany.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—In connexion with the trouble between two honorable members on the Ministerial side of the House with regard to the purchase of goods by the Railway Department, the Commissioners seem to have done a most extraordinary thing in varying the contract prices. I know that some firms have conformed to their tenders, thinking that it was their duty to bear any loss. According to the statement made by the Minister of Railways, it seems that the Railways Commissioners entered into an arrangement to allow several firms a certain amount of consideration in connexion with the prices of articles which they had contracted to supply. I look upon that as wholly improper, because it is abrogating the rights of Parliament, and if it is going to be applied generally, it will cost the Department a large sum of money. The Minister's statement shows that the commercial community is active in looking after its own interests, and men who have been honorably keeping to their tenders will be foolish, after what has transpired, if they do not apply for some rebate in connexion with the goods which they have supplied.

Mr. KEAST.—It is a remarkable statement.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—Yes, and it is going to cost the Department a large sum of money. The matter has gone so far that it is necessary to find out what goods those firms were in possession of when the war broke out, and what they have purchased since. That can only be ascertained after an exhaustive inquiry. The Commissioners' statement that they will make an allowance for the increased cost of goods will mean a big expense if everybody applies for it. I have nothing to do with the dispute between the two honorable members on the Ministerial side of the House. Into the merits of that dis-

pute I am not entering. It is the action of the Department in varying contract prices that I am referring to. One very large firm has been mentioned, and I think it was intended that their name should be published. I refer to Spicer and Company, the paper merchants, of England, who supply a large amount of paper to the State, and who have adhered to their contract to the last letter. If that is so, that firm will be entitled to apply for the privileges which have been extended to other contractors. I want to know what the Government are going to do, because it is a matter in which public funds are involved. Our Railways Commissioners, after conference with other Railways Commissioners, decided to make certain allowances. Now, I want to know whether that was done with the authority of the Premier, or the Minister, or the Cabinet. It was an improper thing for them to do, and I wish to ascertain whether the Premier contemplates any action in connexion with the method by which variations have been allowed in contracts. I have given an illustration of a firm which kept to its contract, and it seems to me that that firm will be in a position to ask for a rebate if it has been put to extra cost in connexion with the goods because of the war. That was a case which was mentioned by the honorable member for Swan Hill. I want to know what is the attitude of the Government towards the Commissioners in this matter, so that the public funds will be conserved.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—I cannot give the honorable member a reply offhand, but I will go into the matter with the Minister and the Railways Commissioners, and at a later stage I shall be able to make a statement with regard to it.

Mr. COTTER.—I wish to refer to the question of invalid pensions. It is generally considered outside that the Commonwealth are paying the invalid pensions. A number of people in the district I represent have been very harshly treated by the Federal pension authorities, and I have had to appeal to the Treasurer of this State for a compassionate allowance. It is time the Treasurer looked into this matter to see if better arrangements cannot be made.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Quite right.

Mr. COTTER.—If people are entitled to a compassionate allowance from the State Treasurer, surely they are entitled to an invalid pension from the Commonwealth. I have not asked for a grant from the Treasurer's compassionate allowance for people who are not entitled to relief, but we find that the Commonwealth authorities tell applicants for an invalid pension to apply again in two or three months' time.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—And in the meantime they can starve.

Mr. KEAST.—I have known of a number of cases of the same sort, but the Treasurer of this State has been very good in granting relief.

Mr. COTTER.—The Federal Government claim great credit for what they are doing in regard to invalid and old-age pensions, but they should treat applicants with greater consideration. The Treasurer and Mr. Meek have treated my requests considerately, but it is not fair that the State Treasurer should be called upon to give compassionate allowances to people who are deserving of invalid pensions.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I am glad the honorable member has mentioned this matter. I was discussing it with the accountant and Mr. Meek the other day. I will make representations on the subject.

The motion was agreed to.

CONSOLIDATED REVENUE BILL (No. 3.)

The resolution arrived at in Committee of Ways and Means was considered and adopted.

Authority having been given to Sir Alexander Peacock and Mr. McLeod to introduce a Bill to carry out the resolution.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Treasurer) brought up a Bill to apply out of the Consolidated Revenue the sum of £1,318,138 to the service of the year 1917-18, and moved that it be read a first time.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read a first time.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Treasurer) moved that the Bill be read a second time. He said—As honorable members know, this Bill provides for the payment of the money which has just been voted in Committee of Ways and Means.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was then read a second time, and passed through Committee without amendment.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Treasurer).—I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Mr. LAWSON (Minister of Public Instruction).—During the discussion which has just taken place the honorable member for Carlton referred to the medical inspection of children attending the State schools. Prior to the war, we had four medical officers with two follow-up nurses engaged in this work. Since the war, however, our operations have been restricted; we have now only two medical officers. When I visited New South Wales recently I made a pretty complete investigation into the system which prevails there. I had a long conversation with Dr. Withers, the principal medical officer, and I inspected the medical and dental clinics which the New South Wales Government have established. The Government of this State fully appreciate the importance of this matter, but financial considerations prevent our launching out to any extent just now.

Mr. SALLY.—But during the time when the Government had money they did not carry out their promises.

Mr. LAWSON.—At that time the system of medical inspection had to prove itself by going through a probationary period.

Mr. SALLY.—It went through the probationary period in Great Britain long ago.

Mr. LAWSON.—I do not wish to be involved in an argument with the honorable member or to appear opposed in any way to his desires in this matter. As he well knows, I am in entire sympathy with the system, and when times are more favorable, the Government will be prepared to make considerable advances. In the meantime I should like the honorable member to be satisfied with my assurance that we will give this matter prompt consideration at the earliest possible opportunity. His statement with regard to the nurses was not strictly accurate, but it is probably a reasonable interpretation of the position to anybody who does not know exactly what did occur. The facts are that two follow-up nurses were first of all appointed for six months, and subsequently their appointments were re-

newed for a further period. At the end of the term one nurse resigned in order to go to the Front, and the other was not re-appointed. That is quite a different thing from dismissal. In view of the difficulty of obtaining nurses, the Government recognise that it is only playing with the question of medical inspection to have one follow-up nurse. With one nurse we are able to deal with only Port Melbourne, and, to some extent, Collingwood and Carlton. If we are to carry out the system properly, it will be necessary to have a much more numerous staff of nurses than that, but at the present time we cannot launch out as the honorable member desires. I have made this statement, because I do not want him to think that no notice is being taken of his earnest speech on this subject.

Mr. SALLY.—This is too much.

Mr. LAWSON.—I can assure the honorable member the Government is sympathetic on this subject. The honorable member has spoken very often with regard to it, and I recognise that, if we were to carry out all he desires, one of his favorite subjects of debate would be taken away from him.

Mr. SALLY.—I should be only too delighted.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was then read a third time.

The House adjourned at twenty-nine minutes past ten o'clock p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, September 6, 1917.

The SPEAKER took the chair at twelve minutes past eleven o'clock a.m.

REAL PROPERTY BILL.

Mr. MACKEY moved the second reading of this Bill. He said—This Bill, which relates exclusively to the law of real property, is a Bill that was drafted in England, and brought in in the Imperial Parliament in pursuance of the recommendations of a very important Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the state of our real property law. That Royal Commission consisted of the most eminent equity and conveyancing men in the Old Country, including Lord Buckmaster, late Chancellor of England.

They made certain recommendations, first of all with regard to the law of settled estates, secondly, with regard to the law of trusts, thirdly, with regard to certain manorial matters that have no effect on Victoria at all, fourthly, with regard to administration and probate, and, fifthly, with regard to the amendment of the general law of real property. This Bill relates exclusively to that part of the recommendations which deals with the recommended amendments on the general law. The other parts of the recommendations and of the Bill drafted and presented to the Imperial Parliament, pursuant to those recommendations, are not dealt with in this Bill, although I hope that they will be introduced into this Parliament, and passed into law as soon as practicable. Every clause of this Bill was contained in the Bill drafted in pursuance of those recommendations.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Except clause 13.

Mr. MACKEY.—Except clause 13, which is already law in England. Clause 3 of the Bill is intended to carry out what is, I think, a common-sense reform of our law. I may mention that in this regard, and in many other regards, evidence was given before the Royal Commission by the most eminent conveyancing counsel and solicitors in the Old Country—men like Sir Howard Elphinstone, Mr. Arthur Underhill, Mr. Charles Sweet, Mr. Cyprian Williams, Mr. Sanger, Mr. B. L. Cherry, and other leading counsel, and most of the eminent conveyancing solicitors. It is remarkable that, whilst the consensus of evidence as regards the law of real property is known to England and to Victoria, that is, the general law of real property—certainly it is known to those eminent men whose practice consists exclusively of this branch of the law—they declare it to be a disgrace to a country that aspires to be a civilized nation. There is no question about it that our law of real property is one that is the surprise of the world. I am speaking of the general law, and not of the law under the Transfer of Land Act. Clause 3 is one of the clauses that were strongly supported. It arises in this way: Originally, in England, in the old feudal days, all that was granted was an estate for life. The English King, for example, granted a sum for military retainer to the owner of a feudal estate on condition that military service—and sometimes other services—was rendered. Of

course, on the death of the owner of the estate the conditions ceased, and the estate went back to the Crown. In that way estates for life became the accepted thing. Later, although the practice grew up of re-granting the estate to the eldest son of a deceased land-owner, and that practice became ultimately a right, the law of conveyancing incorporated the old idea. All that a man had was a life estate. When he conveyed away his property he was presumed to convey the life estate only. That was all that he originally had. That rule of conveyancing continued, although later he had the fee-simple. To-day a man who owns land under the general law makes a contract of sale of property—in regard, say, to property in Queen-street, or any other part of the State—a formal contract of sale followed by a form of conveyance, and if he conveys all his interest in that particular property it is well described. Unless he uses certain technical terms, "Conveying to John Smith and his heirs," or "To John Smith in fee-simple," or "To John Smith in fee—," if he says "To John Smith absolutely," or something of that kind—John Smith would take merely the life estate, although the previous contract must obviously mean that this is a sale of the whole property, and full value is given for it. The necessity for these technical terms has come down through hundreds of years. The reasons for them when they came into existence have long since gone by. That law is continued in Victoria with regard to conveyancing. It does not hold good under the Transfer of Land Act; it does not hold in the case of a will. Nevertheless, so slow is Parliament to move in matters that do not immediately concern the bulk of the people, that both in England and in this State, and, I think, in every other State of the Commonwealth, this law continues. It may be said that solicitors and counsel know this, and that no difficulties occur. That is not so. When we read the law reports for the last ten years we find that cases have occurred in England where conveyances that were intended to convey the whole of an estate have been held to convey the life estate only.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—What becomes of the property then?

Mr. MACKEY.—On the death of the life tenant it would revert back to the original grantor or to his representatives.

Mr. SINCLAIR.—Is the idea to abolish the technical terms?

Mr. MACKEY.—Yes.

Mr. McGREGOR.—Will it affect the cost of the law?

Mr. MACKEY.—It will tend to reduce lawyers' fees. There is a maxim, by-the-by, that cheap law means plenty of it. What deters many people from going to law nowadays is that it is so costly and so prohibitive. They prefer to suffer an injustice rather than resort to law.

Mr. McGREGOR.—Is there any cheap law?

Mr. MACKEY.—Yes. But it is usually administered out of Court. The parties administer it to one another. A very important provision in the Bill relates to corporations, which are mostly companies. A lot of difficulties have arisen as to who are to affix seals and who are to make grants in the case of companies. This clause codifies this branch of the law, and makes it so perfectly plain that he who runs may read. This Bill was drafted by the most eminent draftsmen in the Old Country. No amateurs have been at work on it. The Attorney-General placed at my disposal the services of the Commissioner of Titles, who, as a lawyer, is certainly a very eminent man, especially in this branch of the law. Clause 5 deals with tenancies in tail. There are a few tenancies in tail in this country still. None has been created since 1885, but those that were then in existence were not abolished. Power was given to allow a tenant in tail to dispose of his property, but power was not given to dispose of it by will. The tenant in tail is simply a person to whom the grant is made—to him and the heirs of his body. That is to say, on his death it goes to his eldest son, or daughter if their are no sons. In 1885 this Parliament passed a law by which a tenant in tail can grant in fee-simple, and convey the whole estate. But he cannot do that by will. This Bill proposes to allow that to be done by will by specific devise. In England there is a more liberal tendency nowadays in regard to legislation of this character than is the case in Victoria.

Mr. MCLEOD.—Will this Bill apply to those estates?

Mr. MACKEY.—Clause 5 only applies to entailed estates, and the practical effect will be, for most purposes, to make a tenancy in tail an ordinary fee-simple. Clause 6 deals with the case of a

mortgage by sub-lease. Clause 7 provides a very short form of transfer of mortgages. As to clause 8, a mortgagee may want to sell his rights to somebody else, and this clause provides that, instead of having an elaborate deed, the transfer can be effected by a very short form. A still more important alteration deals with the position of the mortgagor. At the present time if a person wants to raise money by a mortgage under the general law, although borrowing only a few hundred pounds on his property, he has to make a conveyance of the property to the mortgagee, who undertakes, if the interest and principal are paid at the due date, to re-convey the land back to the borrower. That means two conveyances, one to the mortgagee and one to the mortgagor when the money has been repaid.

Mr. McGREGOR.—You will be a benefactor to the country if you secure that provision.

Mr. MACKEY.—The clause simply amounts to this, that a simple receipt under seal of mortgage money will have all the effect of a re-conveyance.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—Is not nearly all the land now under the Transfer of Land Act?

Mr. MACKEY.—No; there are thousands of old titles. It was pointed out in the evidence before the Royal Commission that one of the inducements to bring land under the English Transfer of Land Act was to simplify procedure. One of the reasons why land under the old law is not brought under the Transfer of Land Act is the difficulty of convincing the Commissioner of Titles that the title is a good one. If the procedure for issuing titles can be simplified, it will mean that more land can be readily brought under the Transfer of Land Act. A title issued under that Act is practically as good as the corresponding value in debentures. So long as a person deals with the man whose name is on the register, and gets himself registered, he gets a good title. I suppose it is the best title any man can have, hence the desire to bring land under the Transfer of Land Act. This clause will facilitate the procedure. Then I come to clause 9. A curious anomaly is sought to be removed by this clause. Under sections 34 and 25 of the Trusts Act, provision can be made for the maintenance of infants who are entitled to land on reaching the age of twenty-one. By virtue of those sections trustees may

use a part of the income for the education and maintenance of the infants, notwithstanding the fact that they may be only contingently entitled to the property. Curious law is disclosed in the case of *re Averill* 1898, Chancery Division, Vol. 1, in which it was shown that certain of the beneficiaries were not provided for. This case reveals one of the anomalies of our law. Property is sometimes given under a will to a class of children, or to such of the children of a specified person who attain the age of twenty-one, and the rule of law provides that, when the first child reaches that age, he is entitled to the whole of the income from this particular property. When the second child reaches the age of twenty-one he is entitled to share in the income, and when the third child attains his majority he becomes entitled to a share also; but in the interval until the first, second, and third children respectively attain the age of twenty-one, no income for maintenance can be provided for them from the property held in trust. This difficulty will be removed by clause 9. The value of the provision in clause 10 is growing somewhat in importance. This clause deals with what is known as restricted covenants. When estates are being cut up, or other land is sold for building purposes, a covenant is sometimes inserted restricting the use of buildings erected on the allotments, and providing that no house shall be erected unless it costs £2,000, or only private residences be erected, or some other restriction imposed as to trade and so on. These restricted covenants are binding, and may last for hundreds of years, although the reasons for their insertion have wholly disappeared. There are no ready provisions for getting rid of these covenants.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—Is that something like section 69?

Mr. MACKEY.—Not quite. It is a rule of law that no Act of Parliament can be binding against the Crown unless the Act says so, or unless there is a necessary implication that it should, and section 69 is a positive, not a negative, provision. Clause 10 provides for the removal of these restricted covenants with the consent of the parties interested, or in cases where they cannot be found, and the reasons for their inclusion in the deed have become obsolete. No injury will be done to those persons for whose benefit the covenants were imposed. Clause 11 also

deals with an anomaly. Our Conveyancing Act provides that a man cannot make a contract with himself. Supposing A enters into a partnership with B to carry on a certain business. A has land, and he has agreed with B to put a certain amount of money into the business. The Conveyancing Act permits A to convey his land to A and B, but it is not provided that the covenants shall be binding as it is in every other conveyance. This clause in effect says that any covenant or contract made by a man with himself and another shall not be invalid for the reason that he is one of the parties. Of course, it may be invalid for other reasons. Clause 12 provides for another class of hardship which arises under what is known as the rule against perpetuity. It is a good law that property should not be tied up by settlement for all time. The idea is that property should be readily transferable. Persons are constantly leaving money to the children of other people. For instance, a man who is an uncle will leave money to the children of others on their attaining the age of, say, twenty-four. The property may represent a gift worth £10,000 or £20,000, and may go to all the children mentioned who attain the age of twenty-four. Because a particular age is mentioned, the gift is wholly void, notwithstanding that all the children may attain that age. It is declared to be bad, because it may possibly infringe the rule of perpetuity. Supposing one of the beneficiaries may be only a year old on the death of his father, the land would be tied up for twenty-three years should the age of inheritance be fixed at twenty-four. Because of the invalidity brought about by the law against perpetuities, the intentions of the testator are not carried out. The provision I have included in the Bill declares that the gift shall take effect when the children reach the age of twenty-one. In this way, as near as possible, the intentions of the testator will be given effect to. The final clause in the Bill relates to what is known as adverse possession. It is a good law, and one which has been in force for hundreds of years, that no land should be allowed to remain idle or unused, and to get rid of that objection, the law of adverse possession has been brought into force. A person who occupies land for fifteen years without let or hindrance from the owner may get a title to the land, but if the

owner is absent from Victoria, no title can be secured for thirty years. The owner may be living at Albury or Mount Gambier, or somewhere in the other States, and because he is an absentee the law of adverse possession will not prevail against him for thirty years, though if the man resided in the State it could be used against him in fifteen years. Take the case of 100-feet blocks of land commencing at a corner. The boundaries are so many feet, say, from the kerb. The kerb is shifted from time to time, and when the houses are built the measurement is taken from the new kerb. The first block commences, say, 10 or 15 feet back from the kerb, and the fence runs for 100 feet. The owner of that block is, perhaps, really trespassing 5 feet on his neighbour's block. He may have a building on this land. His neighbour has a frontage of 100 feet, and measures it for 100 feet from the end of the first man's fence, and he may be trespassing on his neighbour's land also for 5 feet. If one man discovers that his neighbour, against whom he has a grievance, is trespassing on his block, he may say, "Your fence and building are 5 feet on my block." The building may be a valuable one. We have had cases of this kind in Melbourne affecting buildings worth tens of thousands of pounds. So in other cases of genuine mistaken overlapping. The law of adverse possession says that if this goes on for fifteen years, and the owner of the block trespassed on is in Victoria, his remedy is barred. He has no remedy if he has not found out the mistake in fifteen years. But if the owner is in another State, or outside of Australia, his remedy is not barred until thirty years have elapsed. Take the case of farmers adjusting the boundaries of their holdings. Farmers do not always get solicitors to do their business. It is unwise, I think, in transactions regarding land not to employ a firm of solicitors, but nevertheless we have to recognise the practice that is followed. Farmers by mutual agreement re-adjust their boundaries here and there, but such an agreement is not binding. If fences have been erected in that way coming across the true boundary for fifteen years, a title is obtained by adverse possession, and rightly so.

Mr. KEAST.—What about Crown lands?

Mr. Mackey.

Mr. MACKEY.—In this State the law of adverse possession does not run against the Crown. You cannot get a title against the Crown by adverse possession, otherwise we should have our Crown lands being jumped all over the place. An army of bailiffs would be required to protect the Crown lands. But this law of adverse possession is not exclusively confined to "jumpers," although there is a good deal to be said in favour of that, but it works exceedingly well in cases such as I have indicated, and it is absolutely essential as between farmers and as between neighbours building on adjoining blocks. If the true owner of the land has gone to another State, a period of thirty years has to go by before a title can be obtained under the law of adverse possession. In England, in 1874—over forty years ago—they decided that the absentee should have no privilege in this regard. They decided that he should be on the same footing as a man within the United Kingdom, and, by the way, the period was reduced to twelve years. The period is fifteen years in this State, and I do not suggest that it should be reduced below fifteen years. They said in England that the absentee was to get no privilege, and the disability that existed was removed. I am asking the House to enact what has been the law in this regard in England since 1874, and I think it will be agreed that it is a very desirable change to make. This is an exceedingly technical Bill. Last session, at the instance of the Attorney-General and the Government, a Statute Law Revision Committee, consisting of lawyers of both Houses, and laymen of both Houses, was appointed for the consideration of technical Bills of this character. It has been re-appointed this session, and I suggest to the Attorney-General, who, I suppose, has not had time to consider the Bill, that, if he does not feel inclined to commit himself definitely to the support of the measure at this stage, he should reserve the Government's approval, or disapproval, of it, and say that, in order that time shall not be wasted, it shall go immediately to the Joint Committee. In the meantime, the Attorney-General can obtain the advice of his expert officers, who will advise him as to whether the Government should support the Bill or not, or support it with amendments. It is necessary, I understand, that, before a Bill goes to a Committee of that kind, it should be read

a second time. That was done in the case of the Consolidated Bills. After the second reading, those Bills went to the Joint Committee. I would ask the Attorney-General to agree to the second reading of this measure, and then to consent immediately to a motion that the Bill be referred to the Joint Committee, who will consider the Bill, and report upon it before the measure is considered by the House in Committee.

Mr. MCLEOD.—I should like to know if clause 11 removes a difficulty very often met with, especially in country towns. A father dies, and leaves his property to be sold when his youngest child is twenty-one, and divided amongst the children. The property may be worth a good deal of money when the father dies, but by the time the youngest child is twenty-one, it may be worth very little. Would clause 11 enable an application to be made to the Court for the property to be sold before the youngest child reaches the age of twenty-one?

Mr. MACKEY.—No; clause 11 deals with another matter altogether. A difficulty used to exist in cases where land was given for hospitals, but that has been remedied. As a matter of fact, trustees have not the power of sale unless that power is given to them expressly, or by implication by the trust instrument, or unless, in exceptional cases, they can get an order of the Court.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—I support the Bill. I do not propose to delay the second reading of the measure. There is no part of our law that is so technical as the general law of real property. It is a study which is of great importance to everybody, and a study which is most uninteresting to persons who are not lawyers. It is a most remarkable thing in this State that land is held under two different systems, one of which is a most advanced system. It is a system which assimilates, as far as possible, dealings in land with dealings in personal property—a system which we devised in Australia, and have taught to people in other parts of the world—America, China, the Federated Malay States, and also England.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—Thanks to Mr. Torrens.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—This system was devised in South Australia by a man who was not a lawyer at all, but was, I think, head of the Customs Department. He saw that the law which governed dealings

in ships could easily be adapted so as to apply to dealings in land. The Torrens system of land transfer is only an adaptation of the system of dealing with British ships. We have given the Torrens system to the rest of the world. It has been adopted in many countries, including England. On the other hand, we have the traditional system of the real property law, which we inherit from England, and which has its roots in English feudalism. In this State and in other States we have cut off certain parts of that law. We have not gone so far as New Zealand has in that direction. New Zealand has cut away probably one-half of the old real property law by repealing the Statute of Uses as applied to New Zealand. There is a good deal in the law, as it remains in Victoria that may be simplified. I support the contention of the honorable member for Gippsland West that the Bill should be referred to the Statute Law Revision Committee.

Mr. KEAST.—I should like to congratulate the honorable member for Gippsland West on having introduced this Bill. As was said by the honorable member for Ballarat East recently, the honorable member for Gippsland West is a public benefactor. As the Minister of Railways knows, in connexion with the old titles, there is a good deal of trouble. On many occasions, I have sold blocks of land having three or four old titles, and the cost of bringing them under the new law has been very considerable. There may have been a number of transfers.

Mr. H. MCKENZIE (*Rodney*).—And one of them may be missing.

Mr. LAWSON.—This will not affect the cost of bringing land under the new law.

Mr. KEAST.—I know of one instance in which there were sixteen titles for about 1,300 acres of land. It was very costly indeed to have that land brought under the new law. I am not saying that the lawyers charged too much, because they had a great deal of work to do, and several searches had to be made in New South Wales and New Zealand. I say that we should endeavour to simplify the law so as to make the procedure less expensive to the man getting a transfer. It appears to me that the provision made in the schedules to the Bill is admirable. Take a man discharging a mortgage of £50 or £100; it will probably cost him two or three guineas. I understand that

under this Bill it can be done for a great deal less than that. It would probably be done for half a guinea.

Mr. LAWSON.—It costs 12s. 6d. to register it.

Mr. KEAST.—The people I want to save expense are those with smaller mortgages.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—You might get it done for two guineas instead of five guineas. That would be more like it.

Mr. KEAST.—I am not complaining of lawyers' charges, because as a rule they are pretty fair.

Mr. COTTER.—They have rendered less service free for the community than any other professional men.

Mr. LAWSON.—That is an unfair reflection. The legal profession stand out prominently for the free service which they have rendered to the community during these times.

Mr. KEAST.—As the result of my experience with them, I think that they are an admirable set of men, but, if we can simplify things in connexion with mortgages, especially for the benefit of poor people, it will be an excellent thing. I look upon the speech of the honorable member for Gippsland West as the most satisfactory explanation of a Bill which I have ever heard in this House. I congratulate that honorable member on having introduced the measure, and I hope that the Government will give it prompt and favorable consideration, because the sooner it is passed into law in the interests of the farmers and others in the community the better it will be for the country.

Mr. LAWSON (Attorney-General).—I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

I should like to say a word or two as to the reasons for my inability to comply with the request of the honorable member for Gippsland West, and immediately concur in the second reading of the Bill, so that it may be referred at once to the Statute Law Revision Committee. The honorable member has made a most interesting explanation of the Bill, an explanation quite understandable by laymen as well as lawyers, and I am sure that he has convinced the House that the simplification of the law is essential, and that some of those technicalities which are so deep-rooted and go so far back in the his-

tory of the conveyancing law should be removed. The time is ripe for that, but I feel a personal responsibility with regard to the measure. While I have the utmost confidence in the honorable member for Gippsland West in guiding the House in a matter of this kind, and while I know he has had the assistance of the Commissioner of Titles, who is an eminent conveyancing lawyer, I think that at least it should be the duty of the Attorney-General to read the provisions of the Bill and obtain the advice of his officers before he recommends the House to affirm the principle. Of course, if I recommended the adoption of the course which the honorable member has suggested, the House would have the security of knowing that the Statute Law Revision Committee would consider the measure. All the same, I do not think that takes away the responsibility of the Government, and particularly the Attorney-General, in the matter. Therefore, I ask that the debate may be adjourned, in order that I may have an opportunity of reading the Bill, which was only circulated this morning, and of conferring with the law officers with regard to it. I promise the honorable member for Gippsland West that the Government will give him the earliest opportunity of having the second reading of the Bill dealt with, assuming, of course, that I am satisfied, after my investigations, that the measure can be recommended to the House. In that way I think that we will be preserving the best practice of Parliament in a matter of this kind, that we will be true to the traditions which should guide the Attorney-General with regard to it, and that the honorable member will achieve the object which he has in view. Therefore, I hope that he will accept the motion for the adjournment of the debate in the spirit in which I am submitting it.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Thursday, September 13.

COMPULSORY VOTING (ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS) BILL.

Mr. COTTER moved the second reading of this Bill. He said—It is a somewhat new rôle for me to introduce a Bill into Parliament, and I feel a little bit diffident in doing so this morning. I propose to place before the House, as clearly as possible, the facts connected with this

measure. I am not going to ask for a sympathy vote or anything of that kind. If honorable members think it is a Bill which is necessary, and which will achieve the object at which I am aiming, I shall be glad of their support; but if honorable members can show me by any arguments or facts which I have overlooked that the measure is neither good nor necessary, then I do not crave any indulgence from them, and I do not want their support. It seems to me that the time has arrived when we should have legislation of this character. In the Commonwealth to-day we have a system of compulsory enrolment, but voting is not compulsory. It would be rather an anomaly if we were to have compulsory voting for this House and not compulsory enrolment. I understand that, as a result of several Conferences between the State and Federal Electoral Departments, a scheme for a universal roll, or the amalgamation of the two Departments, is likely to be adopted. If the Commonwealth roll is adopted as a universal roll it is a roll to which, as I say, compulsory enrolment applies. That stage having been arrived at, it strikes me that something else should follow. It is no use saying to a man, “We will fine you £2 if you are not enrolled,” unless we are prepared to go a little further, and say that we will do something to him if he does not record his vote. I am explaining these things at the risk of taking up a little extra time, because I want honorable members to get a good grip of this measure. Victoria, as a State, certainly stands fairly well as regards the percentage of voters, but that applies only when comparison is made with other States. When the voting generally was flat, Victoria had a good record, and the percentage of voters in this State increased as the percentages in other States rose. Here the percentage has gone from something like 50 to about 70 per cent. I do not wish to make this a party question in any way, or to cite any honorable member's electorate as an example. My desire is to deal with the State as a whole. To me it has always appeared an extraordinary thing that the percentage of voters in the country has generally been in advance of that for the metropolitan area and centres of population, such as Geelong, Ballarat, and Bendigo, because, in closely settled electorates, the polling

booths are so numerous, and the facilities for voting so great in comparison. Yet, in scattered constituencies in the country, a percentage of 75 or 76 will be obtained, whereas, in a metropolitan constituency, it may be only 48 or 49. It is safe to say that there is not a man in the metropolitan constituencies who lives more than a mile from a polling booth.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—There are a lot at Coburg who do not live within 3 miles of a booth.

Mr. COTTER.—That may be so at Coburg and, perhaps, Williamstown, but, taking the bulk of the metropoliton electors, I think it is a fair thing to say that no man or woman lives more than a mile from a polling booth, and it must not be forgotten that in the city there are asphalt footpaths and every facility for getting about. In my own electorate 49 per cent. of the electors recorded their votes. There must be some reason for that small percentage.

Mr. SINCLAIR.—More people vote in the country than in the metropolis.

Mr. COTTER.—Yes. If the people will not take an interest in the political affairs of the country, if they will be neglectful, should we not take some action to overcome their indifference? If a business man in Flinders-lane or a doctor in one of the suburbs is summoned to attend at Court as a juror, he will make it his business to be present. Perhaps, in that case, the fine has some effect. As a State Parliament, we control the whole industrial life of the community. The National Parliament may be doing great things in a national way, but we have to deal, as a State Parliament, with the every-day life of the people, and it is to the State Parliament that the people must look. Still, we find that the percentage of voting at our elections is considerably less than at the elections for the National Parliament. I have a return prepared by the Commonwealth authorities in regard to the elections. Taking the year 1903, the percentage of voters at the election for the National Parliament was 50.27; in 1906 it was 51.48; in 1910 it was 62.80; in 1913 it was 73.49; and in 1914, 73.55. In other words, the percentage has increased on every occasion that the people have been asked to express their opinion. Now, in regard to the elections for the State Parliament, I

find that in 1866 the percentage of voters was 56, and in 1914 it had fallen to 55. We have, therefore, gone back. After fifty years of responsible government we find we have a lower percentage, although we have greater facilities and the influence of the press. The result is worse than it was in the year 1866. Now, I will deal with Victoria voting as a State at Commonwealth elections. In 1903, the Victorian vote at the Commonwealth elections showed a percentage of 53.83. In 1906 it was 56.73; in 1910 it was 66.58; in 1913 it was 75; and in 1914, 80.40, or nearly 80½ per cent. There must be some reason for this. What is it? Is it that the State Parliament has fallen away in the estimation of the people? Is it that we do not deal with our political affairs as forcibly as we ought to, or is it because the Commonwealth Parliament being in the State of Victoria overshadows the State Parliament? Whatever it is, the fact remains that Victoria, voting as a State of the Commonwealth, shows an increased percentage of voters; whilst Victoria, voting as a State for the State Parliament, shows a decreased percentage of voters, the numbers being 56 per cent. and 55. The voting in connexion with the referendums submitted by the Commonwealth shows that in 1906 the percentage of voters was 50.17; in 1910 it was 62.16; in 1911 it was 53.31; in 1913 it was 73.66; and in 1916 it was 82.75, or nearly 83 per cent. The indifference displayed at elections for our State Parliaments is due either to the fact that the State Parliament is overshadowed by the Commonwealth Parliament, or that the people of Victoria are indifferent in the matter of State politics. Perhaps both things operate. If we are going to keep our State Parliament in existence, we must do something to galvanize the people into activity. I am not at all dealing with party politics. At present, we have only one example of compulsory voting in Australia, and the result is remarkable. The State of Queensland has compulsory voting, and there has been only one election under that system. Whilst the percentage of electors there has never been more than 72 for an ordinary election, at the last State election under the compulsory system the percentage of male voters was 88, and of women voters was 90. We have a big dilatory population in the Commonwealth, so far

as politics are concerned, but we see the effect of legislation on a portion of that population. Immediately the Legislature of Queensland say, "You return us to represent the bulk of the people, and we are going to insist that you shall vote so that we shall represent the majority," then we find an enormous increase in the percentage of voters. When a fine is held over their heads for neglecting to vote, the effect is magical. Never before in the history of Australia have we touched 90 per cent. at our elections. It is evident that the slow, dilatory, easy-going section of the people will not record their votes unless some legislative action compels them to do so. That, as I have said, has been proved in Queensland, where the numbers jump from 72 per cent., prior to the passing of the Act providing for compulsory voting, to 88 per cent. of the men voters and 90 per cent. of the women voters under compulsion. There are many systems of voting, but they do not come into this question. I am not dealing with systems of voting. We have decided on a certain system of voting, and I want the Government to take the responsibility of seeing that the electors make it worth their while once in three years to record their votes. It is a remarkable thing to metropolitan members that, whilst every accommodation is provided for electors to vote, the percentage of voters is frightfully small. Before I became the member for Richmond, there were only two polling booths in that electorate; but now there are four. I suppose it is as compact an electorate as any in the State.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—No.

Mr. COTTER.—Probably Fitzroy is more compact, but I have no doubt that Richmond is one of the most compact. We have four polling booths, and at the last election the percentage of voters was only 49, so that 51 per cent. of the voters were indifferent.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—They thought you were a certainty.

Mr. COTTER.—Perhaps that had a good deal to do with it; but it is not satisfactory to a member to find that the bulk of the voters are indifferent. If it were a question of jury service, 51 per cent. would not stop away when they were summoned. They say they do not often have to act as jurors; but it is a fact, also, that they have not often to vote at

political elections. If it is fair to provide a penalty of £2 to compel jurors to attend, surely it is fair to impose some penalty on members of the community who fail to do their duty as voters. The percentage of voting in New South Wales at the Legislative Assembly elections in 1894 was 80.38. This was the highest percentage recorded between that year and 1913. In 1913, the percentage was only 64.55. In a big State like New South Wales, where the population is scattered, such a percentage may be considered reasonable. The percentage in New South Wales is a bigger one than we get in Victoria. In other States similar percentages are found. There is only one State in the Commonwealth in which compulsory voting obtains. The result in that State of the compulsory system was so remarkable that I think it justifies our acceptance of the principle. If I can show that by the passing of this measure the percentage of voting in Victoria will be increased from 56 to, say, 80 per cent., then I shall have accomplished something. In Queensland the percentage has been brought up from 72 per cent. to 88 per cent. as regards males, and to 90 per cent. as regards females. That is the only portion of Australia where anything of that nature has been accomplished. The reason for that is the whip, in the shape of compulsion, that is used. The difference between a compulsory method and a voluntary method is always most marked. We know, as regards the Commonwealth enrolment, that the people take all sorts of care to see that their names are on the roll. The reason for that is that, if they are not enrolled, they are liable to a fine of £2. Contrast that with the little anxiety that is shown among the people to get on the State rolls. Speaking generally, they do not trouble their heads about the matter at all. They are too apt to take it for granted that they are on the roll. It is no uncommon thing to hear a person say, "I am on the roll, because a policeman brought a card to my house." On election day, if they find that their names are not enrolled, they will come to honorable members and kick up a row about it. A meeting has been held, or is about to be held, of the Electoral Officers of Australia, with a view, I understand, to the amalgamation of the State and Federal Electoral Offices. Inasmuch as

enrolment for the Commonwealth elections is compulsory, is it not a necessary corollary, if the amalgamation is brought about, that the State should adopt compulsory enrolment? At an election both sides claim the absent voters to be friends of theirs. If we adopt compulsory voting that question will be settled. I am going to ask the House to agree to the passing of this measure, if honorable members think it a good one. I am asking the House to look at it from the stand-point of the interest of the community. It is in no sense a party question. If it can be shown that the Bill is defective, or that the policy I am advocating is a wrong one, I shall be content. I am not anxious to foist anything on the country that is not in the interests of the country. If the Bill is not a good one, then I hope that some responsible member of the Ministry will show why it is not a good one. Section 88 of the Queensland Electoral Act reads—

1. It shall be the duty of every elector to record his vote at every election held for the electoral district on the roll of which he is enrolled. But this provision shall not be construed to compel any elector to vote contingently under the provisions in that behalf hereinafter contained.

2. It shall be the duty of the Returning Officer, at the close of every election, to compile a list of the names and descriptions, as appear by the roll, of the electors who have not voted at the election for which he is the Returning Officer, and to certify such list by statutory declaration under his hand. Such list so certified shall, in all proceedings, be *prima facie* evidence of the contents thereof, and of the fact that the electors whose names appear therein did not vote at the said election.

3. Within seven days after the close of the said election, the Returning Officer shall send by post to each elector whose name appears on such list, at the address therein mentioned, a notice in the following form—

The form then follows. Coming back to the Bill we find that, though the wording may be different, its purport is very much the same. It is a Bill to provide for compulsory voting at elections. Clause 3 provides that—

1. Every elector shall record his vote at every election for the Assembly held for the electoral district on the electoral roll of any division of which he is enrolled.

The Returning Officer will be required to keep a marked roll—

Such marked roll so certified shall in all proceedings be *prima facie* evidence of the contents thereof and of the fact that any elector

whose name appears therein marked as aforesaid as not having recorded his vote did not record his vote at the said election.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Supposing there are two candidates' names on the ballot-paper, and the voter strikes out the two, thus recording an invalid vote, will the voter render himself liable to any penalty?

Mr. COTTER.—No. Provided the elector takes the trouble to go to the booth he will comply with the provisions of this Bill. The argument has been urged against the Bill that, if people are dragged to the polling booth, they will record invalid votes. I think experience will show a large increase in the number of valid votes cast. When the unwilling voter arrived at the booth he would most likely adopt the attitude that it was better to choose the lesser of two evils, and accordingly vote for one candidate or the other. The difficulty at present is that so many electors stop at home, and do not bother their heads about voting. Within a reasonable time after the election there will be a marked roll. The effect of this will be that the Returning Officer will strike off the names of those who have not voted. The roll will be sent to the Chief Electoral Officer, with whom the final result will remain. A notice will be sent out asking the elector, who has absented himself from the polling booth, for an explanation. If a reasonable explanation is offered it will be accepted. If an elector gives a false reason for not recording his vote, or can offer no valid excuse, or neglects to return the notice I have referred to to the Returning Officer, he will be liable to a penalty of not more than £2.

No interference is made with voting by post, or with any of the provisions that exist to-day. An elector is compelled to be on the roll, and to vote, or to show reason why he does not vote. I recollect the honorable member for Stawell, when we were both considerably younger, addressing a meeting of a body of which I am still a member, and of which he was then a leading light, on "The Duties of Citizenship." One of the points made was the responsibility of citizens to see that they returned the right men to Parliament. I ask the honorable member for Stawell whether he is of opinion, when we have a percentage of voting of only 56, that the citizens are carrying out their responsible duties in a manner that satisfies him? If a jury were empanelled

on a 56 per cent. basis of jurors, would that be a fair thing? We know that when a man is summoned to a jury he attends. It does not matter whether he is a professional man or a worker, he is at his post when the jury list is read over. Why? Because he is under a penalty to be there. We know, of course, that as regards many business men it would be cheaper for them to pay the fine than attend at the Supreme Court. I have an idea that the electors of Victoria would sooner vote than pay the fine. On what side they would vote when they got to the polling booth, I am not just now concerned about. What I want to do is to provide that every elector shall go to the polling booth, so that every man who is returned to this House will have the assurance that he has the bulk of the electors behind him. We have already provided for a preferential system of voting, so as to seeure that each candidate shall get a percentage of the votes that are cast; but we have no law which will enable a candidate to get a proper percentage of the votes of those whose names are on the roll. For instance, in my own electorate, only 49 per cent. of the electors voted at the last election. It follows that 51 per cent. were opposed to me, but still I got a huge majority.

Mr. ROGERS.—Probably, it was a good job they did not attend.

Mr. COTTER.—That may be the case; but still the fact remains that 51 per cent. of the electors were too indifferent to record their votes.

Mr. KEAST.—They knew you had a safe seat.

Mr. COTTER.—Perhaps I ought to take it that way, but I am not doing so. Sub-clause (7) provides that—

Every elector who—

- (a) fails to record his vote at an election for the Assembly without an excuse which in the opinion of the court is a valid and sufficient excuse for such failure; or
- (b) on receipt of the notice aforesaid, fails refuses or neglects to fill up and sign and post or deliver the same to the returning officer so as to reach him within the time prescribed; or
- (c) states a false reason therein for not recording his vote,

shall for each such offence on the complaint of the chief electoral officer or of some person authorized in writing (either generally or in any particular case) by the chief electoral

officer be liable to a penalty of not more than £2.

Paragraph (b) has been inserted to deal with those electors who, on receiving the notice from the Electoral Department, simply tear it up, and bother about it no further. Clause 4 provides that—

(1) For the purposes of this Act the returning officer with the assistance of such officers as he deems necessary shall in the presence of such officers but of no other persons open and if necessary break the seal of any parcel containing the rolls used at the election and examine the same for the purpose of indicating on the marked roll aforesaid the names of the electors who have not voted at the election for which he is the returning officer.

(2) At the conclusion of the said examination and marking the returning officer shall replace such rolls in the parcels from which they were taken and re-seal the same and then comply with the provisions of section 263 of the principal Act.

This clause contains the provision for the secrecy of the ballot. I am anxious that nothing should be put on the statute-book which would permit a Returning Officer, or any prying person, ascertaining how a vote was cast. It is highly objectionable that 50 or 60 per cent. of the electors in the metropolitan area should refuse to vote at the elections which, as a rule, do not occur oftener than once in three years. The man who is living in the country, and who may, perhaps, be 10 miles from a polling booth, may find it difficult to attend, particularly if he happens to be ploughing or harvesting; but there is scarcely a man in the metropolitan area who lives more than a mile away from a polling booth. Even if he is working up to 6 o'clock at night, he still has an opportunity of voting, because the booths do not close till 7.

Mr. KEAST.—Is it proposed to confine this Bill to the metropolitan area?

Mr. COTTER.—No; that would not be fair, because we might have a man living on one side of a road in Mordialloc who would be compelled to vote, and another man on the other side who would be under no compulsion. That would not be at all reasonable; but I have provided that, where a man can give a valid reason for not voting, he will be excused. We may have a man in the employ of the Railway Department who quite anticipates being able to record his vote, but on the day of the election he may have to leave the city at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning to go to

Ararat, or Gippsland, and would not return to his home until after the booth had closed. He would be able to give a valid reason for not having voted. The Chief Electoral Officer, who will have the power to decide upon these matters, will be a public servant, and not at all likely to act unreasonably in dealing with excuses which may be offered. I do not anticipate that, after the first election, there will be very much objection to the compulsory voting, and it would mean that the electors would take a deeper interest in politics than they do at the present time. When I drew up this Bill, Mr. Molloy was the Chief Electoral Officer. He is a man on whose judgment I would be quite prepared to rely. I do not know who is the present Chief Electoral Officer, but I have no doubt I shall be able to depend upon his judgment equally as well as on Mr. Molloy's. I hope the Chief Secretary will give the consideration to this Bill that it deserves. I do not ask for any favours. If the Bill is not a good one, it should be rejected; but if the proposals are reasonable, I ask honorable members to give them their support.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I regret that, owing to public business, I was not able to hear all that the honorable member has said; but I have no doubt he has made an interesting speech, and has been able to back up his arguments in favour of this Bill by the experiences in Queensland. It may be suggested that I have somewhat pre-conceived ideas as to the wisdom or otherwise of passing this Bill; but it appears to me very strange that, at a time like this, when the question of liberty is so much in the ascendant, and when Britishers are fighting bloody battles in Flanders for personal and national liberty, we should be engaged, not only in this House, but in other places, in infringing upon that priceless gem of the British Empire. If some of my friends, both inside and outside of this House, had a proper conception of liberty, we should not have so many attempts to subvert that great principle. The honorable member referred to an address I delivered before the Richmond branch of the Australian Natives Association upon the question of citizenship, and its duties and responsibilities. I hold the view to-day that I held then, that it is the bounden duty of

every man and every woman who is permitted to enjoy the advantages which a democratic State confers, to exercise their privileges and responsibilities to the full. I should like to know what value is to be given to a vote which is only cast because the elector is absolutely dragged to the polling booth. By the way, I see no interpretation in the Bill of what constitutes a vote. There is no penalty imposed upon the voter who may improperly mark his ballot-paper. What sort of people are we going to drag to the poll by this system of compulsion? We may get weak-minded people who have only sufficient sense to discriminate between responsibility when it is voluntarily exercised, and responsibility when it is exercised compulsorily. These people will cast a vote for some candidate, but its value will not be worth very much. We want people who vote to be imbued with the full sense of the responsibility of citizenship. If a man does not exercise his vote in that way, I do not regard it as worth even the little effort he puts forth in the exercise of his franchise. The matter of liberty is considerably involved in this proposal. After all, it is a matter of personal liberty as to whether a man exercises the responsibility of voting or otherwise. There are some men who, without doing anything contrary to the law, believe that government is a failure. They believe that there should be no government. A number of well-educated citizens believe that parliamentary systems are shams.

Mr. HANNAH.—This Parliament has been very largely a sham for the last two years.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—The honorable member is a part of that sham. However, I do not wish to cross swords with the honorable member. I have a lively recollection of a recent incident. The honorable member who introduced the Bill dwelt upon the duties of citizenship. One has to give an interpretation to the term "citizenship," and to determine what are the manifold and multifarious duties imposed by citizenship. There are many degrees of citizenship, and many duties consistent with citizenship. But it is somewhat to be doubted whether the act of going to a polling booth, and there exercising a vote, constitutes the highest

act of citizenship. There are numbers of people who, for various reasons, object to voting. There are people of religious principles and persuasions who would not record a vote on any account whatever. I do not know whether they are exempted by the Bill.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—They will be provided for.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—There are others, outside of the religious brotherhood, belonging to the brotherhood of man, who do not care about exercising a vote, and, consequently, they take little or no interest in political affairs.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—They take an interest in them if they belong to the brotherhood of man.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—They belong to the brotherhood of man, whether or not they are outside of the charmed circle with which the honorable member so frequently associates. I should like to know of what value it would be to get an unthinking vote—not a true vote of citizenship? In my own electorate I have known men to ride 40 and 50 miles to exercise their votes, because they were so much concerned with the value of their votes.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—Did they vote for you or your opponent?

Mr. TOUTCHER.—In one case a man who rode 50 miles in order to exercise his vote showed the great wisdom with which he was endowed by the Creator by voting for me. Again, take the case of young people arriving at the age of twenty-one years. I remember that I myself eagerly looked forward to becoming twenty-one years of age in order that I might exercise the franchise. I always took a very great interest in political matters. But there are plenty of people of twenty-one years of age who have never given one serious thought to the government of their country. They have, perhaps, a very hazy idea of the meaning of government. There are men of full adult age in this State who could hardly tell you who is the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, or who is the Premier of this State. I have known men who have pretended to be pretty well up in politics who did not know who were the members in another place for their province. I do not say that that should block a man from exercising his vote. But if you are to get the intellectual cream of the community, you will only get it by

the voluntary system—by allowing men to think over the responsibility and duty which devolve upon them, and to exercise their votes as they should be exercised. What is the use of dragging up to the polling booth a lot of uneducated men—I mean uneducated as to a proper conception of civic responsibility and duty. I am not referring to their being uneducated from the stand-point of the education to be obtained in our public schools, but to their being lacking in the education of the world, and lacking in education as to the affairs of government. If you compel men to vote whose vision and environment have been considerably circumscribed, and whose knowledge of human affairs is very small, you will not get the result that you would like to see where the people of a Democracy select from that Democracy representatives to carry out the ideas of the highly intelligent and trained minds of the community. I am a great believer in personal liberty from its very foundation principles. I have never seen compulsion exercised with good results, except that compulsion which is necessary for the preservation of good order and government. So far as the personal habits and customs of the people are concerned I have never known the exercise of compulsion to be of any use whatever. One has to regard the customs and habits of the people before one can think of interfering with them. The exercising of a vote is a very great responsibility, and the people must be trained to a full knowledge of what that responsibility consists of, if you want to get the best results in a Democracy such as we have. When I know that the liberty which we enjoy to-day is being threatened by one of the most formidable, one of the most treacherous, and one of the most unprincipled powers in the world, I rise, perhaps, to a greater conception and a full appreciation of the value of personal and national liberty. Any proposal to subvert that liberty, either by a Bill of this character, or by Bills which may be introduced in the future, will have my opposition, let the cost be what it may. I stand here to-day for personal liberty, and I should not like to see the liberty of any particular person invaded by the indorsement of a principle such as is contained in this measure. It is no use throwing a lasso over some innocent and unoffending

persons, dragging them to the ballot-box, and asking them to perform a duty which they may be unfitted to perform.

Mr. HOGAN.—You might state your views about conscription.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—My views on conscription have already been expressed.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—The honorable member for Stawell may, perhaps, be a little surprised to learn that I take an entirely different view from the view he takes on this question. I have always been in favour of compulsory voting. The honorable member for Stawell says it is an interference with the liberty of the subject. The interjection of the honorable member for Warrenheip answers that. The honorable member for Warrenheip asked what attitude the honorable member for Stawell assumed in regard to conscription?

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I worked for the preservation of liberty.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Surely the highest duty a citizen can perform is to vote for the men who are going to make the laws of the country. There are many matters in connexion with which the liberty of the subject has to be interfered with for the benefit of the general community. Those who advocated conscription took that view—that we should compel men to go and fight, and to lay down their lives for the benefit of the nation. We take the same view in regard to jurymen, and a great many people—I am not one of them—take that view with regard to vaccination. There are a great many things in connexion with which the liberty of the subject is interfered with for the benefit of the general community. It must be accepted, in the first place, that it is the duty of a citizen to vote. The honorable member who moved the second reading of the Bill pointed out that in spite of the facilities that are granted to people to vote, only 60 per cent. of the electors in the metropolis record their votes. That shows that 40 per cent. of the electors in the metropolis neglect their duty. The honorable member for Stawell argues that if people are compelled to vote, you will drag to the polling booths people who, on account of their lack of citizen education, are incompetent to discriminate and cast an intelligent vote. Surely the honorable member does not say that 40 per cent. of the electors are in that condition.

Mr. COTTER.—They are not in that condition so far as the Commonwealth elections are concerned.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—I do not agree with the view put forward by the honorable member for Stawell at all. There are many things that prevent people from voting. Some people are so engrossed with their own pleasures, and others with their own interests, that they neglect to perform their duty as citizens. It is not because they fail to realize it in some degree, but because other things come in, which make a sufficient demand upon them to induce them to neglect their duty to the State.

Mr. COTTER.—Quite a number of electors refuse to vote unless a motor car is sent to take them to the poll.

Mr. M. K. McKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—Yes. If such people were compelled to vote they would exercise their votes just as they do now, when they are taken to the booths in motor cars. In the country districts we have often to deplore that the farmers are so engrossed in putting in their crops, or taking them off, as the case may be, that they do not realize it is their duty to vote. They say, “I hope so-and-so will get in,” but they do not go and vote for him. However, they are becoming more wide awake, and are beginning to exercise the franchise more freely than they did years ago. Still there are a great many who neglect to perform their duty. Not only farmers, who might be regarded as Liberals, but workmen who might be assumed to vote on the Labour ticket, neglect this duty for some altogether insufficient reasons. If they went to the polling booth they would vote intelligently, and it would give them a deeper interest in the affairs of the country. They would be inclined afterwards to watch the effect of the vote which they had given, and they would take a little more interest in the man they had voted for. It seems to me that compulsory voting is the corollary to compulsory registration. If you compel a man to register you mean that you intend him to vote, but it is no use compelling him to register, and leaving it to his discretion as to whether he shall vote. The natural sequence is that you should compel a man to exercise the vote that you have imposed on him. Therefore, I think that this is a fair and reasonable proposition. When the honorable member for Gippsland West was a member of

the Bent Government, I think he introduced a measure for compulsory voting.

Mr. COTTER.—He made it applicable to both Houses.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—There were other differences. The honorable member for Richmond proposes to drag to Court the man who does not vote. I do not think that is desirable. Under the Bill brought in by the honorable member for Gippsland West the proposal was that if a man failed to record his vote he was penalized to the extent of 10s., unless he could show to the satisfaction of the inspector that he had a good reason for not voting. Failure to vote was automatically followed by the imposition of that fine which a man could only escape by proving that he had good and sufficient reason for not carrying out his duty. I would commend that idea to the honorable member for Richmond. I think it would be an improvement on dragging a man into the Court. It would be necessary to establish a great many Courts to deal with them all in that way.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—That is a matter which could be decided in Committee.

Mr. M. K. MCKENZIE (*Upper Goulburn*).—I hail with pleasure this proposition, which I think is a step in the right direction, and I intend to support the Bill.

Mr. ROGERS.—I also support the Bill. I regret that it has been necessary for a private member to bring forward a measure of this sort. I was sorry to hear the remarks of the honorable member for Stawell, who made such a stirring speech against the Bill. If the Government had been looking after the interests of the electors the introduction of such a measure by a private member would not have been necessary. My feeling is one of disgust that the Federal and State authorities have not come to some arrangement whereby, not only compulsory enrolment, but compulsory voting would operate throughout the Commonwealth. The whole thing should be taken out of the hands of the Victorian Government, and there should be one uniform roll. If the House does not give this Bill a favorable reception I hope that the Chief Secretary will at least see if something cannot be done by interviewing the Com-

monwealth electoral authorities with regard to obtaining a uniform roll.

Mr. MCLEOD.—I have already told the House that we have settled that in Conference, and that the Prime Minister has been asked to pass a measure so that we may also do so.

Mr. ELMSLIE.—What is to prevent us passing a Bill stating that the Commonwealth roll shall be the roll for the State?

Mr. MCLEOD.—There are districts which overlap.

Mr. ROGERS.—Something in that direction is certainly wanted. In my opinion, we should have something which is even in advance of the Bill which the honorable member for Richmond and myself are now submitting. Notwithstanding what has been said about voters who have been dragged to the poll striking out all the names on the ballot-papers, thus invalidating their votes, I am satisfied with the results achieved in Queensland when compulsory voting was in operation for the first time. About 88 per cent. of the men and 90 per cent. of the women in that State exercised the franchise.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Do you know the percentage of informal votes?

Mr. COTTER.—Speaking from memory, the percentage was about the same.

Mr. ROGERS.—I have not read the Queensland Act, and do not know whether it is the same as this measure. In Victoria to-day there are some cases in which the names of electors will be on half-a-dozen rolls. I know myself of some persons who are enrolled in three or four districts. If there is anything that will purify the rolls, it is surely a Bill of this description. A worker who is frequently moving from one suburb to another may be on three or four rolls, although he will only vote in the district in which he resides. Supposing a man was enrolled for Melbourne, Port Melbourne, and Richmond, and he voted in Melbourne. If this Bill were enforced the returning officers at Port Melbourne and Richmond, finding that he had not recorded his votes in those electorates would ask him for an explanation. Rather than be brought before the Court he would explain to the returning officers that he was now living in Melbourne and that he had voted in that constituency. That sort of thing would lead to the purification of the rolls. Possibly the fact that only 55 per cent. of the electors

voted at the last elections may be accounted for by the fact that many men were enrolled in two or three districts. On the new rolls, which have just been prepared in view of the coming elections, there may be 4,000 names more for a district than this time last year. In the district of Melbourne which I represent there are 3,500 more names on the new roll. That shows that little notice of the rolls is taken by electors except just before the elections. I agree with the honorable member for Upper Goulburn that possibly a provision under which a small penalty, say 5s., automatically followed failure to vote, would be better than bringing a man before the Court in every case, and if the Bill gets into Committee I believe the honorable member for Richmond would favour a proposition of that sort. I do not want to speak at any length on this Bill. I think it will be far better if the Minister will give us some indication whether he intends to accept it, and then we might go to a vote upon it. There is no reason, apparently, why the Government should not accept the Bill. Possibly they will tell the House that there is already a meeting arranged between the Commonwealth and the State Electoral Officers, with a view to bringing the Commonwealth and the State electoral laws up to date. That might be so. I remember three years ago, when we were dealing with the question of the quality of boots, that it became necessary for each State to pass an Act before the provisions it was desired to enforce could be applied. We were a long time waiting for that, and if we have to wait as long for an alteration in our electoral laws, it appears to me that we shall lose, to a large extent, the value of this Bill. This Bill is very simple, and nobody can complain of its provisions. If a man who does not desire to vote has an excuse that will satisfy the Returning Officer, he will not be brought before the Court at all. That will get over the difficulty which has been suggested by some honorable members who have spoken on this Bill. Clause 3 gives the elector the opportunity, as I have stated, to place his views before the Returning Officer if he has not been able to vote, and no difference is made so far as country and town are concerned. The information supplied by the honorable member for Richmond convinced us that it was absolutely

Mr. Rogers.

necessary to provide for compulsory voting. Although the Bill comes from this (the Opposition) side of the House, it cannot be said that we desire this legislation because it may work in the interests of the party I represent. At the last council election in Port Melbourne representatives of the Labour party were beaten, in some cases, possibly because certain regulations were adopted for doing away with plumping at municipal elections. I remember an occasion where it became necessary for one side or the other to vote for somebody they did not favour, because a sufficient number of candidates were not before the electors. But, in this case, it appears that nobody will suffer, because all that is required of anybody is that he shall vote. This Bill will purify our rolls, and I do not know of anything which will be more effective for that purpose. People shift from one suburb to another, and their names are not taken off the rolls of the districts they have left. Their names appear on the rolls sometimes for years, and the only way in which to get the rolls corrected is by adopting a measure such as this. A man will be asked why he did not vote in a certain constituency, and he will be able to point out that he had voted where he lived and where he was entitled to vote. His name will then be struck off the roll of the place in which he had previously lived, and no fine will be recorded against him. In that way the rolls will be brought up to date. I trust that the Bill will receive earnest consideration. It is no good saying that the matter it deals with is of no importance, and that, as no other State, except Queensland, has adopted this provision, we here should not adopt it, and that we should wait until the Commonwealth has brought in a similar law applying to the whole of Australia. I agree that the Commonwealth ought to have done that, but I think that at this stage we might pass this Bill, and wait for the Commonwealth to take action later.

Mr. Solly.—A Commonwealth Bill would only affect the Commonwealth electors.

Mr. ROGERS.—We do not propose to touch them, but I understand that there is a likelihood of the State Electoral Officers meeting the Commonwealth Electoral Officers to consider the question of making

the electoral laws uniform. But making our law uniform with the Commonwealth law would not be going far enough, because, while the Commonwealth provide for compulsory registration, they have not up to the present provided for compulsory voting. I hope that if the Government do not accept this Bill they will, at any rate, point out to the Electoral Officers, when they meet in conference, that they should deal with the question of compulsory voting. It may be said that some people will not be able to vote because their religion will not, in some cases, allow them. We provide for that.

Mr. SALLY.—Why should they keep back a good reform?

Mr. ROGERS.—We provide that if such people have a reasonable excuse they will not be brought before the Court. Although a fine of £2 is provided for in case an elector fails to vote, and has not a valid excuse, that is the maximum penalty, and the fine may be only a few shillings. The Government might allow this Bill to pass the second reading. I believe myself that a majority of honorable members in this House are favorable to the Bill. If that is the case, there is no reason why the Bill should not be passed through all stages, although it is a private member's Bill. During the nine years I have been in the House only three or four private members' Bills have been passed. They have often been talked out. It has been recognised that certain Bills were of great importance; but because they came from private members, the Government have had them postponed, knowing well that it would be impossible for them to be brought up again in the same session. Even though this Bill comes from a private member, the Government should recognise that it is not to secure any advantage for labour. It would not inflict injustice on any section of the community, and it would prove of great advantage, as we know from the results in Queensland, where from 80 to 90 per cent. of the electors voted at the only election so far held under the compulsory system. I hope we shall be able to take a vote on the second reading of this Bill this afternoon.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—I trust the Government will accept this Bill. We know that it is difficult to deal with people who do not record their votes. This cannot be regarded as a party measure. We

must deplore the fact that there are great variations in public opinion that result in great expense being incurred. A small number of people may vote at one election, and a larger number at the next election, and the expression of opinion is different. Those who brought in the conscription referendum seemed to justify themselves by the fact that certain elections had resulted in a certain way; but when the referendum was taken, an immensely greater number voted, and the attitude taken up previously was altered. If you look at our last elections you will find that the percentage of voters was as low as 35 in some places, and went up to between 80 and 90 in others. In my district, we consider it a big poll if from 60 to 70 per cent. of the electors record their votes. A greater number voted on the referendum. When the people do not record their votes as they should do, it results in increased expenditure through questions not being settled, and having to be voted on again. One remedy proposed is that those who do not vote should have their names removed from the roll. The trouble in connexion with that is that when the roll is next prepared the names of these people appear on it again. Of course, such voters could be disfranchised for three years, although I do not advocate that. Unless that is done, there is the expense of putting these people's names on the new rolls. Before we had voting by ballot, it was said that many people did not vote because they were afraid to vote openly. Voting by ballot was introduced in the hope that a much larger number would vote; but we find that the average number of voters is not very much greater than it was under open voting. There were fewer names on the roll in 1866, and they were all property-owners. When the first reform took place, manhood suffrage came in, but through some bungling in connexion with the rolls, plural voting was allowed. In my district, from 60 to 70 per cent. of the voters record their votes, and that is a big percentage. Nearly every one in the district votes. A large number of the electors in Allandale and Daylesford, for instance, leave those districts every year. They remove to other portions of the State, or they leave the State altogether. I established proof, and my conclusions were confirmed by others, that at least 25 per cent. of the voters in working-class constituencies

leave their districts every year. Many of these people find that their names are not on the roll in the districts they have removed to, and they do not apply to the district's they have left. It is hard to deal with these people. We should provide that a man should be able to vote wherever he is residing, so long as he can show that he did not go into the district with the avowed object of voting against some one. Let him exercise his vote as is done in Tasmania, or parts of Tasmania, in connexion with municipal elections. The voter has to take an affidavit that he is resident in the municipality, and then he is allowed to vote. Why cannot we have that system? It would obviate, to a large extent, the necessity for this Bill. We have had a Conference of State and Federal electoral officers sitting for some time in order to simplify the procedure, and lessen the expenditure in connexion with the rolls. The officers who attended this conference went there with certain instructions. They came to certain conclusions, and suggested an alteration in the law to simplify the procedure. Then there is the question of equal electorates. What is the good of talking about manhood suffrage when people's votes are not of the same value? Four electors in one district may have only the same voting power as one in the Premier's constituency, for instance. Four people in my district could only do the same with their votes as one in his district. Sixteen thousand or 17,000 people in my district have only the same power in returning a member of Parliament as 4,000 or 5,000 electors in another part of the State. I think the honorable member for Richmond did well in bringing this measure forward. It allows of a ventilation of the electoral question. I ask that this general question of reform shall be considered. We have been promised a Government measure to deal with the voting power, but during the last two or three Parliaments no step has been taken to redeem that promise. The present Bill is as mild as milk. It contains really no penalty clauses at all, because practically any excuse from any elector is to be accepted. A frequent excuse for not voting is that the people have left the district. They do not know the right way of ascertaining whether they are on the roll. In the first instance, there is a difficulty in seeing the roll, because it is not displayed in prominent

places. Then people may have left a district, and when they find they are not enrolled for their new place of residence they do not dream of looking up the roll for the district that they came from to see if their names are retained on that. All these excuses will be offered. A man may be excused for being ill, or he may be excused because he has been prevented from voting through the nature of his work. No punishment of any consequence is provided for except in a case where the elector is not able to offer a valid and sufficient excuse.

Mr. SALLY.—What would the honorable member for North Melbourne do if a voter wrote on the ballot paper—“There is no man standing in whom I am interested.”

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—I would not interfere with a man who cast an invalid vote. The conscience of a religious man, for instance, may prevent him from voting. He may say, “It is no duty of mine to deal with matters appertaining to this mundane sphere at all. All my interests are centred in the Bible, and I receive my instructions from that Book.” Such a man should not be interfered with. Why should he not be allowed to act in accordance with the state of his conscience? The point is that when we get a percentage of votes recorded of only 50 or 60 we are not getting a fair reflex of the mind of the people. In many instances a question is settled by a large vote that could have been settled earlier if the people had taken the trouble to go to the polling booth. Even from the point of view of experimental legislation, it would do no harm to adopt this measure, if it were only to see how it would work at one election. We know what was done with regard to preferential voting. We adopted that principle. Some of the members on the Ministerial side of the House stated positively that it was a step in experimental legislation. They were taking it, hoping that some better system would be evolved. Personally, I do not think it has been a great improvement. What we want to arrive at is solid majority rule. We simply created more difficulties, and transferred to future years the settlement of a question that could have been decided before this if that system had not been introduced. I think the Chief Secretary ought to give this measure fair consideration. It ought to have been made a Cabinet matter before this,

so that we should know positively whether the Ministry are for or against offering us a measure of electoral reform. They have not yet honoured the promise they gave us years ago, and do not seem inclined to honour it. I do not think that this measure will encompass all that we desire, but it will go a long way in the right direction. If we adopt this Bill we shall be doing something towards attaining a better reflex of the mind of the people than we get at the present time. The operation of the measure will not be expensive, and it will tend to the public benefit in the near future. Have the Government received any recommendations as the result of the conference between the Electoral Officers? The Commonwealth have not adopted compulsory voting, but I believe they are on the verge of adopting it. Two or three systems have been considered, and it is likely that in the near future a system of compulsory voting will be adopted. Whilst under this Bill all kinds of excuses would be accepted, I think that the result would be that many electors who do not vote now would cast their votes in order to obviate the necessity of furnishing excuses for refraining from voting. It is not a party measure, as no party interests are involved. At one time, as a result of a big poll, Labour succeeds in obtaining power. At another time, when there is a big poll, the Liberal party is successful. The measure, therefore, is one which aims at getting the full voice of public opinion.

Mr. SINCLAIR.—I should like to go a little further than the honorable member for North Melbourne in support of the Bill. He asked the Chief Secretary to fairly consider this measure. I would like the Ministry to put it into operation at once. Nothing contained in it is calculated to injure any one. But it will have the effect of making a member of this House feel, after his election, more honoured because of the better expression that will be given to the will of the people. We have all had occasion to notice the general apathy on the part of the public during elections. It must be obvious that where the percentage of voters at an election is only 49 or 50 of the total we are not getting a proper expression of public opinion, although one candidate may be returned by an enormous majority over another candidate. There is no reason to feel alarmed in putting this measure

into operation. This State, I believe, had the honour of being the first portion of the British dependencies to bring in the ballot system of voting. At that time this system was looked upon as experimental. That system has been copied now by practically every people in the civilized world. That was a good reform to bring about, and we would not go back on it now. So far, Queensland is the only State in the Commonwealth which has gone in for compulsory voting, and an analysis of the votes at the last election shows that 88 per cent. of the male, and 90 per cent. of the female, voters exercised the franchise. The idea of compelling people to vote is to make them take a greater interest in political matters. The galleries in this Chamber are invariably empty, which shows that the electors take no interest in our work in the House. If they were compelled to vote, the probabilities are that they would attend the debates in this House, and learn something more as to what Parliament is doing. By watching the proceedings in this House, they would be better qualified to exercise their vote at the elections. I hope the Government will not show any hesitation in adopting the principle contained in this Bill, and agree to the measure being passed at once. The penalties which are imposed are by no means severe, and any elector who could make a reasonable excuse for not having voted would readily escape the payment of a fine.

Mr. McLEOD (Chief Secretary).—I have listened attentively to the arguments which have been advanced by the various speakers, and I should like to intimate briefly what is the present position in regard to the amendment of our electoral laws. As honorable members know, a conference of Chief Electoral Officers of the various States considered the question of arriving at a scheme whereby the Commonwealth and the State rolls could be made up on the same basis. The conference agreed upon a scheme, and a Bill to give effect to the recommendations has been in my possession for eighteen months. Nothing, however, can be done until the Commonwealth Government have passed a Bill on this subject, because the proposals make considerable alterations in the electoral legislation of both the Commonwealth and the States.

Mr. ROGERS.—Is there any provision for compulsory voting in that Bill?

Mr. MCLEOD.—I am not at liberty to say what is in the Bill. The Premier has seen the Prime Minister on two occasions on this subject, and the Prime Minister has promised to introduce a Bill into the Federal Parliament at the earliest possible opportunity. The continuance of the war and other matters have so congested legislative proposals in the Federal Parliament that it has not been possible to bring in a Bill on this subject up to the present. I give the honorable member every credit for the trouble he has taken in preparing this Bill, and for the arguments he advances in favour of it, but in view of what I have already said, it is not advisable for us to further deal with the matter now. When the honorable member for Richmond was referring to the question of penalties, he suggested that not much expenditure would be involved in carrying out the provisions of this Bill. I do not think he has quite gone into this matter, or he would not have made such a statement. Suppose 75 per cent. of the electors voted, that would mean that 205,000 would be defaulters if this Bill became law.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I think you are wrong with your figures.

Mr. MCLEOD.—The rolls which have just been compiled contain the names of 818,881 voters. Supposing a quarter do not vote, that will leave, in round numbers, 205,000 who will be called upon to show cause why they have not voted.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The numbers the honorable gentleman has given includes the names of persons who are on more than one roll.

Mr. MCLEOD.—I am taking the rolls as they stand. It is probable that, since they were compiled, some people have become of age and entitled to vote, and some of those whose names were on the roll have died. Honorable members will see that the Bill would impose upon the Chief Electoral Officer the duty of sending notices to 205,000 defaulters, and possibly three or four notices would go to one person if his name was on more than one roll. However, I do not propose to further discuss the details of this measure, and I am going to ask the House to agree to the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. ROGERS.—Can we get any intimation when the Bill is likely to come before the Federal Parliament?

Mr. MCLEOD.—We can get nothing beyond the Prime Minister's statement that he will bring it on at the first opportunity.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—That is a pretty weak promise to rely on.

Mr. MCLEOD.—Whether it is weak or strong, that is all we have to go upon. I do not think it is advisable that we should alter one of the vital principles of our electoral law now, in view of the extensive alterations which it is proposed to make as soon as the Commonwealth deals with this matter. I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

Mr. WARDE.—The reasons given by the Chief Secretary for the adjournment of this debate are not satisfactory to me. I believe more than two years have elapsed since the conference was convened by the Federal and State Governments to deal with this matter. I have heard on pretty good authority that compulsory voting was one of the recommendations of the conference. The Chief Secretary has told us that on account of the war and other important matters, there has not been time to deal with a measure of this sort.

Mr. MCLEOD.—That is the Prime Minister's excuse, not ours.

Mr. WARDE.—We are not compelled to await action by the Federal Parliament before we interfere with our electoral machinery. The idea of the conference of the Chief Electoral Officers was that there should be a uniform system of compiling rolls, and that the boundaries of the State electorates would conform as nearly as possible to those of the Federal electorates. It was hoped that savings could be effected in the compilation of the rolls if these arrangements were made, but the principle of compulsory voting is another matter, and the view of the State Parliament may be entirely different to that of the Commonwealth Parliament. It may be that the law of the Commonwealth would not provide for the compulsory system of voting, and that would not be satisfactory to me. It is over thirty years since a compulsory voting Bill was first introduced in this Parliament. Such a measure was introduced by the late Duncan Gillies and his Government over thirty years ago,

within my own knowledge. They proposed to make voting compulsory. The matter has been hung up ever since, and the Government have always some reason to give why it should not be brought forward. Whenever there is an election, and a Labour man is successful, we are told that the reason is that the Liberals, the Conservatives, and the Tories do not take sufficient interest in the matter to go and vote.

Mr. McLEOD.—The Bent Ministry introduced a compulsory voting Bill.

Mr. WARDE.—That is so. It is always said that the time is inopportune for passing such a measure. In fact, it simply amounts to this: That it is not worth while a private member to bring forward a measure because the Government are always opposed to his going to a division and getting the opinion of the House upon it. If I were the honorable member for Richmond, I would have a division on the motion for the adjournment of the debate rather than agree to a postponement. I do not think the proposal of the Chief Secretary meets the requirements of the situation at all. I think the time has arrived when the people of this community ought to be informed that it is their duty to vote, without our having to beg and pray of them, and spend thousands of pounds in the aggregate, in getting motor cars and other vehicles to take them to the polling booths to do their duty. The present state of affairs simply plays into the hands of the wealthy section of the community, and that is the reason why they do not want compulsory voting. The people who support the Government can find motor cars to bring their crowd up in dozens to the polling booths, whereas the representatives of the unfortunate workers have a great difficulty to get sick people, and old and infirm people, to go to the polling booths. I think the time has arrived when the change that is proposed should be made. The citizen has a duty cast upon him. Not so long ago the right to vote was regarded as a privilege, and people fought for it. To-day we have a number of people worrying themselves to death about getting other people to go and vote. I feel that the time has arrived when compulsory voting should be made part and parcel of the law of this country. I do not think that the excuse made by the Chief Secretary that he is waiting for the Commonwealth Government to do

something carries any weight. I do not care whether the Commonwealth Government introduces compulsory voting or not. I want it to be done in this State, and I am prepared to vote for it every time the question comes up.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—I am very sorry the Chief Secretary has taken up the attitude he has taken up, because I thought we should be able to get a vote on this measure to-day. I remember that during the last election most honorable members of this House, and particularly those on the Ministerial side, were in favour of compulsory voting. They complained that we had not compulsory voting, although their own party had been in power all the time. Their party is still in power. The reason given by the Chief Secretary for adjourning the debate does not appeal to me at all. Assuming that the Federal Parliament do agree to a uniform system of compiling the rolls, it has nothing to do with us as a State Parliament whether they accept compulsory voting or not. Queensland has not waited for the Federal Parliament. Why should we wait? Why should the Victorian Parliament be always marking time and saying, "By your leave," to the Federal Parliament? We are still a sovereign State. Why not exercise the powers which are with us yet, as long as we have them? Being anxious and enthusiastic in the advocacy of measures during election time, and then making paltry excuses why they should not be passed when we are here to do the work, does not appeal to me at all. I am awfully sorry the Government have taken up such a position as they have taken up. My own opinion is that there would be very little expense involved in connexion with compulsory voting. I think that the figures given as to the number of electors who vote are misleading. So far as my own district is concerned, they are misleading for this reason: In one portion of my electorate there is a very large number of boarding-houses, and they always contain a large floating population. If you get a 50 per cent. vote of the electors on the roll in that portion, you probably get a 75 per cent. vote of the available electors, so that it is not a bad percentage after all. In the metropolitan area, where the polling booths are quite convenient to the people, the percentage of voters to electors is lower than in the country. I account for it largely by the

fact that in the city we have such a large floating population. The reasons given for the adjournment of the debate do not appeal to me at all. If the Government are in earnest, and want to pass the measure, why should they not do it? We have been waiting three or four years at least for the Commonwealth Government to do something. We have no guarantee that they will do it. Why wait when we have no need to wait? There would be reason for waiting if we anticipated that they would do something in the near future, but we do not anticipate it. I do not think it is even necessary that we should wait for the Federal Parliament to act in connexion with having a uniform system of compiling the rolls. The printing office is our own. We do the work for the Federal Parliament. We share the expense with them. But when their rolls are compiled they are available to us, and all we have to do is to change the districts. Every elector's name is there, and all we have to do is to adjust the boundaries. That does not require an Act of Parliament. The Government could do it by regulation if they cared to do it. There is no need to wait for the Federal Parliament to act. The reason given for adjourning the debate does not appear to me to be anything more than an excuse for not passing the Bill. Under the circumstances, I oppose the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. SOLLY.—I understood the Chief Secretary to urge the House to adjourn the debate because it was desirable that all the States, as well as the Commonwealth Parliament, should come into line. I do not think that makes any difference so far as this measure is concerned at all. No matter what system of voting, what system of districts, or what system of rolls the Commonwealth Government and the State Governments may agree to, it will not alter the question of whether compulsory voting should be adopted by this State, New South Wales, or the Commonwealth Government individually. As a matter of fact, I contend that we can adopt compulsory voting, and that then the conference of the Commonwealth and State representatives can recommend any system of roll compilation, or any system of voting that they choose. I trust that, under the circumstances, the Chief Secretary will withdraw his opposition to a vote being taken to-day on the Bill, which, I contend, is a strictly democratic

measure. We want to have a reflex of the people's opinion in this House. Not only that, but we want to get the people to take the keenest interest in every law that is carried, so that our Statutes will be a reflex of the opinions of the people. The result will be that a greater number of people will obey the laws of the country because they will agree with them. There are some people who disagree with various laws that are passed, and some of the laws remain dormant. They are not administered. Why they have been carried I do not know. As the honorable member for Flemington has stated, this agitation has been going on for over thirty years. He says he quite well remembers Duncan Gillies advocating compulsory voting throughout the length and breadth of Victoria. Duncan Gillies was a brainy man—one of the cleverest legislators, I suppose, we have ever had in this State. He was a man who was respected for his broadmindedness.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (Fitzroy).—He was put into Parliament by the working miners.

Mr. SOLLY.—Yes. The other side made a bold bid for him and captured one of the brainiest men we had at that time. The honorable member for Flemington says that this agitation has been going on for thirty years. Since then Governments have come and gone, and although each has said that it believed in compulsory voting not one of them has introduced the system. I suppose that the honorable member will die before this Government carries out that promise, and that I shall pass away long before that day. It is undoubtedly a serious thing for the people that public men and Governments should refuse to carry out their promises. It engenders in the electors a feeling of disgust with politicians and parties. In order to create a better feeling and induce the people to take a keener interest in political doings a compulsory voting law should be placed on our statute-book. I cannot understand the Leader of the Government being opposed to this. In his own heart I do not believe that he really is opposed to it, but he is led by others perhaps not so democratic as he is. I was referring to the fact that the late Mr. Duncan Gillies advocated a system of compulsory voting.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (Fitzroy).—He did not stick to it.

Mr. SOLLY.—He was like the honorable gentleman who is now leading the Government. He was pulled here, there and everywhere because he was not firm enough to withstand the various influences brought to bear on him. Unfortunately thirty years have passed and compulsory voting has not been adopted. The honorable member for Flemington has grown from a black-haired boy to a grey-headed old man, yet, apparently, he is living in hopes that he will some day see a Liberal Government carry out its pledges.

Mr. WARDE.—This will have to come from Labour.

Mr. SOLLY.—I think so, too. At all events I trust that the Government will now allow a vote on the Bill to be taken so that we will be able to place it on the statute-book. I trust that the Chief Secretary will not only withdraw his opposition to the measure being proceeded with now, but that he will persuade the Premier and the other honorable gentlemen associated with him on the Treasury bench to cast in their lot with the honorable member for Richmond.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—I think that the request of the Chief Secretary is a very reasonable one. There is hardly an honorable member who anticipated that this Bill would come on for serious discussion to-day. To attempt to rush it through now would be prejudicial even from the point of view of those who support it. With all due respect to the honorable member for Flemington, I think that the reasons given by the Chief Secretary for the adjournment of the debate were very good ones. A conference took place between Federal and State electoral officers. It is true, as the honorable member for Flemington said, that the primary object was to simplify present methods, and dispense with the necessity for two sets of rolls.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (Fitzroy).—That does not affect this question.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—In addition there were other proposals which we cannot disclose. At the Premiers' Conference early this year we impressed on the Prime Minister that the State Governments were being blamed for certain expenditure in connexion with the Electoral Departments, and that they could not legislate in the matter until the Commonwealth had passed the necessary measure.

Mr. WARDE.—As a matter of fact, Tasmania has already done so.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Tasmania did it long before the Conference. In my opinion the Chief Secretary's point is a good one, that we should not tinker with the electoral laws. He has not said that the Government are going to oppose the Bill, but has simply moved for the adjournment of the debate. Honorable members on this (the Ministerial) side of the House have not discussed the measure at any length. I suggest that the Chief Secretary's proposal should be agreed to, and I will promise to again wait on the Prime Minister and urge him to pass the Commonwealth Bill. I think I could confidently approach the Prime Minister on behalf of not only Victoria but the other States that are waiting for the passage of Commonwealth legislation.

Mr. WARDE.—Will you give the honorable member for Richmond an opportunity of having this Bill dealt with before the session closes?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I would not promise that.

Mr. WARDE.—Will you tell him that you intend to have the elections, say, on the 7th November, and that there will be an opportunity of putting the measure through before then?

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The honorable member for Richmond will certainly have an opportunity of dealing with it again.

Mr. WARDE.—If it does not apply to the next elections it means that it will not be brought into operation for three years.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I know that honorable members have not many opportunities for private business.

Mr. SOLLY.—Well, give him a chance.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—I will do my best, and urge the Prime Minister to have the Commonwealth Bill passed. I understand that Senator Russell is in charge of the Bill.

Mr. COTTER.—Not now.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Well, I will have a talk to the Prime Minister about it. This is one of the points continually referred to at public meetings by those who criticise the expenditure of the State. No one wants to spend money unnecessarily, and I promise to again interview the Prime Minister about the matter.

Mr. COTTER.—I am sorry that the Chief Secretary did not consent to the measure being proceeded with a little further. If we had been permitted to

take it to the second reading that would not have advanced the measure very much, it would have shown that we were not fooling in connexion with it. We have wasted the best part of the day, and now towards the end of the sitting it is proposed to adjourn the debate. All I desire is to show the public that we are in earnest about the Bill. Is the House going to turn down the proposition without any justification because the Commonwealth Parliament has not done anything?

Mr. McLEOD.—I did not turn it down. I expressed no opinion about the Bill itself.

Mr. COTTER.—It is urged because the Commonwealth Parliament has not done something that we must not.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (Fitzroy).—We are asked not to kill the Bill by turning it down, but only to put it to sleep.

Mr. COTTER.—I have not exactly grasped what the Chief Secretary's objections are. The Premier's proposal was certainly more concrete. If honorable members on the Ministerial side of the House are prepared to adopt a system of compulsory voting the Bill could be amended in Committee to suit the wishes of the House. I think the least the Government can do is to allow the Bill to pass the second reading. I am not sure that I should be doing the proper thing in accepting the assurance of the Government, and so let people think that I have merely been fooling in bringing this Bill forward. Under the circumstances, I will oppose the adjournment. Let us have a division upon it. I do not want it to appear in the press that we have been wasting all the time since this morning without the intention of doing anything. If the Government will give me the second reading, I am prepared to take my chance with regard to the later stages. I am anxious that Parliament should show that it has done something to-day.

Mr. SALLY.—We should have had the card system to-day.

Mr. COTTER.—If Taylor's card system had been in operation in this House to-day, not only would this Bill have been on the statute-book by now, but the following Bill in regard to day baking would also have been passed. I think we might as well have the division. At any rate, I shall be no worse off.

The House divided on the motion for the adjournment of the debate—

Ayes	19
Noes	17

Majority for the adjournment of the debate ..	2
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AYES.

Mr. Barnes	Mr. McLeod
„ Beardmore	„ Menzies
„ Bowser	„ Outtrim
„ A. F. Cameron	Sir Alexander Peacock
„ Deany	Mr. Pennington
„ Gordon	„ Purnell
„ Livingston	„ Rouget.
„ Mackey	Tellers:
„ McDonald	Mr. J. Gray
„ M. K. McKenzie	„ Toutcher.

NOES.

Mr. Bailey	Mr. Rogers
„ J. W. Billson	„ Sinclair
„ Blackburn	„ D. Smith
„ Clough	„ Solly
„ Cotter	„ Tunnecliffe
„ Elmslie	„ Warde.
„ Hannah	Tellers:
„ Hogan	Mr. Lemmon
„ Prendergast	„ Webber.

The debate was then adjourned until Thursday, September 27.

DAY BAKING BILL.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (Fitzroy) moved the second reading of this Bill. He said—I am sorry that we have to bring on this Bill at so late an hour. If the Government are determined to adjourn the House at 4 o'clock, I do not know whether I shall be able to get through what I desire to say. However, I will try. The question of day baking is one of extreme interest to the people of this State. We have had a large number of disputes between employers and employees in this trade, which have sometimes resulted in strikes. The last one we had lasted a couple of months. These strikes have caused a great amount of inconvenience and a considerable amount of hardship, and very bad feeling was engendered, and, altogether, no useful purpose was served, except to bring before the public the facts relating to this particular system of work. My own opinion is that no work should be done at night-time that can as conveniently be done in the day-time, and I think that every reasonable man ought to fall in with that view. I do not know of any system that is more disastrous to home life than that of the breadwinner having

to go to work at night, just when his wife and family are going to bed. These bakers are in a very peculiar position. Some of them are married men with large families, and they never see their children except at odd intervals, such as holiday times. One wonders that the system of night baking, which was introduced with the formation of large towns, has continued to exist so long. Customs die very, very hard. I remember one custom in England that lasted for hundreds of years, and that was the system of chimney cleaning. They used to have little boys to do the work. The boy got on a ladder and went to the top of the roof and swept the chimney. There was such a large number of boys killed that eventually an Act of Parliament prevented their employment at this work. There was a great outcry in England against the discontinuance of the system. They declared that it was not possible to do the work in any other way. The children had to be young and small to do the work, and were fairly well paid, according to the standard of payment of the times, so that even the parents cried out against this alteration of the law that prevented them from augmenting their scanty incomes. To-day we have completely changed that. If a reform can be effected without injury to any person, it should be effected. If it is in the interests of the general community, their welfare must be served, even if one or two capitalists are injured in the process. In the case of day baking no one is injured. Here we have a system of baking prevailing that no person would voluntarily follow as a means of earning a living. If any man were offered the alternative of doing the work in the night-time or the day-time, I do not think any man, especially with a family, would prefer the night-time. All the pleasures are in the evening, and all the recreation is in the day-time, when the baker is in bed and asleep. It appears to me that this kind of work is fit for criminals only, and that it should only be regarded as a punishment. It should not be followed as an ordinary means of earning a livelihood by honest men. The feeling in favour of the abolition of night baking is growing throughout the world. During the last strike here a great change took place. Between sixty and seventy employers adopted the day-work system, and worked

it for two months without injury to themselves, and without injury to the general public. Many of them were hopeful that the strike would succeed, because the whole of their competitors would be on the same list, with the exception of a few who employ no labour. They would have been left out, and would have been a menace to those who adopted the day-labour system. The sole menace is that they would be able to advertise their bread as bread baked in the night-time, as though it were superior. As a matter of fact, it is not. The strike method could only have secured a partial success, where an Act of Parliament will achieve a complete success, because it will place every employer on exactly the same footing. There were many objections raised, and I propose to answer them. One was that the bread baked in the day-time was not as good. It is equally as good, as I shall demonstrate. Then, again, there was the objection that there would be disadvantage in connexion with the carting and delivery. I shall prove later that the hours of carting and delivering, where day baking is taking place, are exactly the same as in connexion with night baking. Then there is the health point of view, and I should say that no man is healthy who breaks the laws of nature. It is unnatural for a man to work at night and sleep in the day-time. A man cannot be healthy unless he follows the natural course. This system is a perversion of that natural course, with the result that the health of the men is, to a large extent, broken down. Then there is the matter of the disorganization of the family, to which I have referred. There is a large percentage of juvenile labour engaged in the trade. We have youths working all night and sleeping or loafing all day. That is a bad system, and has great disadvantages. Is it more profitable? We have evidence that it is not more profitable to the employer, but, on the contrary, reports demonstrate that it is a gain to the employer to work the day system, because the men are more alert and do better and more work in a cleaner fashion. Therefore, the objection to day baking is merely a sentimental one. I should say that night baking was most immoral. These youths go to work at night. They work all night. They leave their work in the early hours of the morning. They are ostracised from other men, in

every shape and form, and they are subjected to great temptation that should not be put in the way of youths. In Great Britain they are already considering the question of abolishing night baking altogether. Let me read the following:

In the London *Daily News* of 8th March, under the heading "No New Bread," it is reported that Lord Devonport, the Imperial Food Controller, has issued an order that "on and after Monday next no baker can sell or expose for sale any bread less than twelve hours old." This will mean that, in the majority of cases, the bread delivered to the householder will be from eighteen to thirty hours old, while at the week-end (unless Sunday baking is adopted) the bread delivered on the Monday may be anything from forty to 50 hours old.

They are adopting it there. It is purely a war measure, but it has produced this result—that men who are continuously engaged in a particular calling get used to it, they do not know anything better, and they want to continue that particular system. It was the same in the old slavery days. When the abolition of slavery became an accomplished fact, some of the emancipated slaves begged their masters to retain them under the old conditions. When they were compelled to accept their freedom they asked that they might be kept on as employees without salary. When the change in the hours of baking took place in Great Britain the men had to work in the daytime instead of at night. After so working for a while, they came to a certain conclusion. This is the result. We find in the *Herald* of August 31, under the head-lines "Bakers Threaten Strike: Night Work Opposed," the following cable message:—

London bakers have decided to strike unless night work is abolished.

Therefore, they have made up their minds that what was instituted as a war measure shall be continued. In normal times, that is, they will not go back to night work. That means that if the British Government do not bring in a Bill to prevent it they will have a great strike in the large centres in Great Britain. My own opinion is that that should not be necessary. We may learn something perhaps from our enemies. After all, we have many lessons to learn from them, and we ought not to refuse to learn the lessons simply because they come from an enemy country. *The Board*

of Trade Labour Gazette for March, 1917, contains the following:—

PROHIBITION OF NIGHT WORK IN AUSTRIAN BAKERIES.

According to a statement in the issue of *Die Zeit* for 11th February, the Austrian Government has decided to forbid night work in bakeries. The Order will not come into force until the middle of May, 1917, so that bakers may have time to make the necessary re-arrangements. For the present the Order is to be regarded as a war measure, but the official communication announcing the issue indicates that the Government intends to make preparations for permanent legislation to secure the object of the Order. The new measure affects all bakeries and confectionery making establishments, as well as all hotels, coffee-houses, &c., which produce bread, cakes, &c., for consumption on or off the premises. Work between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. is prohibited as a general rule. . . Provisional administrative authorities are empowered to modify the time limits in the whole or in any part of their jurisdiction, so that night work may be prohibited between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. The same authorities are empowered, upon the application of employers, to sanction night work in cases of unforeseen interruptions of businesses, due to causes beyond human control. The number of such cases, however, must not exceed thirty in any one year. The National Food Supply Department, moreover, is empowered to grant temporary exemptions in the operation of the Order to specified bakers or to all bakers in a particular district when that course appears to be necessary for the purpose of insuring a sufficient supply of bread for the Army or for the civilian population. It is intended that the last-mentioned provision shall obviate all difficulties that may be met with locally owing to temporary interruptions in the delivery of corn and flour.

We see that even in Austria the war has brought about a very similar result. The day-baking system was initiated as a war measure, and the result is a determination to make it a permanent measure, thus recognising the good effect of the change. We are not without examples of the beneficial effects of day baking in Australia. In the neighbouring States of South Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland the day-baking system has already been adopted, and after considerable experience of it we are informed none of them desire to go back to night work. As the result of inquiries, we find this: That where it has been in operation the longest, in Queensland, there is not the least objection to day baking. That has been our experience of all reform legislation. We had exactly the same experience in connexion with our Factories legislation. The first twelve months were months of bitter hostility. The Premier knows that we had deputation after deputation, meeting after

meeting, urging that it should be restricted, and that an inquiry should be made. After the first twelve months the opposition gradually died away until the most bitter opponents of the Act became its firmest friends. I believe we should have the same experience if we passed a Bill which would bring in the day-baking system. I have a letter before me from Mr. E. A. Axelsen, who is the secretary of the Milling, Baking, Cooking and Allied Trades Employees Union of Queensland. In that letter he says:—

In reply to your inquiry as to whether day baking is working satisfactorily in this State, I have pleasure in stating that both employers and employees are quite satisfied, and would not think of reverting to the old order of night work.

The master bakers who, prior to the introduction of day baking, were most bitter against the reform, are now fully convinced that work in the day for them is far preferable.

The hours I am proposing in the Bill are exactly the same as the hours which were agreed upon in the Bakers' and Carters' Award in New South Wales. They are as follows:—

(i) Eight o'clock in the morning and eight o'clock in the evening on any day on which a supply for only one day is made or baked;

(ii) Eight o'clock in the morning and ten o'clock in the evening on any day on which a supply for only two days is made or baked; or

(iii) Eight o'clock in the morning and twelve o'clock in the evening on any day on which a supply for more than two days is made or baked.

When we come to South Australia we find that, in an Industrial Court judgment, his Honour (Mr. President Jethro Brown) gave a very comprehensive finding. He dealt with quite a large number of items that had been submitted to him, and he determined that day baking should come into operation. To take the principal headings only, His Honour considered the following matters:—The decision of the Commonwealth Court; the contest between master bakers and operatives; the case for the master bakers; baking industry governed by laws as opposed to the voluntary system; the cost of production; day and night bakers' competition; large businesses favoured (it was urged that large businesses would be favoured, and this was found not to be the case); day-baked bread will increase consumption; the family baker; large businesses will not suffer; the case for the operatives; health; educational, and social; the home; the interference with home life; the doughman; long dough and

short dough; dough makers compared with operatives; bread carters; no decrease in the number of bread carters; baking trades favour day work; the public; day baking will not decrease demand. All these matters were very fully dealt with by His Honour in a comprehensive report, and he dealt with them in a masterly manner. In the course of the judgment His Honour said—

The Commonwealth Court has no power to establish a common rule.

That is to say, he could only deal with the litigants before the Court. He could not make it apply to the persons in that particular business who were not employing labour. The President of the Court went on—

The learned Judge said, "I have no power to bind a person or persons not joined either as claimants or respondents to the present application." Any one who reads the decision of the learned Judge with care must feel that he was seriously influenced by the fact that if he gave an award in favour of day baking it would only bind the parties to the proceedings. Other employers not joined would not be bound by his award. They could continue night baking, and thus put the employers bound by the award at a serious disadvantage in competition.

Again he says—

I am inclined to the opinion that the exceptional inconveniences or expenses to which certain business firms would be subjected if day baking were introduced would be mostly of a transitional character. I do not think such emphasis would have been laid on them in evidence and argument but for the fear of competition on the part of family bakers and on the part of master bakers not members of the respondent association.

A little further on, in dealing with another phase of this matter, he remarked—

In any case, should it appear that the interests of master bakers are being unfairly prejudiced by the competition of the family baker, it would be possible for Parliament, by legislation, to provide that all baking must be done in the day time. The practical difficulties of enforcing such legislation would be by no means insuperable if, for example, the burden of proof in proceedings for a breach of the law were imposed on the vendor of the bread.

These are some of the reasons that he gave in the course of his judgment which has produced happy results in South Australia. From Queensland I have this communication also from Mr. Axelsen—

Prior to the coming into operation of the Industrial Arbitration Act of 1916, which now controls industrial matters throughout Queensland by means of a Court of Industrial Arbitration, all awards were governed by Industrial Boards. These Boards were

similar to the Wages Boards you have in Victoria, and their method of business is practically the same. The first division to obtain provision for day baking was the central, where this system has been in operation for some years. This was the first place where day baking was inaugurated by award throughout Australia, and the division includes principally the cities of Rockhampton, Mount Morgan, and Mackay.

Honorable members will see that day baking had been in operation for some years in three towns in Queensland, and because of its success there it was extended to the whole of the State. If it had not been a success, the system would have been dropped altogether. Now I come to our own State. While I cannot say the Government were sympathetic to the day-baking system, they were anxious to ascertain the facts, and sent the Chief Inspector of Factories to those States in which the system was in operation to make impartial inquiries and to present a report. The Government did all they could with the machinery at their disposal to bring about day baking, or, at any rate, to settle the dispute between the employers and the employees. The trouble was that the employees submitted the following rates of pay per hour at a meeting of the Wages Board with a view to getting day-work in the trade:—

ORDINARY NIGHTS.

	Foreman or Single Hand.	Persons not Provided for Elsewhere.	s. d.	s. d.
Between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. ...	10	0	10	0
Between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. ...	1	9	1	7

DOUBLE NIGHT.

(i.e., Nights on which more than one day's consumption is produced.)

Between 10 p.m. and 8 a.m. ...	10	0	10	0
Between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. ...	1	9	1	7

TREBLE NIGHTS.

(Nights on which bread for more than two days' consumption is produced.)

Between 12 midnight and 8 a.m. ...	10	0	10	0
Between 8 a.m. and 12 midnight ...	1	9	1	7

Jobbers (i.e., casual workers engaged for 24 hours or less in any one week), 2s. per hour for work done between the hours that 1s. 9d. and 1s. 7d. is paid to constant hands, and between other hours 10s., the same as constant hands.

If these rates had been adopted, they would have made night baking prohibitive, because the employers could not have afforded to pay them. That was the idea in suggesting the rates which I have men-

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tioned. Mr. Bolton, the Chairman of the Board, would not agree to this scheme, because he said he would not take the responsibility of bringing about day baking. He urged that that should be done by Parliament. Mr. Bolton was not opposed to the work being done during the day-time, but he declined to be a party to imposing prohibitive rates for night baking. I have not spoken to Mr. Bolton on the subject, but I have discussed the matter with other members of the Board, and I understand that one of the facts which weighed with Mr. Bolton was that he could not enforce these rates on what are known as family shops, where the employer has only his own and the labour of members of his family to assist him in carrying out his trade. The factories legislation would not apply to him, and consequently he could not be called upon to pay the extra wages sought to be imposed upon those who went in for night baking. I think Mr. Bolton was quite right in the attitude he took up, and the only question we have to consider is whether this Parliament should do what he refused to do. We have power to grapple with the difficulties which Mr. Bolton could not deal with. Some trouble has been experienced in connexion with country bakers. We have been told that some bakers in the country are strongly opposed to day baking. We all know that there are bound to be bakers in the country strongly opposed to anything in the way of a change, and the same remark may be made about some of those who carry on their business in the metropolis. I have a letter from a man in Kyabram which deals, incidentally, with this matter. While writing to the secretary of his union on another subject, he remarked—

I am doing day work here; in fact, both shops are. I often think of the *Age* and their stale bread. We have one country round here only served twice a week, and we have had no complaints.

In the nice little township of Kyabram there are two bakeries, both of which work in the day-time. Some bread is delivered twice a week, and there are no complaints in regard to the quality of the bread. In this case the change was made without an Act of Parliament. Surely what can be done in Kyabram can be done here. The Premier ought to remember Kyabram as the home of the great reform movement.

In this case it appears to me they have initiated a reform of a real, live, beneficial character. It may be said that there will be some objections to the proposed change. Of course there will be some objections to it, and I may explain how those objections will be brought about. I have a letter addressed to the master bakers from the Master Bakers' Association, Collins-street, and it is signed "T. Swift." I am not quite sure, but I think I remember Mr. Swift as one of the strikers in the great railway strike. I may be mistaken. This is what he states in his letter—

The returns asked for from sixty-seven bakers *re* flat rates for country bread should reach the Prices Commission on the 9th inst. I will see the Commissioner personally and use my best efforts on your behalf. This is expensive and difficult work, which will enormously assist you individually. Therefore I trust non-members will assist the association by promptly joining.

Of course, later on the writer asks for a contribution to the funds. It will be seen that he is trying to work up an agitation for the retention of the present price of bread, and, amongst other things, he says, "I will see the Commissioner personally, and use my best efforts." The letter goes on—

The abolition of the Country Wages Board surely interests you, that is being dealt with by Parliament now, and a private Bill providing for day work for bakers will be introduced at any time. Please write to your State member telling him you are opposed to day work and also the abolition of the Country Wages Board, and give your reasons.

I do not think he quite meant that, but it is there.

Advise me so that I can call on your member. Now is the time to act. I hope to have the prompt assistance of every one. If I get your support you will get my best efforts. If I don't get it the outlook for the trade is bad.

This is the way in which the agitation is to be worked up in opposition to the day-baking movement. I venture to think that if it were not for this type of individual there would be little or no opposition to day-baking.

Mr. BOWSER.—Is there any ground for his remark that the Country Wages Boards were to be abolished?

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—The writer of the letter says, "The abolition of the Country Wages Board surely interests you." By that he is inferring that there is a possibility of its abolition. That

is the bait he is holding out to the master bakers with a view to getting their assistance to defeat day-baking. The honorable member can read the letter. The present Government sent the Secretary for Labour to the other States to discover what was taking place in regard to day-baking in those States. I cannot read the whole of Mr. Murphy's report, but I will read a few extracts from it. He states—

My inquiries have brought me to conclude that day baking in Victoria would—

(1) Benefit the general public by causing the production of better quality bread.

Surely that is something to be desired.

(2) Benefit the bakers' employees by improving their conditions of life and work.

That is another very desirable thing.

(3) Put the master bakers in a position not any less advantageous than at present. Adjustment would have to be made, but balancing one thing with another, the gain, perhaps, would be greater than the loss.

On page 4 of his report Mr. Murphy points out that as a result of day baking we should get better bread and better value. He states—

When the baker can deliver his bread piping hot before the moisture has time to evaporate he can comply with the law and supply full weight on a minimum quantity of dough per loaf, but if he has to keep the bread for some hours before delivery he must put the full quantity of dough in each loaf to save himself from prosecution for light-weight bread. One master baker in another State complained that day-baking forced him to put two ounces more dough in each 2-lb. loaf to allow for the longer time of cooking and for evaporation.

Does the fact that they would have to put two ounces more dough in each 2-lb. loaf account for the opposition of many of the master bakers to day baking?

These two ounces extra stand for so much more food supplied to the consumer with each loaf.

I should like to add, "at the old price." With regard to the question of how the public in Sydney and Brisbane fare, Mr. Murphy stated—

I could not find any evidence of public dissatisfaction with day-baked bread in these cities. As far as I could see, the public took no interest in the question of when the bread is baked. A large section of them is unaware that any change has recently been made. The bread served to me when I was in Sydney was of a distinctly better quality than the average Melbourne bread, and appeared fresher. In the bread I had in Brisbane I could not notice any difference from that which we had here.

Mr. Murphy goes on to say that day baking would make for greater cleanliness, better supervision, and an improvement in the hygiene of bread production. In another portion of his report he quotes from the English *Board of Trade Labor Gazette* of July, 1911. He states—

On page 246 of the *Board of Trade Labour Gazette* (England), of July, 1911, will be found—

A report of an inquiry on bakeries, issued in 1911 by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce, observes, *inter alia*—“Remarks may constantly be heard from which it is to be inferred that journeymen practically never wash themselves before preparing the dough. A common expression among journeymen bakers is ‘to wash in the trough,’ i.e., to prepare the dough with un-washed hands, and by whitening them in this way to make them appear clean.”

Day baking makes for cleanliness. Mr. Murphy's report continues—

In volume 2 of *The Bakers' Book*, by E. Brawn, it is said—“The custom, however (not the law), in many French, and in some Austrian bakeries, is that each baker is washed from head to foot before he begins work. The French bakers are stripped to the waist and work with nothing on but an apron and low sandals on their feet.”

I am informed from a private source that the Austrian bakers work under similar conditions, but instead of wearing one apron, as in France, they wear two of them—one in front and one behind the legs.

I now wish to draw attention to Part III. of the report:—“How day baking would affect the bakers' employees.” It is stated—

Instead of working by electric light, gas-light, or kerosene, at night, and sleeping by day—an unnatural and unhealthy condition—they would work by day and sleep by night. They would have better opportunities for discharging a good citizen's duties to their families and of taking their part in public movements.

The doughmakers would, however, be an exception. Doughmakers would have to work at night. Their work must be done before the breadbakers begin.

The following figures are taken from the statistics of this Department:—

The number of persons in Victoria engaged in making and baking bread is—	
Adults engaged in baking bread ...	825
Apprentices engaged in baking bread	203
Improvers engaged in baking bread	11
Adults engaged in dough-making only	18
Total	1,057

By passing this Bill, honorable members can provide day work for 1,039 out of 1,057 workers. As far as the 214 apprentices and improvers are concerned, the health and morals of those youths

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would be improved by the change. Mr. Murphy goes on to say—

The change, therefore, would liberate 214 boys and 825 men from night work, and condemn 18 men to it.

The eighteen men here set down are those who are engaged solely in dough-making. Many of the others do some of the work of dough-making, but they are not doughmakers only. In some small bakehouses, particularly country ones, the one man both makes the dough and bakes it. Such cases have not been taken into account, for the change would make little difference to them.

In Part IV. Mr. Murphy deals with the question of “How day baking would affect master bakers.” He states—

The fear of the employers that a change to day-baking will adversely affect their profits accounts almost entirely for the opposition.

It is somewhat refreshing to know that, according to the Secretary of Labour, the opposition of the employers is due to the way in which profits will be affected. He disposes of that by saying—

There can be no doubt the alteration will—as would any other considerable change—benefit some, injure others; but in Queensland, where day-baking (between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.) has been longest in operation, the weight of evidence indicates a slight preponderation of gain.

Therefore they are making more profit with the day baking system than with night baking. The objection was raised that day baking would mean an alteration in the hours and conditions of the bread carters. With regard to that Mr. Murphy states—

In Sydney and Brisbane the carters work the same number of hours as under night baking. They begin about the same hour as in Melbourne, say, between 5.30 a.m. and 7 a.m.

If we secured the change here it would therefore be unnecessary to alter the hours of bread carters in any way. They are working the same hours in New South Wales, where the bread is baked during the day, as they work here, where the bread is baked at night. Further on Mr. Murphy observes, with regard to the ordering the doughs—

To every master I interviewed in Sydney and Brisbane I put the question—“Have you any greater difficulty under day-baking in ordering the size of doughs?”

In Sydney the numbers of “Yes” and “No” answers were equal. In Brisbane 20 per cent. said “Yes”—i.e., that the difficulty under day-baking was increased—while 80 per cent. said “No.”

Therefore there is a preponderance of evidence from every point of view that day baking would be beneficial to the em-

ployers and the employees, as well as the general public. When the men were on strike here there were continuous complaints from people who knew nothing about it that the bread was much staler, and that day baking created quite a number of other difficulties which were not experienced with night baking. It seemed to me that the attention of those people had been suddenly directed to their bread. Whereas they had been eating it daily, and taking no notice previously, they suddenly examined every little bit of it when there was a strike, and found fault with it. If a man goes to an entertainment with a view of criticising, he will never enjoy it. Nothing on earth is quite perfect. One can always find fault with anything. In this case it seems that, not only was their bread sour, but their dispositions were soured. Mr. Murphy went into the whole question with a view of ascertaining the facts, and, under the heading "The demand for fresh bread," this is what he says—

In order to test these opposing statements the following steps were taken:—An officer of the Labour Department, on the 2nd September, selected 200 names from the State electoral rolls. These names were taken at random, and were of people living in twenty different suburbs of Melbourne. The only preference made in choosing the names was in taking people with families in order to get those who were likely to take luncheons from home. Family homes were taken to be indicated by two or three persons of the same name at the same address. An inspector called at each of the 200 homes and inquired whether bread delivered in the morning was cut for lunches and taken away the same day, with the following result:—

Cases where fresh bread delivered the same day was used	24
Cases where yesterday's bread was used			149
Cases where no lunches were taken away	17
Cases where no information was obtained	10
			200

Leaving out the seventeen cases where no luncheon was taken away and the ten cases concerning which no information was obtained, it will be found that in only twenty-four cases out of 173 was fresh bread used on the same day as delivered. What earthly difference does it make then to people whether the bread is baked during the day or at night? Those are the results of an investigation, not made in some foreign country, but made in our own State by our own officers. I have

the New South Wales return here, and the findings of the Court, which are very interesting, but they are practically the same as what I am asking for in this Bill. Before I deal with the Bill itself I should like to mention one little experience of a party of members of this House, including myself. We were engaged on business in Sydney, and we stopped there four or five days. At the hotel where we stayed the remark was made that the bread which we had at the evening meal was splendid, an opinion in which I concurred. The next day the splendid bread was also the topic of conversation, ditto the third day. On the fourth day we were informed that the bread was baked by day. Some of the party were strong opponents of day baking, but how they managed to reconcile their attitude with the opinions which they expressed concerning the bread is for them to say. I mention this for the simple reason that, in my opinion, no one can tell whether the bread was baked by day or by night from the bread itself. It would require an expert baker to determine the fact. When we recognise these facts and the enormous advantage that would be given to the men and the youths engaged, as well as to their wives and families, I do not think we ought to hesitate for a moment to favour the day-baking system. I have made the Bill as short and clear as I can. The first clause is simply the short title, construction, and citation. The second clause provides that the Bill shall come into operation on the 1st day of February, 1918. I must explain my reason for fixing that date. Some of my friends wanted the measure to come into operation with the new year, as a new year's gift, as something that the men in the trade had been looking forward to all their lives. I thought that some honorable members might object to the measure being brought into operation with the new year, on account of the holidays. I advised my friends that they had better carry on under the old system over the holidays. The third act in the drama provides—

In this Act, unless inconsistent with the context or subject-matter—

"Bread" includes bread, rolls, cakes or pastry of any sort or kind.

That includes all kinds of baking. In Committee we might seriously consider the wording if objection is taken to it, otherwise I say, leave it as it is. The fourth

provision determines the hours of baking, and they are—

- (i) eight o'clock in the morning and eight o'clock in the evening on any day on which a supply for only one day is made or baked;
 - (ii) eight o'clock in the morning and ten o'clock in the evening on any day on which a supply for only two days is made or baked; or
 - (iii) eight o'clock in the morning and twelve o'clock in the evening on any day on which a supply for more than two days is made or baked; and
- (b) no person shall employ authorize or permit any person whomsoever to make or bake (except between the hours aforesaid respectively) bread for trade or sale.

(2) This section shall not apply to the making of dough.

The penalty clause is the last provision—

(3) Any person who contravenes or fails to comply with any of the provisions of this section shall be guilty of an offence against the principal Act within the meaning of section 241 thereof.

That section in the Factories Act reads as follows:—

Every person guilty of any offence against this Act or any regulation or by-law thereunder for which no other penalty is provided shall for the first offence be liable to a penalty of not more than £2, and for every subsequent offence to a penalty of not less than £1 nor more than £10.

I think I have provided for everything that is necessary, and now I leave this little child to the tender mercies of the executioners. I ask honorable members to deal with the Bill as kindly as they can. We have endeavoured by strikes to secure day baking, and have failed. We have endeavoured by arbitration and have failed. The Wages Board system has not the machinery to do what we want in that complete way that it ought to be done. That is the only way in which it can be made a success, namely, by restricting the hours during which the baking can be done, and by making it apply to the whole of the bakers. I ask the House to consider well whether these men are for the rest of their lives to be kept in the bakehouse, working under hot, dirty conditions, coming out in the wintry mornings and sleeping when they ought to be doing as other people do. The present system is not profitable to the employers, and the general public would not suffer

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any inconvenience if the alteration that I desire were made. There is really no earthly benefit to be gained by continuing the present system. Will the House give that relief that is urgently needed by these people, and which will only be justice to them? We have made great changes in the factories law. Great improvements have taken place. I remember, when the agitation for a Wages Board was on, that I was engaged with my friends Mr. Anderson, the secretary of the Bakers Union, and Mr. Garrard in making investigations, and in getting facts and figures to convert the Legislative Council. They appointed a committee of inquiry, and the evidence placed before them showed that men were working 103 hours a week at baking, that they made a "shake-down" on the top of the dough trough, where they slept, and that they worked sometimes for less than £1 a week.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—That is correct.

Mr. J. W. BILLSON (*Fitzroy*).—Those were the conditions. These men have suffered frightfully at the hands of the general public. I ask those in power to lend us their aid, so that we may be able to accomplish what I desire, and that the men who have suffered so long may get that modicum of pleasure and satisfaction in their declining years that we have for so long neglected to give them, and that they richly deserve.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

Without attempting to flatter the honorable member, I must say that he has given a full, clear, and historical account of the day-baking movement. I have listened with a good deal of interest to his statement, and I regret that so few honorable members were present to hear it. I hope that honorable members will refresh their memories by reading Mr. Murphy's report.

Mr. LEMMON.—I hope the Premier will endeavour to have an interview with the chairman of the Bakers Wages Board. A good deal of capital is being made out of the fact that a majority of the employers and the chairman voted in opposition to day-baking. The reason why the chairman voted in that direction was because he considered that the subject was one for legislation and not for the Wages Board to deal with. The

arguments of the chairman will strengthen the proposal for this legislation.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Thursday, September 13.

ADJOURNMENT.

CONDUCT OF POLICEMAN.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (Premier).—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr. LEMMON.—On the motion for the adjournment of the House on Thursday last, I referred to the arrest of a Mrs. Clarke, who, I was informed, was very roughly handled by the constable who arrested her. Since then I have been in communication with the lady, and she informs me that, as the result of the rough manner in which the constable came up against her from behind, she fell down in the street. The constable, she further states, handled her roughly in taking her to the watch-house. So brutal was his treatment towards her, she alleges, that at the police station she made out a charge against the constable and signed and delivered it. The facts of the case are contained in that charge.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—An investigation of the case shall be made.

Mr. LEMMON.—I hope that the Chief Secretary will have the charge laid and an investigation made into the alleged facts.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at twelve minutes past four o'clock, until Tuesday, September 11.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, September 11, 1917.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at five minutes to five o'clock p.m., and read the prayer.

ASSENT TO BILL.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister) presented a message from the Governor, intimating that, at the Government Offices, on September 11, His Excellency gave his assent to the Game Bill.

CONSOLIDATED REVENUE BILL (No. 3).

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly, and, on the motion of the Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister), was read a first time.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister).—I desire to move, by leave—

That the second reading of this Bill be made an Order of the Day for later this day.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I would ask the Honorary Minister to allow this measure to be debated to-morrow. Such a motion is usually not objected to, but there is no urgency in the matter.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—There is urgency.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The Bill deals with two months' Supply. I am not prepared to debate it to-day.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister).—I will ask your ruling, Mr. President, whether this measure may be treated as urgent, because Supply was exhausted on 31st August. No expenditure can be incurred except under warrant of the Governor, and the Governor will not give a warrant until the Act has been signed and approved by the Executive Council. It is necessary that Supply should be put through in order that payments may be duly made by the 15th of the month. If the debate is adjourned until to-morrow we shall be cutting the time at our disposal very fine. To-morrow will be the 12th of the month, and the Executive Council meeting has then to be held, and after that we have to make all arrangements so that the money shall be payable in the country by the 15th. I think that Mr. Beckett will see that in asking that the second reading should be taken to-day I have very good reason for it. I hope he will withdraw his objection.

The PRESIDENT.—I do not think I can rule that this measure is urgent, because the House can meet to-morrow, and the Bill can then be passed. If Mr. Beckett persists in his objection the Bill cannot be read a second time during this sitting.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—If in order, I should like to ask the Honorary Minister if he proposes that the House shall meet to-morrow?

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—Unless the business on the notice-paper is pretty well completed to-day, it will be necessary to meet to-morrow.

If we can get through the business to-day, we will not meet to-morrow.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I persist in my objection.

The second reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for the following day.

THE STRIKE.

VOLUNTEERS FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT asked the Hon. W. L. Baillieu (Honorary Minister)—

1. How many public school boys have been engaged in replacing men who are out on strike?

2. What public schools do they represent?

3. How many from each school were engaged?

4. What wages were they paid?

5. How many are engaged now?

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister).—The information required, so far as it is available, is as follows:—

1. Sixty-nine.

2 and 3. Miscellaneous (school not stated on enrolment form), 48; Scotch College, 8; Swinburne Technical College, 4; Working Men's College, 3; Church of England Grammar School, 2; Camberwell Grammar School, 2; Wesley College, 1; Dookie College, 1; Stott's College, 1.

4. Full arbitration award rates—usually 1s. 9d. or 1s. 6d. per hour.

5. Definite information not available yet.

RETENTION OF THE TITLE "HONORABLE."

The PRESIDENT.—I have received copies of certain papers in connexion with the retention of the title "Honorable" by the late Mr. Willis Little, who had served continuously as a member of the Legislative Council for a period of more than ten years.

The papers referred to (which included a despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies notifying that His Majesty the King had been pleased to approve of the retention of the title "Honorable" by Mr. Willis Little) were then read by the Clerk.

DEATH OF THE HONORABLE J. Y. McDONALD.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister).—Since this House last met, one of our oldest members has passed away. The late, much respected Hon. John McDonald was well known to honorable members. He was first elected for the Wellington Province on the

26th August, 1898, and that he resigned on the 20th January last. Honorable members will realize that, when the late honorable gentleman resigned, it was because his failing health compelled him to do so. He was an Honorary Minister in the Bent Ministry in 1908. I do not know that, of all the honorable members who have been in this House, there was any more respected than the late John McDonald was. He was fearlessly honest. We would not claim that he was a great parliamentarian, but we always knew where he was. I know, Mr. President, that he was an old and much-esteemed friend of your own, and I am sure that the House will join with me in the motion I am about to move. The Minister of Agriculture has just reminded me, and I am glad he did so, that the late honorable gentleman's will shows that he has left most of his estate to the charities. That is exactly what we would have expected of him. I move—

That this House records its sorrow at the death of the Honorable John Young McDonald, an ex-member of the Legislative Council. His services to the Parliament of Victoria, both as a Minister of the Crown and as a member for the Wellington Province during eighteen years, caused him to be regarded by all with respect and affection.

The motion exactly expresses our feelings for our late colleague, and I move it with deep sorrow and regret.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I had not the privilege of knowing the late honorable gentleman in his private life; but during the fourteen or fifteen years that I have been a member of this House I, of course, got to know him fairly well. To know him was to esteem him. He was a man you could always rely upon. If he said he was going to vote in a certain way, he did so. There was no "shilly-shallying" on his part. He was just and fair-minded. He was, indeed, an admirable man; and I am sure that every honorable member deeply regrets his death. The cause that forced him to resign was the state of his health. He stuck to his parliamentary work longer than he really should have done. I am quite certain that every honorable member who knew him at all regrets exceedingly that the country has lost him. Although he resigned his seat, he was a man of such character that his services would be of great value to the State in other respects. He has gone,

and all we can say is that we deeply regret his death.

The Hon. J. McWHAE.—I had the pleasure of knowing the late honorable gentleman for forty-two years. He was a splendid type of the old pioneers, who made Ballarat what it was in the early fifties. He was a genial, kindly soul, and I do not think that I ever knew a man who had not a kind word to say for him. He was a generous soul, who never turned away from any one in distress. I do not know of any man whose memory better deserves to be revered. I had the greatest affection for him. I am glad to pay my tribute to his memory.

The Hon. A. BELL.—I indorse the sentiments expressed by the last two speakers. I knew the late Mr. McDonald for nearly fifty years, and was associated with him for many years. He was a white man in every sense of the word. We have seen his will disclosed in the papers, this morning. After making bequests to personal friends and to certain charities, he distributes the balance of his estate in four equal shares—one to the Ballarat College, one to the Ballarat Hospital, one to the Ballarat City Council to beautify the gardens, and one to St. Andrew's Kirk. The citizens of Ballarat were deeply grateful to the late honorable gentleman for what he did for Ballarat. He was a man whose word was his bond, and no one knows the amount of money that he dispensed in charity.

The Hon. A. O. SACHSE.—I had not the honour of that acquaintance with the late honorable gentleman that his friends have spoken of; but still I had a long association with him, and I can say that I never knew any man with a more simple and beautiful nature. I never knew any man so charitable, so sterling, so true and so high-principled, as the late John McDonald. He was known in Ballarat, as Mr. Bell will, no doubt, say, not as Mr. McDonald, but by something much more friendly and familiar. I met a well-known gentleman in Ballarat on one occasion, and I said, "How is my friend, Mr. McDonald?" The reply was, "I do not know to whom you refer." I said, "I am referring to Mr. J. Y. McDonald." The gentleman to whom I was speaking said, "Oh, we all know J. Y." I agree with Mr. Bell in saying that there will be scarcely one person in the Ballarat district who will not speak in tones of grief to-day at the

loss that has been sustained by the death of so fine a man. I know that for many years past Mr. McDonald conducted his business with a view to helping those fine institutions Mr. Bell has referred to. I know he was the simplest of simple livers; he wanted nothing for himself. He conducted big enterprises, and his great desire was that everything he was connected with should be for the betterment of Ballarat. If the deceased gentleman's heart could be opened, I think we would find the word "Ballarat" written in luminous letters. The House has lost a fine member. He did not speak very often, but he always voted conscientiously. He was a man who could always be relied upon. There was never any shirking by him. Even when the illness which had its fatal grip upon him was developing, he attended the sittings of the House at the expense of his health, and, as I have reason to know, of considerable suffering. He was the stamp of man whose character uplifts the people with whom he associates, and it must have a beneficial influence upon the community as a whole. He was the sort of man we want in Parliament. He was fearless in every way, and had no petty ideas, and did not descend to the consideration of public matters on miserable party lines. The honorable gentleman has left a lustre in parliamentary life as a result of his simplicity and honesty, and the records of this House will be improved if we can only get more men of the stamp of honest J. Y. McDonald.

The PRESIDENT.—I should like to add a few words to express the affection and esteem that I had for the late Mr. McDonald. I was associated with him as a member for about seventeen years, and during that time I learnt the excellencies of his character. He was a most unassuming man, and although he had strong views about certain questions, he spoke very seldom. I think he always voted the right way. He was a great friend of the attendants of this House, and used every year to take charge of the little Christmas gifts that we made to them. Last year he was too ill to attend to this matter, but he remembered, in spite of his illness, to get another member to take his place. I am sure he held the deepest place in the affections of those honorable members who knew him, and we shall long affectionately retain his memory.

Honorable members rose in their places, and carried the motion in silence.

SPECIAL WAGES BOARDS.

CHEMISTS' ASSISTANTS—ASSISTANTS IN DISPENSARIES.

The debate (adjourned from 4th September) was resumed on the motion of the Hon. W. L. Baillieu (Honorary Minister)—

That the Council concur with the Assembly in agreeing to the following resolution, viz:—“That it is expedient to appoint a Special Board to determine the lowest prices or rates which may be paid to any persons employed in a shop dispensing, compounding, or selling medicines, drugs, or medicinal preparations.”

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I desire to make a personal explanation in connexion with this motion. When we were discussing it last Tuesday, I stated that I had been informed that there were only two master chemists who were in favour of a Wages Board, and that they had been practically intimidated into consenting to it, through fear of being brought before the Arbitration Court. I also said I was informed that the greater number of the employees would very much prefer to be left alone, as they were thoroughly satisfied with their position. In fact, they had petitioned against being brought under a Wages Board. I have since placed myself in communication with the Pharmaceutical Board, and also, incidentally, with the chemists' association, and I find that the information given me was absolutely wrong. Whatever may be the private feelings of the master chemists, I have no doubt they would all prefer not to have to work under a Wages Board—

The PRESIDENT.—The honorable member cannot discuss the motion in the course of a personal explanation.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I have received a communication from the secretary of the Pharmaceutical Society, in the course of which he says that the matter was fully discussed at a full meeting of members held in March last, and the proposal for a Wages Board was adopted. Subsequently, conferences were held between the master chemists and their assistants, and according to the *Australasian Journal of Pharmacy*, which is the official organ of the chemists, I believe, it was unanimously agreed that a Wages Board should be applied for. I find that at one of these meetings the voting in regard to the constitution of a Wages Board was forty-three in favour,

and seven or eight against it. Notwithstanding this fact, I was informed that only two members were in favour of a Wages Board. I regret very much that I should have been led into making the statements I did last week; but honorable members will agree it was not my fault.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—I moved the motion last week for the postponement of this particular matter, but I understand the Minister has a statement to make on the subject.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister).—Since the matter was before the House last week, a report has been obtained by my leader from the Department of Labour, and information has also come to him from various quarters which it is just as well should be placed upon record. In a letter to the Honorary Minister (Mr. Baillieu), the Secretary for Labour says—

The Honorable W. L. Baillieu, M.L.C.,
State Parliament House,
Melbourne.

September 10, 1917.

CHEMISTS' BOARD.

Sir,—Referring to the debate in the Legislative Council on Tuesday, the 4th inst., I have the honour to inform you that both employers and employees desire the appointment of this Board. The officers of this Department cannot call to mind any resolution asking for the appointment of a Board ever set before the Legislative Council that received more unanimous support from both employers and employees. The deputation of employers which waited upon the Minister of Labour to ask for this Board on the 16th May last claimed to represent the whole of the chemists in the Metropolitan District. It was said at that deputation that, with the exception of a very few—I think the number mentioned was three—the rest of the chemists desired unanimously that a Board should be appointed. Their desire arose from the fact that they are suffering certain competition from other traders at present, which they believe the Board will cure, and they also feared that their employees would take them into the Arbitration Court.

A meeting of the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society was held on Wednesday, the 5th inst., and reaffirmed the previous decision of the Council in favour of a Wages Board. I beg to attach a letter on that point from Mr. C. J. Butchers, the secretary, which says that at that meeting 75 per cent. of the metropolitan chemists voted for a Board.

On the question of the correctness of the figures relating to females under 21 years of age, the following statistics are rather more detailed than those already supplied. They relate to apprentices and shop assistants who assist in dispensing and selling medicines. In no case—either adults or juveniles—has any

servant or person engaged at such work as sweeping out the shop or otherwise been included. The figures in all cases refer only to employees who have actually qualified as chemists or to employees in chemists' shops and dispensaries who are doing the work of chemists, selling goods over the counter, and mixing medicines:—

	Wages per Week.
1 received	... none
8 received	... 2s. 6d.
21 received	... 5s. 0d.
7 received	... 7s. 6d.
9 received	... 10s. 0d.
2 received	... 12s. 0d.
5 received	... 12s. 6d.
1 received	... 15s. 0d.
1 received	... 17s. 6d.
2 received	... 20s. 0d.
1 received	... 25s. 0d.
1 received	... 30s. 0d.

Total 65

Average wage, 8s. 10d.

H. M. MURPHY,
Secretary for Labour.

Honorable members will see from the figures I have just quoted that women in other avocations of life receive a much greater remuneration than those employed in chemists' shops. A letter received from the Pharmaceutical Society of Australasia under date 6th September is as follows:—

Pharmaceutical Society of Australasia.
Melbourne, 6th September, 1917.

Sir,—Relative to the question raised in the Legislative Council on the 4th inst. during the discussion on the Chemists Wages Board resolution, I am desired to state that at a meeting of the council of the above society held yesterday, it was decided to re-affirm the previous decision of the council in favour of a Wages Board for chemists in the terms of the resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly.

I am further requested to point out that the decision supporting the resolution now before Parliament was the outcome of several friendly conferences between representatives of the master pharmacists and the employees.

I might also add that the question was fully discussed at the 60th annual meeting of the society held in March last, after due notice of the proposed discussion had been given to every member. After exhaustively considering the council's report, the meeting indorsed, by a large majority, the recommendations in favour of a Wages Board, subject to the proviso that satisfactory assurances were received from the Department of Labour in regard to the wording of the resolutions, and that only qualified pharmacists should be appointed on the Chemists Board.

These assurances were subsequently received, and the resolutions submitted to the Legislative Assembly, and passed without amendment. They met with the approval of the special committee representing master pharmacists and the employees, and no written objection has been raised to them by any pharmacist in Victoria, so far as the society, which

represents 75 per cent. of the chemists in business, is concerned.—Yours' faithfully,
C. L. BUTCHERS,
Secretary.

H. M. Murphy, Esq.,
Secretary for Labour,
Melbourne.

I have a number of other letters, but those I have quoted make the case for the motion unanswerable. It is apparent that there has been an agreement between the employers and employees that a Wages Board should be created for this industry or calling, which, as honorable members know, is of a professional or semi-professional nature. The facts which have been placed before honorable members would appear to indicate that the skill which is required in this business is inadequately paid for. The position emphasizes the point that more clamant and noisy people sometimes get a larger proportion of the wages that are paid than those who are more skilled but less noisy in their disposition. The Government hope that the House will agree to the motion without delay. I should like to express the appreciation which all of us feel of the attitude adopted by the unofficial Leader of the House. It is entirely in accord with what every honorable member would expect of him.

The Hon. J. D. BROWN.—The debate on this motion was adjourned because the information given by the Minister, and statements made in the House, were absolutely contradictory. In future I think we should insist on the House being approached by petition in these matters, instead of gentlemen coming here and interviewing honorable members in the corridors—a practice which should not be encouraged.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Without entering into the merits or demerits of the proposal, I want to say that I intend to vote against it. One reason for my attitude is that a couple of years ago Mr. Bajlieu made a promise that country employers and employees should be given a voice in connexion with industrial matters. That promise has not been carried out. Applications have been made for country Wages Boards, and some of them have not been granted. In other cases country Boards have been granted, but the Government and the Department have been flouted by the employees refusing to appoint representatives. When the Government are flout-

in that way it practically means that the system is broken down. The Government took no action to prevent that. They should have compelled the employees to appoint representatives on the Boards. There is another reason why I oppose the appointment of any more Wages Boards. Mr. Murphy, the Secretary for Labour, was sent about the Commonwealth collecting information in connexion with an amendment of the Factories and Shops Act. In a lengthy report he made various suggestions, dealing partly with the question to which I have referred, but his report has not been acted on. I know of no question of greater importance than the amendment of the Factories and Shops Act. From a return which was presented to this House a couple of years ago we know that there is a gross waste of money in connexion with Wages Boards. That return showed that up to 1915 £50,000 odd had been spent on Boards, and a portion of that expenditure was something scandalous. In coming to their determination the Tinsmiths Board spent £2,766 8s. 10d. The Hairdressers Board spent £298 13s. 6d. before arriving at a decision to alter the word "persons" to "females." There were thirty-seven meetings of the Hairdressers Board before that decision was arrived at. The whole Wages Board system is practically a farce, and a waste of money. The Boards meet and come to determinations, and a few months afterwards they think it is time to meet again, and so the thing goes on and money is wasted. Until there is an amendment of the Factories and Shops Act, I feel that we should appoint no more Wages Boards. The present strike and the turmoil which we have had in industrial matters show that something is wrong. Before he joined the Government, Mr. Robinson fought for the insertion in the Factories and Shops Act of provisions to prevent strikes and lockouts. He was one of the most active supporters of those amendments which were not accepted either by the Government or Parliament. If they had been accepted a good many flaws in the Act would have been remedied. We do not hear Mr. Robinson saying now that it is necessary to amend the Factories and Shops Act. • He has become a member of the Government, and his mouth is closed. Still, honorable members generally should realize that there is no more important matter for Parliament to deal with than

Hon. H. F. Richardson.

the amendment of that Act. Mr. Murphy is an able man, and the recommendations which he made should be carried out. It is a crying shame that this Parliament should go out of existence without that all-important question being dealt with. I repeat that if the present system is to continue, and if the Trades Hall—

The PRESIDENT.—I think the honorable member is going too far on this question. He can give any reasons for not voting for the motion, but he cannot speak of the attitude of the Trades Hall or of other amendments of the Factories and Shops Act.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—If the Melbourne employers and employees are to fix the wages to be paid in the country districts, it will practically mean closing up industries in the country.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Would you pay the men less in the country districts?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I would give them the same opportunities as they have under the Federal Arbitration Act. That is all we ask, and that is what Mr. Murphy suggested. Why should country employers and employees have to go to the Arbitration Court of the Commonwealth to get justice? We do not want country Wages Boards. We desire one Board to deal with the whole question, but a reduction which is recognised as reasonable in view of the living conditions in country districts should be applied in those districts. Unless that is done, it will be good-bye to a good many industries in the country. It will mean that there will be centralized in the metropolitan area a large number of industries which should be in the inland centres, and that will be a bad thing for the Railway Department.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—You can avoid that by giving men decent wages in the country.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—It can be avoided by paying them proportionately the same as is paid in the metropolitan area. There are conditions in country districts which ought to be taken into consideration. That has been recognised by Mr. Justice Higgins when fixing wages in the Federal Arbitration Court. At present employers in country districts are being compelled to go to that Court, whereas provision should be made to meet the case under our law. Those are the reasons why I oppose the granting of this

or any other Board until amending legislation has been introduced.

The motion was agreed to.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU (Honorary Minister) moved—

That the Council concur with the Assembly in agreeing to the following resolution:—

That it is expedient to appoint a Special Board to determine the lowest prices or rates which may be paid to any persons employed in dispensing, compounding, or selling medicines, drugs, or medicinal preparations in a friendly society's or hospital dispensary.

He said—It is unnecessary for me to repeat information which has already been supplied to the House in connexion with the previous resolution. Practically the same information applies to this motion. Honorable members have been furnished with a printed slip containing the usual items of information in connexion with motions of this kind, and they have also heard the statement which was read by Mr. Robinson to-night.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I presume that the House is going to pass this motion, which is only a measure of justice. I rise now because I was unable to take part in to-day's discussion on the previous motion, having spoken in connexion with it on Tuesday last. It is gratifying to find that the House, by nearly a unanimous vote, adopted the motion for a Wages Board for chemists' assistants, and, no doubt, it will follow as a matter of course that this proposal for a Board for assistants in dispensaries will be also agreed to. I wish to briefly refer to the splendid example shown by Mr. Manifold. As I mentioned last Tuesday, there is evidently—

The PRESIDENT.—The honorable member cannot refer to a debate that took place in this House last Tuesday night.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—As far as the Wages Board now proposed is concerned, I only wish to say that no doubt honorable members have been subjected to the same amount of lobbying as in connexion with the other motion. It shows how necessary it is in all these matters to go right to the fountain head. If all the available information were obtained from the employers and employees' unions, then we should know the exact position. In bringing such motions before the House it should be the duty of the Minister to make us acquainted with the views of both sides. If the Minister had brought before us last week the official views of the associations of employers and em-

ployees, the House, I believe, would have agreed to them unanimously.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—I gave the House all the information I had.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The honorable gentleman gave the House all the information he had at the time. However, we presume that the honorable gentleman will now see the error of his ways, and that in future, when he has Wages Board resolutions to bring before the House, he will see that, whoever supplies him with the information concerning them, will supply him with all the information available, in order that honorable members may cast an intelligent vote.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—I will act in the future as I did on this occasion.

The motion was agreed to.

ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

This Bill was recommitted.

Clause 1—(Short title, construction, and citation).

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I should like the Minister of Public Works to make a general statement with regard to the Bill. I think this is an appropriate time for him to do it. It appears that the Bill is disapproved of by a great many of the electrical contractors in the city. It appears to me that they view the matter in a very rational way, and they ask, "Why does the Melbourne City Council want to get this Bill passed at all?" I understand that the council propose to invest the ratepayers' money in acquiring a stock of all sorts of electrical appliances, and that they propose to sell those appliances at such prices as will not return them any profit at all. It appears that, if the Bill is carried in its integrity, the council will be underselling every electrical contractor in the whole of the State. The contractors, of course, expect to get a reasonable amount of profit for the goods they sell. But under sub-clause (2) of clause 4 the council are not to get any profit at all. It appears that the council are looking for a return by selling an additional amount of electric current. It appears to me to be a very improper thing to use any of the revenue obtained in that way to provide the profit that ought to be made on the sale of electrical machinery and appliances. To have the sale of electrical appliances and the sale of current mixed together will be very misleading to the ratepayers, and, as has been pointed

cut, in the Old Country this has landed many of the municipal councils in difficulties. In my opinion, it is not a fair thing that a big body like the Melbourne City Council should set up a shop and sell things.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—That is not proposed.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—Sub-clause (2) of clause 4 provides—

Such undertaker shall so adjust the charges to be made by it to consumers for the purchase or hire of fittings and consuming devices or for the fixing, maintaining, repairing, or removal of consuming devices as to meet in the aggregate any expenditure by it under the powers of this Act in connexion therewith (including interest upon moneys borrowed or used for these purposes, and a reasonable amount to make provision in respect of the depreciation of fittings and consuming devices let on hire, and all sums applied to sinking fund for repayment of moneys so borrowed or used).

A number of the firms of electrical contractors have a lot of money invested in electrical appliances, and I do not think it is a fair thing for the council to set up a show-room—virtually a shop—and sell electrical appliances at a price just covering the cost and the interest on the money invested, while they look to making their profit out of the extra current supplied. I shall vote against this proposal.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I think the Minister should make a statement.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I do not know what statement I am expected to make at this stage. I know very strong opposition to the Bill has been brought to bear by the electrical contractors. In fact, they have sent letters to members of this House asking them to throw the measure out. The genesis of the measure was an application to the Government by the Melbourne City Council to be allowed to extend their electrical business by selling electrical appliances on what is known as the time-payment system. There are a number of old buildings in the city which it would cost a great deal of money to wire and fit up for electricity. People were not inclined to go to that expense. The Melbourne City Council believe that they can induce a number of people who are not now using electric current to use it if they give them sufficient time to pay for the fitting up of their premises, in the same way as the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works give to people, who want their premises sewered, time to pay. I understand that the Melbourne City

Council and the electrical contractors had between them drawn up a Bill, which was handed over, as is the custom, to the Parliamentary Draftsman. Later on, the electrical contractors came to see me with regard to certain points of difference between their Bill and the Government Bill. I will try to tell honorable members as briefly as possible what the points of difference were. They wanted to put a provision in the Bill that they should have power to go into the warehouse of the Melbourne City Council, and mark the price at which every article should be sold. That was an absurd proposition. It would allow the electrical contractors to get up a combination amongst themselves, and fix the prices at which articles should be sold. I said emphatically that a provision of that sort should not go into the Bill, and the advisers of the Government said the same. These gentlemen also wanted to make it mandatory on the council to provide for depreciation at the rate of not less than 10 per cent. per annum. In sub-clause (2) we provide that the council shall set aside a reasonable amount to make provision in respect of depreciation. The Government consider that that is quite sufficient. Another point of difference was this: The electrical contractors wanted to limit the purchase of materials by the Melbourne City Council to firms or companies trading within the State of Victoria. I told the House the other night that I was advised by the Crown Law authorities that such a limitation is contrary to the Constitution. Another point was that they wanted the power of the City Council limited so that the council could fix the price of consuming devices supplied by the council itself, but not any other consuming devices. That was a proposal I told the gentlemen who came to see me that we could not agree to. When they left my office I understood that we were in accord that some things could not be put in the Bill for the reasons I have stated. I kept no record of the conversation. If I had known that this matter was to be discussed I certainly would have done so. These gentlemen have written a letter to me. Possibly they have written to other members of this House also. The letter, which is signed by Thomas H. White, on behalf of the Electrical Traders and Contractors' Association of Victoria (Messrs. Fell, Rankin,

Morrison and Company, secretaries), states—

RE BILL TO AMEND THE ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER ACT.

According to a statement made by the Minister of Public Works, *Hansard*, page 1297, reading—

There was a conference between the authorities of the City Council and electrical contractors. They saw me afterwards, and the contractors agreed to the Bill.

On page 1302 the following statement was made:—

I have seen the gentlemen interested, and I know the persistency with which they put their views. I listened to them in my office, and I then told them what we were going to do.

It is obvious that these two statements by the Minister are at variance. As far as this association is concerned, we are totally opposed to the Bill being passed, and, therefore, respectfully request you to use your endeavours to get the Bill withdrawn from the House.

When the Bill was before the Committee last week I answered many interjections, and I may not have clearly expressed what I meant to say, but what I have told the Committee to-night is substantially correct—

Retail trading with the public credit must of necessity lead to stupendous financial liability, add to the burden of the rates, weaken municipal credit, bring about inequality of taxation, interfere with the natural laws of trade, check industrial and scientific progress, stop invention, discourage individual efforts, establish an army of officials, breed corruption, create aristocracy of labour, demoralize the voter, and ultimately make socialistic communities in towns and cities. The public of Victoria are in every way well catered for by the existing traders, and unless the public desire an alteration, no alteration should be made.

I am going to ask the Committee to interpret the following sentence. I frankly admit that I do not understand it—

The duty of a municipality is to protect and facilitate the interests of ratepayers, and to openly oppose them under parliamentary protection. Municipal trading in this special branch has been found disastrous and abandoned in several English municipalities (*vide* pamphlet already supplied).

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—Will the Minister say that the municipalities will make a reasonable profit?

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—There is a difference between a trading concern and the municipal council. But we are not going to assume that the City Council is going into this business for the sake of cutting down the traders and ruining the business they carry on.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—Does the Minister say that the big trading companies will still sell these articles without making a profit on them?

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—No. Sub-clause (4) of clause 4 states—

The total sums expended and received by such undertaker in connexion with the purposes of this Act in each year (including interest and sinking fund and provision as aforesaid for depreciation) shall be separately shown in published accounts of the undertaking of such undertaker for that year.

I have gone through the Bill with the officers of the Public Works Department. I think it is a Bill that could very properly be passed, and I am going to ask the Committee to accept the views of those who know something about this business from inside the Government Department as against the views of self-interested individuals outside.

The CHAIRMAN.—The question of a slight irregularity occurs here. Clause 1 embodies the short title, construction, and citation. The discussion would, perhaps, be more regular on clause 3, which grants power to councils to perform certain functions. If the Minister so desires, and the Committee concurs, we will go on with the discussion on clause 1, and make that the test in a division. Either we can pass clause 1—which is a formal clause—and clause 2, and then get on to clause 3, where the contentious matter really lies, or proceed as we are doing. It will save time to continue the discussion now if honorable members desire to test the Bill on clause 1.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I think the intention of the unofficial Leader of the House was that the feeling of the Committee should be tested on a vote on clause 1. I am rather inclined to agree with him in that regard. Generally speaking, I support the Bill, as I think it may be of benefit to the citizens if we provide some means by which they can get electrical fittings or consuming devices through the City Council. I certainly think there is something to be said for the contractors who have established businesses in this city. It appears to me that the discussion which arose between the City Council and the contractors resulted in a friendly arrangement by which both sides were satisfied with the Bill which they put into the hands of the Minister.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—No Government could allow an outside body

men to draft a Bill to put before Parliament. I have mentioned certain matters that they desired to put in the Bill and that we could not agree to.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—No Government could prevent people from drafting a Bill. At the same time, no Government would move in the matter unless they felt so inclined. When they move they can move in any direction they please. At the same time, I think that due regard should be given by any Government to the attitude of the people for whom they are acting. Certainly they should have due regard to those people who have large interests at stake. Not, of course, that they should give undue attention to the interests of any particular section. I am quite in accord with the general principles of the Bill. I believe it is desirable that the City Council of Melbourne, and other municipalities too, should be given facilities to supply fittings and consuming devices to people who wish to enjoy all the benefits electricity can give. The measure produced by the two bodies to which I have referred was one that would not act against the interests of citizens who desired these privileges, but would safeguard the interests of the contracting parties. That, I think, is a proper thing. Of course, if the Minister says he is not going to pay any regard to the interests of that particular section of the community—

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—I did not say that. But I surely cannot allow outside people to write out their own Bill.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—They have a right to prepare a Bill, but the Government can say whether they will accept it. I think these contractors should receive some consideration, and what I want to do is to induce the Minister to withdraw this Bill, at any rate, until the Government see fit to frame some kind of amendment which will produce all that is desired on behalf of the citizens, and at the same time safeguard the section to which I referred. This is the position of the contractors: They have established themselves here to sell electrical contrivances, fittings, consuming devices, and so on. They have invested large sums of money to carry on that business. I do not know how much capital is involved, but certainly a very considerable amount. That their fear is not groundless I showed the other night when quoting extracts from a journal which gives facts relating

to experiences in the Old Country. Those extracts showed that in certain places—London, and other cities in Great Britain—municipalities carrying on this trade had suffered very large losses. Those losses resulted, to some extent, from underselling. In some cases the cause was bad management. Certainly in one case I quoted the cause must have been bad management, because it was stated in that particular case that the business had previously been profitably carried on by a private company. We know that private companies have to manage their businesses in a thorough manner in order that they shall show a profit. Any man who puts his capital into a private business has to see that the management is such that at the end of the year the business returns him a profit. When you get a municipality taking over a business of this sort there is a likelihood of a lack of good management. Through bad management, and other causes, there may be a loss at the end of the year. We have had plenty of cases where heavy losses have been incurred. So it is not only in the interests of these contractors, but also in the interests of the ratepayers that some restriction should be placed on municipalities going into this or any other business. The Minister in his remarks just now rather resented the fact that the contractors wanted to say at what price these goods should be sold. I do not think there was any idea in the minds of the contractors to mark up the prices of the goods to any undue extent. What they claimed was that the goods should be sold at a reasonable price, and not at a price at which manufacturers could not manufacture or compete. That is a thing which has been done. And when I mentioned that the other night, Mr. McWhae said that the Melbourne City Council was not likely to do any such foolish thing as to undersell goods. However that may be, I do not know that the Melbourne City Council have more virtues than other councils. It has been the practice for many municipalities that used merely to provide electricity to write down the price of the goods sold to the public. That is the main objection of the contractors. This is a difficulty that should be taken into consideration. I know quite well what difficulties there are in getting supplies from the Old Country at present. You cannot get electric motors from Great Britain, and most elec-

trical contrivances are not to be had. If this Bill is passed the position of the City Council will be that they will not be able to get British supplies, and will have to get supplies from America or Japan.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Can we not manufacture electric motors in Victoria?

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I do not think we can at present, but I hope we shall be able to make them. The electrical contractors have invested their capital here, and they are in the unfortunate position that they cannot get supplies from Great Britain. They will be doing nothing, whilst the City Council will be allowed to import supplies from America and Japan, and so they will be allowed to carry on business that these people who are British cannot carry on. It would be a grave injustice to them, and to the Old Country. Under the circumstances, I think the Minister should review the whole situation. He should consult the City Council authorities, and see if he cannot safeguard the interests of the electrical contractors. I think the Minister feels rather warmly that these people have been too persistent. When their interests are concerned, it is natural for men to be persistent. Their interests and their living are centred in this business.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—We have given their representations the fullest consideration.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I asked the Minister when we were dealing with clause 4 what could be done to make the "undertakers" fix the prices in such a way as to safeguard private interests.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I thought you objected to price fixing.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I do not object to it. It can be looked at in various ways. Sometimes it operates for the benefit of the people and sometimes it operates in the opposite direction. It is a very wide question. I asked the Minister how he could explain sub-clause (2) of clause 4, and he said that the auditors would see that the provisions of that sub-clause were carried out. The contractors say that it does not sufficiently safeguard them. I asked them if they could frame an amendment, and they said that the original Bill was what they

desired. The Minister should frame an amendment to meet the case.

The Hon. J. McWHAE.—I hope nothing will be done to cause the loss of this very beneficial measure. We are very much behind in the matter of electrical conveniences. In Sydney, they have 40,000 horse-power used in the way indicated in this Bill. It would be a pity to lose the Bill. It is most important that business people in the city should have the facilities that are provided in most large cities. There was a conference between the City Council and the contractors at which an agreement was reached. Unfortunately, since then certain amendments have been introduced by the Minister, and their effect has been to put the contractors in a worse position. That is not the fault of the City Council. I should like the Minister to report progress, and to see if he cannot find some golden bridge to carry us over the difficulties, for I should not like this valuable Bill to be lost.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—The Minister read out a list of the differences in the Bill as drawn by the two different bodies. If the Minister looks at that list he will see that about two-thirds of it represents an attempt on the part of the contractors to protect themselves from the under-selling that would be inevitable if the City Council were given the powers proposed. What the Council ask for is absolutely unreasonable. The contractors want to be sure that the City Council will not undersell them, and ruin their business. If people find that they can get electric motors from the City Council at something like the cost price, they will not patronize the importers, who have large stocks of electrical goods on hand. The Melbourne City Council have issued a memorandum for the information of members. That memorandum states—

The necessary agreement should be entered into with the owner of a building, and only with a tenant when his lease is of sufficient duration to enable him to complete the payments within the period of his lease, unless the owner guarantees the payments.

That ought to be in the Bill. As the Bill now stands, any tenant can go to the Melbourne City Council and ask for electric motors. The Council can sell these appliances.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—They cannot sell them.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—The memorandum further states—

At the present time the council's statutory powers are restricted to the supply of electricity, the current being taken from the source of supply to the consumer's meter (which is installed by the council). It is therefore necessary to obtain additional statutory powers, and these should be of an ample nature so as to cover all the activities mentioned.

A Bill on such lines was before the British Parliament some time ago. It was promoted by the British municipalities, with the object of giving increased powers to local authorities so that they might sell, hire, fix, repair, maintain, and remove electric lighting fittings and other apparatus in connexion with lighting, heating, and motive power on consumer's premises.

The electrical contractors are practically faced with ruin because they cannot compete with the Melbourne City Council, which, under the Bill, can sell these articles at cost price.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I shall read the proposition of the electrical contractors in regard to sub-clause (2) of clause 4, and if honorable members will look at that provision in the Bill they will see that the difference between it and what the contractors ask for is not material—

The undertakers shall so adjust the charges to be made by them for fittings or for the fixing, repairing, maintaining, or removal thereof, as to meet in the aggregate any expenditure by them under the powers of this section in connexion therewith (including interest upon moneys borrowed or used for these purposes, and all sums applied to sinking fund for repayment of moneys so borrowed or used), and such interest and sinking fund to be at the rate of not less than £10 per centum per annum.

Instead of "£10," we inserted "a reasonable amount," and that is the only difference. These people are out to wreck the Bill. When I agreed to recommit the Bill, I did not think that it was the intention of honorable members to try to have it rejected. I thought there was some confusion in the minds of honorable members in regard to consuming devices and fittings, and what the City Council might be able to do under the Bill. It is quite clear that that council may sell consuming devices and fittings, but that it cannot go on the premises of the consumer and wire those premises. It cannot erect fittings, but may provide the electrical devices after the premises have been wired by an electrical contractor. From conversations I had with the Town Clerk and the manager of the electrical

department, I can say that the council will really put business in the hands of the contractors. The whole of the work will be done just as the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works carry out their functions.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—If we go thoroughly into this Bill it will involve a very long discussion. A considerable number of members disapprove of municipal trading, and a considerable number disapprove of power being given to the Melbourne City Council to undersell people who have devoted their lives to the business of supplying electrical fittings and consuming devices. I move—

That the Chairman do now leave the chair.

The Hon. T. BEGGS.—I second the motion. I think the municipalities ought to be quite satisfied with the powers they already possess. I do not like the building up of these socialistic schemes. The session is coming to a close, and I do not think we should go on with this Bill.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I do not see why the Melbourne City Council should not be granted the privilege proposed by this Bill. The Metropolitan Gas Company has the right of stocking and supplying fittings, and why should not the Melbourne City Council have the same power? The other night the objection taken to the Bill was that it would extend the powers all over the State; that it would not be fair for a municipality in the country to be given the right to put in the fittings. Now an endeavour is being made to throw the whole Bill out, not even allowing the Melbourne City Council to stock consuming devices. As far as the inland centres are concerned, the powers under the Bill should be even wider than they are. I am prepared to support the Bill, provided it only applies to the Melbourne City Council.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—You do not want Geelong to have the benefit of it, then?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I do not want Geelong to be blocked.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The Bill confers a privilege upon them.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—To my mind, the country municipalities who have gone in for electrical installation should be allowed to go further than they could go under this Bill. They should be allowed to stock electrical fittings, and their officers should be allowed to put them in. So far as the Melbourne City

Council is concerned, the Bill permits the stocking of fittings, but does not permit the putting of them in. I understand that the Minister is prepared to accept the view that this Bill should apply only to the Melbourne City Council. I propose to move an amendment that if any other municipality desires that the powers under the Bill shall be extended to them, the Governor in Council can grant the extension. In some of the smaller towns there are no electrical experts other than those employed by the municipality. I am one of those who think that the municipality should have increased powers in this matter. It is the only way in which electric lighting can be carried out in many places.

The CHAIRMAN.—I should like to say that a motion "That the Chairman do now leave the Chair" supersedes all other business of the Committee, and if decided in the affirmative, the Bill will be lost.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—If I may say so without being offensive, I think that if this motion is carried the Committee will be guilty of a distinct breach of faith with the Minister. When the Bill was before us the other night there were only two principal amendments to the Bill, and a number of consequential amendments. Honorable members found it difficult to fit these amendments into the Bill. When the Bill came up previously I promised to recommit it to deal with certain clauses after they had been put into proper shape. When the Bill came up to-night—it was my own fault, perhaps, through my lack of knowledge of parliamentary practice—instead of asking that the Bill be recommitted for the consideration of clauses, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, I asked for the recommital of the whole Bill. Now the Committee propose to put the Bill back to the second reading stage, or knock it out. The House affirmed the principle of the measure on the second reading. To knock it out at this stage would be a distinct breach of faith with me.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—In answer to the Minister, I should like to point out that, when the Bill passed its second reading, there was an understanding that some points that needed elucidation would be elucidated in Committee.

The Hon. E. J. CROOKE.—The other night I took exception to clause 5 of this Bill, because I considered there would

be difficulty in working it, as far as municipalities in the country were concerned. I wrote to persons interested, and the suggestion was made to me that, if an amendment were carried to the effect that it should only apply by direction of the Governor in Council to any particular municipality at their request, it would overcome that difficulty. The municipalities recognise that other parts of the Bill are to their advantage, and I am prepared to propose a new clause in the direction indicated. I understand, however, that Mr. Richardson has an amendment drawn up by the Municipal Association to the same effect. If that were carried, there would be no objection to the Bill as far as the country municipalities are concerned. I will read what the proposed new clause is, so that honorable members may understand what I have in my mind.

The provisions of this Act shall apply to the city of Melbourne, and the Governor in Council, on the application, in writing, of the council of any municipality may, by Order published in the *Government Gazette*, declare the whole or any of such provisions to apply to the municipal district of such municipality.

If the amendment I have referred to is carried, there will be no objection as far as the country is concerned. We shall be going too far if we throw the Bill out.

The Hon. J. STERNBERG.—On the second reading of the Bill, I explained the position as far as the country municipalities are concerned, which Mr. Richardson has explained to-night. The Minister then said that he would look into that question with the object of trying to meet the request of country members, but he has not done so. That is deplorable.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—What you are asking for is provided in the Bill.

The Hon. J. STERNBERG.—I have not seen it. I am prepared to support Mr. Richardson's amendment, and I think it would be a pity to reject the Bill.

The Hon. J. McWHAE.—I hope honorable members will not throw out the Bill. No doubt it can be improved. Perhaps the Minister will report progress and endeavour to get over the difficulty. The Bill has many valuable features, and I hope honorable members will not follow our unofficial Leader in this case. With a little forbearance and deliberation on the part of the City Council, the contractors, and the Government, we may be able to get a measure that will be acceptable to all of us.

The Hon. D. L. McNAMARA.—I hope the Bill will not be set aside, for it appears to contain many useful provisions. The Bill was almost passed through on the last day of meeting. There were only some technical amendments to be considered. It appears to me that some influences have been at work since we last met. I think the electrical contractors have used some influence in the matter. May I say that I can almost see the cloven hoof of the Metropolitan Gas Company, which wants to hamstring an active competitor for the supply of light and power. It will be rather interesting to see in the division who are the friends of the electrical contractors.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—For the information of the last speaker, I have to say that I have not spoken to any person connected with the Metropolitan Gas Company.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I sympathize to a very great extent with the Minister. We had accepted the principle of this Bill last week, and I think we should go on with it, in the hope that the Minister will alter clause 4 so as to give fair treatment to the contractors. I am satisfied that the Bill will be of benefit to the citizens, and I have always held that view. If the motion now before us is defeated, I hope the Minister will give generous consideration to the claims of the contractors, as those claims are not unreasonable. I am afraid that I cannot support Mr. Manifold's motion. I hope that the Bill will be made a good and useful measure.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—It seems to me that the Bill is considerably tangled up. It does not seem to suit the Melbourne City Council nor the contractors.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—It suits the City Council.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—The printed memorandum issued by the City Council shows that the Bill is not exactly to their satisfaction. I shall just read this extract—

The electric supply department of the City Council have been in communication with the local contractors and traders, and the Bill now before the House is the outcome of the negotiations, except where it has been altered by the Government.

That is plain. The agreement arrived at has been departed from.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—You have been a Minister of the Crown, and you know that you cannot allow outside

organizations to frame such Bills as they like.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—In this memorandum the City Council show that there has been a departure.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—They do not say that the Bill is objectionable.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—Let us refer the matter back to the two bodies concerned. We might get over the difficulty by bringing those two bodies together, and by incorporating the amendment desired by country members. The Bill has some excellent provisions in it, and should not be rejected. The Bill has been so tangled up that Mr. Manifold thinks his motion provides the best way out of the difficulty.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—There is no tangle.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—The Minister should make a halt and allow the two bodies concerned to deliberate and come into line with the Government. The Bill might then be amended so as to meet what is desired. We should endeavour to conserve the rights of all.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—So far I have purposely refrained from taking part in this debate. The proceedings have entirely upset my preconceived ideas of our rules of debate. When the Bill was reported from Committee last week, it was understood that the Bill was to be recommitted for the consideration of certain amendments. Yet to-night we have had a second reading debate on one particular clause. That may be right or wrong. The question now before us is a motion for the Chairman to leave the chair, and yet I find that every honorable member who has spoken to that question has dealt with the amendments that should be made in the Bill. If this kind of procedure is to be followed in the future it will enable some of us to delay a Bill if we wish to get more light upon it. We have learned a useful lesson. We have heard a lot about the Melbourne City Council and other municipalities on the one hand, and the importers or the contractors on the other. We have not heard anything as to the real object of the Bill, which is to give some benefit to the public. Apparently most honorable members who have spoken are engrossed in the question as to whether their interests or the interests of their friends are to be conserved. We have had a debate as to whether the City Council are going to show a profit, or whe-

ther they are going to join the importers, and control the electrical supplies of Melbourne. It has been suggested that it would be well for the City Council and other councils to fall in with this particular trading ring in their methods of raising prices, and practically robbing the public. It is feared that if this measure of relief is granted to consumers, and the City Council is allowed to supply electrical devices at a fair price, the day of the traders will be gone for ever. We know what has transpired recently. An edict was passed under the War Precautions Act calling on every wholesale man to get rid of his German goods within a certain time. Those who complied with that edict have been laughed at as fools. We have the same thing happening in connexion with other edicts issued from that source. There are many firms holding large quantities of German electrical goods, and they want to dispose of them to the public at enormously enhanced prices. If they have an active competitor in the shape of the City Council they will be doomed, and the public will see that where they were charged 8s. 6d. for a lamp imported for 1s. 10d., they will be able to get it for 2s. 6d. They will want to know where the profits went to in the past. I presume I shall have another opportunity on another clause of making a second reading speech, and for the present "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Mr. Manifold's motion was negatived.

Clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to.

Clause 3—

Any council, being an undertaker under the principal Act or any corresponding previous enactment, may—

- (a) sell or let on hire fittings or consuming devicess;
- (b) fix, maintain, repair, or remove any consuming devices sold or let on hire as aforesaid; and
- (c) demand and take such remuneration, rents, and charges, and make such terms and conditions as are agreed therefor.

The Hon. T. BEGGS.—It is this power which I think is so dangerous in this Bill—the power which is being given to municipalities to provide fittings.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—That is the whole Bill.

The Hon. T. BEGGS.—I am aware of that, and I wish to speak of all the evils that follow upon measures of this kind. It appears at first that the ratepayers will be getting their fittings at a lower rate

than the contractor can supply them, but in the long run it turns out that the ratepayer has to pay more. Take the case of fittings. They become obsolete. You cannot expect any Department of the State or a municipality to keep themselves up in all the new improvements that are taking place in the world. They cannot have the same interest in the matter as the man will who is working on his own account, and who is watching every improvement that takes place. It is for these reasons, and because of the many evils, that I am opposed to this proposal. By the adoption by municipalities of this business, which should be left to private people, you build up a host of employees who eventually control the councils to a great extent. I understand that the number of employees of the London County Council is so great that already they have a good say in electing the members of the council. If we allow these things to be initiated in Melbourne we shall drift into the same state. However, as the Committee is not with me I know I am speaking in vain, so will say nothing further on the subject.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I have an amendment to move in paragraph (b). I do not wish to go over the whole ground of the Bill again, but I should like to remind the last speaker that his opposition to Socialistic measures I suppose did not cause him to oppose certain Socialistic proposals which were recently carried through by which he obtained such a record price for his wool.

The CHAIRMAN.—I would ask the honorable member not to go into the question of the price of wool.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I do not intend to do so. I merely mentioned the matter as an example of what can be done with a Socialistic measure. I do not think this is a Socialistic measure.

The CHAIRMAN.—The question before the Committee is clause 3, giving power to councils to sell certain goods.

The Hon. T. BEGGS.—The honorable member should not impute motives.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I merely mentioned the matter to show that opposition to a measure classified as Socialistic may not mean opposition to anything Socialistic when it appeals to our own particular interest. Honorable members are carried on their passes on Socialistic railways, yet I do not find any of them objecting and calling the railways Socialistic.

Neither should we have any objection to this Bill on the ground that it may be classed as a measure of Socialism. However, I desire that an amendment should be made in this clause in order to make it consistent with the general tenor of the Bill. In paragraph (a) we see that any council has the right to sell or let on hire fittings or consuming devices. The Minister in charge of the Bill will recall that, on the last occasion when I mentioned this matter, I wanted to have the word "fittings" included in paragraph (b) as well as in paragraph (a), so as to allow the undertaker to sell or let on hire fittings and have the right to fix, maintain, repair, or remove those fittings. It seems ridiculous from any stand-point to give the councils power to sell or let on hire fittings, and not give them power to fix, maintain, repair, or remove them. Unless the word "fittings" is inserted in paragraph (b) I fear this Bill will be unworkable. Say a council sell or let on hire fittings to a man to place in his house. If these fittings get out of order the council dare not put them in order. Nor can the council remove a fitting from a building, although they can remove consuming devices. They cannot maintain, repair, or remove any fittings. I therefore move—

That in paragraph (b), after the word "any," the words "fittings or" be inserted.

Fittings and consuming devices are specially defined in clause 2. and I think that the Minister, in order to make the Bill workable, should accept this amendment.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—If this amendment is made, inserting the words "fittings or," it will affect the whole Bill, because fittings include all the wires. If this Bill is passed with clause 3 as it is, the City Council can import and sell everything connected with the outfit.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—They cannot fix them up.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—If the amendment suggested by Mr. Beckett is made it puts the whole business in the hands of the council. They can pull down or put up wires or anything of that kind. If these words are put in we shall have to cut out a great deal of other parts of the Bill.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—In objecting to the amendment I would point out that all the experience we have had shows that, where this particular work has

been undertaken by municipalities, it has resulted in loss. That is where the objection comes in. I am in favour of the principle of the Bill, but I want to see it carried out on proper lines without loss to the ratepayers or anybody. We want the council to have the power to let out fittings, and to fix, maintain, and repair consuming devices, but if they go into the business of dealing with fittings, that is where they make a loss.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—Does not the contractor ever make a loss?

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—The contractor may make a loss. In Great Britain this power had to be taken from municipalities because of the losses they made when they went into this business. The Melbourne City Council do not ask for this power. They recognise that it is not the kind of work they should undertake. Why should we force them to take work out of the hands of people who are brought up to the business, and who have been carrying it on to the satisfaction of the council themselves? The council want to be able to employ these people and ask us to give them power to do so. Why should we say that we will not give them that power, but will give them power to do it themselves? There will then be the temptation for the council to have a try at it, and the result will be a loss.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—This clause empowers any municipality to supply a consuming device. We will say they supply an ordinary heating radiator. It goes wrong. The council send a man to look at the radiator, and he says that the radiator is all right but that the fittings which the council supplied are apparently wrong. The householder will be told that, unfortunately, owing to an Act of Parliament, another man will have to be sent out to see to the defective fittings. There will thus be two men on the one job.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—That should suit you.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It is not what suits me, but what suits consumers, and not many honorable members in the House appear to be standing up for the consumers of electric power. An important point was stressed by Mr. Crooke at the last sitting of the House. If we do not give this power the position will be difficult in the case of a country municipality that has a small electric lighting plant, and that has supplied fittings and con-

suming devices. There will be no electrical engineer in the township to attend to the fittings.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—That does not apply to Melbourne.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—This Bill applies to the whole of Victoria. The benefits of this Bill are to be extended to the country, and we should not legislate in the interest of one municipality. In the country there will be no man to keep the consuming devices in order, and people will have to send to Melbourne to have the fittings looked after. What ridiculous red tape it is to provide that there should be two lots of men to do one lot of work. This will increase the cost to the consumer every time, and I therefore cannot see any objection to the amendment. As the clause is at present, if the Melbourne City Council or any other council supply an article on hire they cannot remove it. The Minister cannot give us any idea how we are to get over that difficulty. The clause does not allow the council to remove any fittings unless my amendment is agreed to.

The amendment was negatived.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I should like the Minister to say what will be the position of an owner of premises which have been leased to a person who has had electric-light fittings supplied to him, but has not paid for them when the lease has expired?

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—The owner would be left with premises properly lighted.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON (Honorary Minister).—I should like to draw the attention of Mr. Manifold to section 198 of the Metropolitan Gas Company's Act, which provides—

The meters and fittings of the company shall not be subject to distress for rent of the building or premises where the same may be used, or to be taken in execution under any process of any Court of law or equity against the person in whose possession the same may be, nor be affected by any order for sequestration of the estate of such person or any order respecting his estate having similar effects.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—But that is not in this Bill.

The Hon. A. ROBINSON.—But this Bill is on the same lines. Fittings can only be removed in a legal way.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—The risk will be undertaken by the Melbourne City Council.

The Hon. A. A. AUSTIN.—Does Mr. Manifold think the City Council will run any risk of not being paid for any fittings they might put in a building?

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—I think you are right.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I have failed to catch the point in dispute. We have already agreed that the undertaker or the council should not have power to remove fittings. If the undertaker has no power to remove them, surely no one else can do so. Under this Bill, the fittings will become the property of the landlord.

The clause was agreed to.

Clause 4—(Restrictions upon exercise of powers).

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—This clause has been the subject of some consideration, and I should like the Minister to report progress at this stage to enable a clause to be drafted which will be fair to contractors and those engaged in this business.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—We should have the contractors here, and discuss the matter with them.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I want to deal fairly with them and with the public. I should like to have an amendment in these words—

Such charges shall not return a lower purchase price for fittings and consuming devices than is recognised as the fair market value of such fittings or consuming devices.

What I desire is to prevent the Melbourne City Council doing what is commonly done elsewhere—selling fittings and consuming devices at a lower price than the current market values, and thereby resulting in loss to the council and the rate-payers.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I will agree to add words which were included in the draft Bill adopted by the contractors. I move—

That the following be added after sub-clause (2):—“And such interest and sinking fund to be at the rate of not less than £10 per cent per annum.”

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I have been trying to grasp what will be the effect of this amendment. The Minister apparently is anxious to get this Bill through, and will accept anything in reason. I do not agree with Mr. Merritt in his assumption that municipal councils cannot manage their own business. If

the business of the country were carried out as economically as the business of the municipalities, it would be very much better for the country as a whole. I am speaking now as a municipal councillor. I know that municipal councils practise economy, while politicians and statesmen only talk about it. This matter can be safely left to municipal councils without any stipulation of 10 or any other percentage. Except in regard to the expenditure of loan money, municipal councils are under no limitation in the conduct of their affairs, and I do not know why we should assume they are going to waste the money of the ratepayers in this particular direction.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—Municipal councils are bound to have a sinking fund under the Local Government Act.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Yes; but not to the extent of 10 per cent. I do not think this particular amendment is required.

The amendment was agreed to, and the clause, as amended, adopted.

Clause 5—(Relations of undertaker with electrical contractors).

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—When this Bill was last under consideration, I asked the Minister if he would say what was the form of arbitration provided in this clause.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—The arbitration will be carried out under the provisions of the Arbitration Act 1915.

The clause was agreed to, as were clauses 6 and 7.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I propose the following new clause:—

8. The provisions of this Act shall apply to the city of Melbourne, and the Governor in Council, on the application, in writing, of the council of any municipality may, by Order published in the *Government Gazette*, declare the whole or any of such provisions to apply to the municipal district of such municipality.

This will cover a defect which has been referred to by several honorable members, who have pointed out that municipalities in small country centres will not be permitted under this Bill to put in fittings.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—They are not allowed now.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Still, they do put in fittings. This Bill has been brought in practically to meet

the requirements of the Melbourne City Council, but I want it to apply to any municipal council which may desire permission from the Governor in Council to work under its provisions.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I should like to know whether the new clause is in order, because the Bill already covers the same ground. The Bill gives every municipal council power to take advantage of its provisions. A council need not take advantage of them unless it likes.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—The new clause says that the measure shall not have a general application.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The Bill is not compulsory on a country municipality. For instance, if the Geelong Council does not desire to take advantage of the Bill, it need not put it into operation.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—That is so.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The option is entirely left with the municipal council?

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—Yes.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Then, where is the necessity for a clause giving a council the option of standing out? I do not know what is in the honorable member's mind; I only know what the provision says.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works).—I take it that Mr. Richardson wishes to make the measure applicable to the city of Melbourne only. He does not desire it to apply to small country towns such as Mr. Crooke referred to last Tuesday night. The clause proposes that before any other council can take advantage of the measure it must make an application to the Governor in Council.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The Bill does not compel a council to take advantage of it.

The Hon. W. A. ADAMSON.—The Governor in Council may say that it is inadvisable to allow some little municipality to apply the measure.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—If Mr. Richardson's object is to prevent country municipalities taking advantage of the measure unless it can be proved that they are competent to deal with such a matter, it gets over the difficulty. He knows more about country municipalities than I do. As far as suburban councils are concerned, we do not wish to be placed in that position. If he thinks it desirable

that country municipalities should be discriminated against, very well.

The new clause was agreed to.

The Bill was reported with further amendments, and the amendments were considered and adopted.

On the motion of the Hon. W. A. ADAMSON (Minister of Public Works), the Bill was then read a third time, and passed.

FISHERIES BILL.

The debate (adjourned from September 4) on the motion of the Hon. W. L. Baillieu (Honorary Minister) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I secured the adjournment of the debate in order to ascertain whether, as stated by the Minister, this Bill was brought in by the desire of the various angling bodies interested, and whether a particular clause in it met with their approval. This is not a Bill which can be debated at any great length on the second reading. It is more a measure for consideration in Committee. In the first clauses there is no very great principle involved. Later on, however, there are provisions which would be most dangerous in operation. In another place this measure was subjected to great opposition. Apparently it was used there to fill in a gap. At the present time we could be more usefully occupied in discussing more important measures. The Bill introduces a most vicious principle which has not been proposed or adopted in any State of the Commonwealth, and that is that in order to fish in our streams a person must take out a licence.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—It is in operation in Tasmania.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—We are told that in Tasmania and New Zealand these licences are in operation, but whether that is so or not we in Victoria desire to lead, and not to follow. As one who has taken a little interest in the sport, I desire, and so do some of the angling clubs, that fishing in our streams should not be restricted in the way proposed. The principle of the proposed trout licence is an obnoxious one. The majority of streams which are away from the metropolitan area have been stocked, not by the Government, but by the various fish protection societies and anglers' clubs. It seems to me to savour somewhat of impertinence to say to the members of those

bodies, "We will charge you so much per annum for catching what you put into the streams at your own expense." I cannot see how any country member can support such a provision. It means that a farmer who has a stream running through his property will not be able to fish in it once it is proclaimed a trout stream, nor, if he has five or six sons, can they do so. An obnoxious principle of that description should not be established. As far as river fishing is concerned, we know that a close season is required. All that is necessary for this particular class of fish is a close season, and that is already provided for in our Fisheries Act. I doubt whether trout is a useful food fish, although we know that it is a good fish from the point of view of sport. Wherever trout and perch have been put into our streams the native fish have diminished, and in some cases have died right out. We know that trout can be caught in all sorts of ways. In New Zealand they have started a sport called "tickling for trout." There large numbers of boys catch trout merely with their hands, and patience. To do that under this Bill the boys would have to get a licence. The effect of the measure will be, as I have said, that farmers will not be allowed to catch fish in streams running through their own property. Those streams are to be specially reserved for visitors from Melbourne and, possibly, for tourists from abroad. It is stated that the proposed licence-fees here will bring in nearly £1,000. Whatever sum is received, it will be more than offset by the payments for inspectors to see that all fishermen have their licences. At least four inspectors will be required to look after these trout streams, and it will probably be necessary to pay each of them £250 a year and travelling expenses. The complaint is made that we are duplicating Wages Boards and Government Departments. Under this measure another Department will be introduced and another staff of inspectors. There is too much of the "Thou shalt not" about our laws, too much of the "Keep off the grass." The Bill means that persons who desire to fish for trout are not allowed to do so without a licence. We should do our best to encourage young men to take up this pastime. A man occupied in the pleasant device of fishing has many virtues which others do not possess. Fishing develops one's thinking

habits. The clause providing for the licence-fee is not desired by all anglers' clubs. Two angling clubs, at any rate, wish me to try to induce the House to throw out the clause providing for the trout licence. We were told that that clause had the approval of all those clubs, but the Fish Protection Society and Anglers' Club of Abbotsford, as well as of Northcote and Preston, are opposed to the clause. Honorable members were led away with the idea that various interests were opposed to the Wages Board proposed this afternoon. We have also been misled in connexion with this measure. The House has been led to believe that the anglers' clubs are in favour of the Bill, and yet two of the principal clubs—I do not say they are the aristocratic, "toffy" clubs—are opposed to the provision I have mentioned. These are not clubs that exist in Melbourne, and that desire all the streams in the country, and elsewhere, to be reserved for their use. I think the House would be well-advised to throw out the Bill altogether, or to cut out this obnoxious clause. I know that we desire to protect our fish, but it is a question as to whether any protection of sea fish is altogether necessary. I rather doubt it myself. The harvest of the sea is inexhaustible. If it can be shown in Committee that in Hobson's Bay and Port Phillip Bay there are breeding-grounds for fish, that the fish remain here, and that by having restrictions we can do the country some good in the way of conserving a supply of fish for food purposes, I will be with the Minister. But we find that the harvest of the sea is practically inexhaustible.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—The breeding spots are not.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It has yet to be shown that there are breeding spots in Port Phillip Bay for this particular class of fish. I do not think there is any Bill such as this in operation in the Old Country, where fisheries have been carried on year after year. The herring fisheries and the great cod fisheries of Newfoundland have been carried on for two or three centuries past. They do not want to spoon-feed the fishermen there. I know that the Minister will say that very likely Port Phillip Bay is a breeding-ground for schnapper. It has been asserted that that is the case, yet any one who has any knowledge of the habits of the schnapper

will say that it is a most peculiar fish, and that very little is really known about it. I should very much like to see the restriction on the length of schnapper that may be caught reduced somewhat, or cut out altogether, because I do not think that this Bill, or the Act itself, can give any measure of protection to the schuapper at all. If it can be shown that the fish breed in the Bay, and remain here, well and good. But we know very well that the schnapper is a Japanese fish, and not indigenous at all to this coast. However, we have a large number of these fish here now. Strange to say, the big fish are always here in September. Any one who has fished in the Bay will know that about this time of the year the schnapper enter the Bay. For very many years they have entered the Bay in one particular direction. They come in round the West Channel, and go out through the Heads by the South Channel. Schnapper caught at this time in the Bay weigh from 6 lbs. up to 30 lbs. I have been told of a schnapper weighing 43½ lbs. having been caught off Mornington. In September and in the beginning of October, the fish are very large; but when November is reached, the fish diminish in size. In the month of December the fish range from 4 to 6 lbs. weight. You very seldom catch a schnapper weighing more than 6 lbs. in December. At the end of December, the weight of the fish has apparently come down, and it is rarely that you catch one weighing over 2 lbs. Honorable members may say, "Surely this is not correct." But every fisherman will tell them the same thing. The schnapper are continually travelling. They are not a migratory fish in the ordinary sense of the word. If they were, I could understand the restriction, so far as size and weight are concerned. A migratory fish is a fish that travels either for breeding or spawning purposes; but, apparently, the schuapper travels round and round Australia for the whole period of its existence. The schnapper that is spawned and grown in Port Phillip Bay does not leave the Bay until it is nearly 1 lb. in weight, and that fish may never return here again. As the Minister well knows, schnapper have been labelled in Port Phillip Bay, and only one of them, so far as I know, has been caught. That fish was caught off the coast of northern Queensland. When they leave our Bay,

the fish travel in a northerly direction, and if they live long enough they will eventually go all round the continent, and find themselves back in our Bay. None of these fish spawn in the Bay, but the breeding-ground is all round Australia. If the Minister wants to protect these fish, he will have to adopt a different course altogether from the present course. At the present time, hundreds of thousands of under-sized fish are caught every year, and are destroyed. It is not permissible to use them for food. What should be done is this: No person fishing on these grounds should be allowed to use a hook less in size than 2-O. No schnapper under 9 to 10 inches in length can be caught except on a hook of a smaller size than 2-O. The small fish are caught by anglers who use very small hooks. The Government will protect the fish if they bring in a measure to compel anglers to use a decent-sized hook.

The Hon. A. A. AUSTIN.—Supposing a man wants to catch other fish?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The other fish on this particular ground are flathead, which you can pretty well catch on a shark hook. No one fishing for schnapper and flathead should ever use a hook smaller in size than a 2-O. The only other fish on these grounds are a few rock cod and butter fish. They are very few and far between. If the Government would bring in legislation in this direction, they would be doing some good. I should like to see provision made in the Bill for the protection, not only of the fish, but of those who go out to catch them. I should like to see some protection afforded with regard to boats which are let out to amateur fishermen.

The PRESIDENT.—I think that is altogether foreign to the Bill.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I am suggesting something that should be included in the Bill.

The PRESIDENT.—I do not think the honorable member can do that.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I regret that that is so. I should like to see the Bill rejected altogether. If it is not rejected, I trust that the provision for the payment of a licence-fee will be removed in the interests of anglers, and more especially of country fishermen, amongst whom I am happy to include myself sometimes. I do not think it is right and proper at this time to tax the people who

desire a little bit of sport and relaxation in the country.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—As one who has taken a good deal of interest in the fishing industry, and who time after time has been on deputations from the Geelong fishermen and the Geelong anglers to Ministers with reference to the restrictions that have been placed on amateur and professional fishermen, I wish to say a few words on the Bill. I am not with the last speaker in saying that the Bill should be thrown out. I would have had a good deal more to say only for the fact that the Chief Secretary, who was in charge of the measure in another place, has promised to reduce the minimum size of schnapper and whiting that may be caught. A large number of anglers and fishermen in the Geelong district were interested in that matter. In view of the Chief Secretary's promise, I support the Bill. The request for a reduction in the minimum size was made by a large number of members in another place, and it was also put forward by a very large number of anglers and fishermen in the Geelong district. When the Premier was in Geelong, I presented to him a petition, signed by 3,500 professional fishermen and anglers, requesting that the minimum size of schnapper and whiting should be reduced. Under the present regulations, the minimum size for schnapper is 11 inches, and an 11-inch schnapper is sufficient for a meal for any person.

The Hon. A. A. AUSTIN.—What would the weight be?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—An ounce to the inch.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—The weight would be about 11 ounces. If a man had a schnapper less than 11 inches in length in his possession, he was liable to be taken to Court and fined. Anglers were taken up and fined for having such fish in their possession. This has resulted in great injury to the city of Geelong. A large number of visitors to Geelong go out fishing, and they are prevented from catching such fish. It has also done an injury to the professional fishermen. I am satisfied that our fishing laws have added pounds on to what the consumers have had to pay for fish. I do not want to say anything about the officers in charge of the fisheries law, but I think they have gone a great deal too far. The previous speaker said that at

the present time you would not get a schnapper in Corio Bay. I do not think you would get one in the whole of Port Phillip Bay. As soon as the cold weather comes, they go north. There were millions of schnapper 11 inches in length in Corio Bay last summer, and now you could not find a solitary one.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It is not the cold water that drives them away.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—They may go away to breed. They leave Port Phillip Bay and Corio Bay and go up north.

The Hon. A. A. AUSTIN.—Do you think it would make any difference if there were no restrictions on the size of fish that can be caught?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—So far as whiting and schnapper are concerned, I do not think it would make a bit of difference. We have millions of tons of fish all round Australia, and yet the price of fish is ridiculously high. It is partly owing to our silly fishing laws. They require altering. There is too much red-tapeism about the matter. The opinion of the so-called experts is taken, and the men who have been brought up in the fishing industry, and who thoroughly understand the matter, are not consulted in any way.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The fish are the principal attraction to the seaside places.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—The present condition of affairs means a loss to Geelong, Portarlington, St. Leonards, and other watering-places; and it also means a loss to the consumer of good, wholesome food. However, the Chief Secretary has promised to reduce the minimum length of schnapper and whiting that may be caught, to 9 inches.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Why should not that be put in the Bill?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I would sooner see it put in the Bill. The late Mr. John Murray, when Chief Secretary, promised one deputation I accompanied that he would have the minimum length of schnapper and whiting reduced, but that promise was never carried out. The Premier also promised to give the matter consideration, but he was overruled by the so-called experts in the Department. However, the Chief Secretary has given the promise I have mentioned. It has satisfied the anglers and the fisher-

men, and I will have nothing further to say so long as that promise is carried out.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was then read a second time, and committed.

Clause 1 was agreed to.

Clause 2—(Extension of power to make proclamations for regulation, &c., of fishing).

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Sub-clause (2) of this clause states—

In paragraph (p) of the said section 7, after the word "fishing" (where it occurs for the second time) there shall be inserted the words "or any such boats."

I referred in my second-reading speech to the licensing of boats. I did not notice the word "boats" in this clause, or I would have drawn the attention of the President to it, and I do not think he would then have pulled me up when referring to the question of licensing boats. At the present time there is hardly any restriction on the licensing of boats that are let out to amateur fishermen in the Bay. We have had experience of the danger of this practice. My namesake, the late Hon. Robert Beckett, directed attention to a case in which two or three boys lost their lives in the Bay when out boating. Every boat that is let out should be licensed. Personally, I do not think that any one should be allowed to hire out a boat on our Bay, because we know that the Bay is often treacherous, more especially to an unexperienced boatman. A man may go out boating on the Bay on a nice clear day in the summer, and before he knows where he is he finds that the wind has twisted round, and it takes him all his time, if he is in an ordinary rowing boat, to reach a place of safety.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—The clause refers only to fishing boats.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The Minister may see his way clear, perhaps, when some other measure is before us, to afford the protection that is needed.

The clause was agreed to, as were clauses 3, 4, and 5.

Clause 6—(Unauthorized putting of non-indigenous fish into Victorian waters).

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I should like to ask the Minister what this particular clause is intended to cover. Is it to prevent people from putting non-indigenous fish into Victorian waters? That would prevent any person who has a nice little lake on his property from stocking it with trout if he so desired.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN (Minister of Agriculture).—I take it that a man who owns a lake enclosed within the boundaries of his property can do what he likes with it. This Bill will not affect such a case as that. Clearly, if a man owned a lake he could prevent any person from going on to his property to fish there. If he does not own the lake, he has no right to put in what are described as predacious fish.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Where would he get them from in the first place?

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—Such fish can be obtained. If fish that are most useful to anglers and others, and are the best for the purposes of sport, are to be bred in security, the Department must have the necessary authority to prevent fish of a predatory nature being put into the waters.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—English trout would kill any fish.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I understand that the Government introduced perch into Victorian waters. There is no more predatory fish than perch. Where they have been put into waters no other fish can exist. This clause distinctly applies to all Victorian waters, whether lakes or streams. A man may have a fairly large property through which a river runs. He would, according to the Bill, not be allowed to put fish into that.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—He would not own the river.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—He may have a water-course with a succession of lakes that, perhaps, only once a year is a river within the meaning of the Act. He is not allowed to put even a trout into it.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN (Minister of Agriculture).—The Chief Inspector of Fisheries, who is supposed to know a good deal about fish and fishing, makes this comment—

Under the present law, there is nothing to prevent persons importing predacious and worthless fishes from other countries and liberating them in our waters.

This clause will give full control to the Minister. The Minister is not likely to prevent a man who goes to a lot of trouble to improve the stocking of fish in streams or lakes from doing it.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Does the Minister fear that the association known as the Industrial Workers of the

World may introduce predacious fish in order that they shall eat up our native fish? I know that members of this association are accused of all kinds of things. Some people seem to think that they are responsible even for the spots on the sun.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—They would certainly be prevented from introducing predacious fish into our waters.

The clause was agreed to.

Clause 7—(Provision for the issue of licences to fish for non-indigenous trout).

The Hon. D. L. McNAMARA.—I should like to ask the Minister how far this clause goes. Personally, I am against the imposition of licence-fees for fishing at all.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—The object is to charge a licence-fee to people who wish to fish for trout.

The Hon. D. L. McNAMARA.—We are placing a great restriction on fishermen. I am against the principle of issuing licences to privileged persons.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—I understand that a special kind of tackle is used in fishing for trout.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Trout can be caught any old way—with a fly, with a worm, and with a person's fingers.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN (Minister of Agriculture).—If a fisherman accidentally catches a trout, when his object is to catch other fish, he will not be punished for catching the trout. All that he has to do under section 4 of the Fisheries Act, which is not amended by this Bill, is to put the trout back into the water.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Will an ordinary country boy be able to tell whether he has caught a trout or a black-fish?

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—It is not probable that such a boy will be punished.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I have not heard any reason why it is desirable to impose a licence-fee for the catching of trout. In this country we should not impose restrictions of this sort. I am not a fisherman, but I do not see the necessity for such a restriction. I know that a licence-fee is charged in the Old Country, but I do not see any reason for it here. Sub-clause (2) states—

Subject to the Fisheries Acts, any person, not being the holder of a trout-fishing licence,

who, after the expiration of six months from the commencement of this Act, fishes for or takes non-indigenous trout shall be liable to a penalty of not less than £2 or more than £10.

This is a severe penalty. The magistrate cannot inflict a lesser fine than £2. When the Game Bill was before us last week, a suggestion was made that there should be a minimum penalty. The House did not accept the proposal. I think in a case like this the penalty could be safely left to the discretion of the magistrate. The Minister said that if a boy accidentally caught a trout nothing would be said to him. But the magistrate is not given any latitude. He must inflict a penalty of not less than £2.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It makes criminals of country boys who are anxious to have a bit of sport.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—We do not want to take up an extreme attitude. We want to take a reasonable view of the matter. Personally, I do not think it desirable to impose a licence-fee for fishing.

The Hon. W. S. MANIFOLD.—You admitted that you were not a fisherman.

The Hon. J. K. MERRITT.—I am not a fisherman. But I can see no use for the restriction. Up to the present time everybody has been allowed to fish for trout if they so desired in any waters.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN (Minister of Agriculture).—Persons interested in trout fishing in Victoria have long asked for the imposition of a licence-fee, and have expressed their willingness to pay it. There is the cost to the Government of a certain expenditure every year, and it is a fair thing that those who get the benefit should contribute something to the amount. The fees are moderate. They are only half the amount of those in force in New Zealand. Tasmania has similar fees to those proposed in this Bill. As to the penalty, I may say that it is very hard to catch offenders. It is necessary that some penalty should be imposed. As a rule, the magistrates impose a nominal fine. The anglers who are interested say that when a person is caught breaking the law a substantial fine should be imposed as a preventive.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—We are here to discuss this matter on its merits, and both sides of the case should be put

before honorable members. The Minister says that the licence is desired by persons who fish for trout.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—By the anglers' societies.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The Minister does not give the names of the societies. I have letters from two societies. Just let me read this communication from the Northcote and Preston Fish Protection Society and Anglers' Club—

Dear Sir,

I have been instructed by the members of the above society to state that they are against a trout licence being imposed on them after the societies for many years stocking the streams at their own expense with yearling trout.

They state that the fish that are now being caught were not placed in the streams at the expense of the Government, but at the expense of the anglers' clubs that are opposed to the licence. The letter goes on—

Since the Government has taken over the stocking of streams, we venture to state that the sport obtainable has not shown as good results as when the angling clubs had the matter in their own hands. This refers principally to the metropolitan area. For the Government now to proclaim trout streams, and impose a trout licence on us anglers who, at their own expense and trouble, stocked the streams with fish that are now being caught, seems to us to be very unjust. The imposition will tend to make trout angling a class sport. We, therefore, ask you to use your influence in protesting against this matter when it comes before your own body.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—They are being relieved of the obligation now.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The honorable gentleman said that this measure was brought in at the wish of the anglers' societies. These societies I have referred to object to the licence, because they are catching their own fish. They say that the members of their clubs are honorary inspectors, and that if the licensing system is introduced the Government will have paid inspectors, so that the community will be saddled with a liability. It will mean placing a tax on every boy who goes out fishing. I cannot understand how country members can agree to a proposal that really means that every boy who goes out fishing must pay a licence. The idea is preposterous, and no honorable member should subscribe to it. These clubs believe that once the licence is established it will only be a

matter of a little time when no one will be allowed to fish in our streams. The object the Government have in view is that of proclaiming certain streams trout streams in which no one will be allowed to fish.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—There is only one angler in the Government, and the rest of us are guided by the officer at the head of the Fisheries Department.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Why should people be deprived of their liberties unless some good result is to be derived? We should do our best to encourage young fellows in the country to have useful sport. You cannot compare our fishing with that of New Zealand. On Lake Taupo you can see men coming in with boatloads of rainbow trout. They cast them ashore, and they are used to manure the gardens. We are not in that position. No wonder there is a tax in New Zealand. The same thing applies to some parts of Tasmania. Here a man may fish all day without catching anything.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN (Minister of Agriculture).—The honorable member has said that certain angling clubs are against this proposal. The main authority on fishing here is the Piscatorial Council, which represents nearly all the angling clubs of Victoria, and has a membership probably eight or nine times as great as the one or two clubs that are not represented on the council. The Piscatorial Council, representing practically all the angling clubs, unanimously approve of the licence. The official amateur fishermen are really unanimously in favour of the licence.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Has the Minister the letter from the Piscatorial Council?

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—I spoke from a statement given to me by the Chief Inspector of Fisheries.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Have you the letter?

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—If I brought all the letters with me I should have a few tons of papers here. I take it that the honorable member will accept a statement made by a responsible officer.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—He might be deceived.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—The total amount expended by the clubs in stocking the streams does not amount to anything like the sum spent by the Government in one year.

The Hon. J. STERNBERG.—How many inspectors will be necessary?

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—I do not know.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Will the Minister agree to postpone this clause so that we can get the opinion of the various angling clubs?

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN.—I have no objection.

The Hon. E. J. WHITE.—I do not like this clause. I represent a fishing club in Hamilton that has 170 members. I think the departmental officer will bear me out when I say that our society is one of the most live societies in Victoria. Every member of it is a keen fisherman, and is practically an honorary inspector. They are out for the protection of the fish, and would not allow the law to be broken. They have spent a great deal of their own money in stocking the Wandon River with trout, but unfortunately for them, trout do not do well there. I do not know whether the perch have eaten them or not. Last year these men caught only five fish in the whole twelve months. If they have to pay 10s. a year it will mean £85, and at that rate each of the five fish will represent £17. They do not object to pay the licence if they can have trout fishing, and they suggest that certain streams in which trout are plentiful should be proclaimed as trout streams. It seems to be ridiculous to penalize men for fishing in streams where there is only an odd trout. I should like to see the clause amended, or else struck out.

The Hon. F. W. HAGELTHORN (Minister of Agriculture).—I am not certain whether the honorable member has made out a very good case. It may be set out as a proportion sum that if 170 fishermen catch five trout in twelve months, how much should they pay for the licence? I can promise the honorable member that, if the Bill passes with this clause in it, I shall be prepared to pay any of the fines imposed on his constituents.