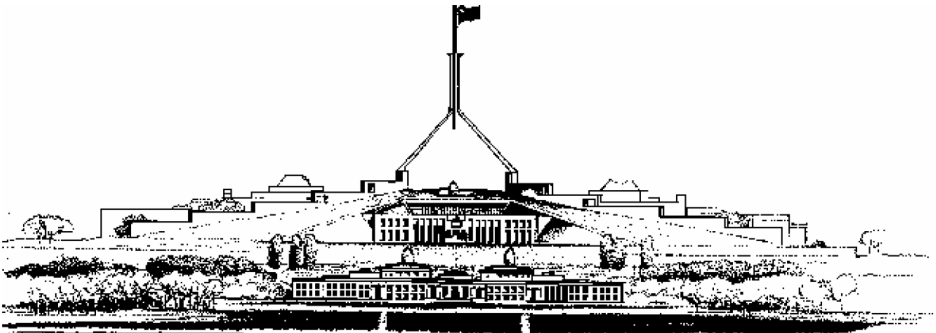




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 43, 1927
Friday, 28 October 1927

TENTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—THIRD PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

His Excellency the Right Honorable JOHN LAWRENCE, BARON STONEHAVEN, a Member of His Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Companion of the Distinguished Service Order, Governor-General, and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Commonwealth of Australia.

BRUCE-PAGE GOVERNMENT.

(From 9th February, 1923.)

Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs	The Right Honorable Stanley Melbourne Bruce, C.H., P.C., M.C.
Treasurer	The Honorable Earle Christmas Grafton Page.
Vice-President of the Executive Council	The Honorable Llewelyn Atkinson. <i>succeeded by</i> Senator the Right Honorable Sir George Foster Pearce, P.C., K.C.V.O. (18th June, 1926).
Attorney-General	The Honorable Sir Littleton Ernest Groom, K.C.M.G., K.C. <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable John Greig Latham, C.M.G., K.C. (18th December, 1925).
Postmaster-General	The Honorable William Gerrard Gibson.
Minister for Trade and Customs ..	The Honorable Sir Austin Chapman, K.C.M.G. <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Sir Littleton Ernest Groom, K.C.M.G., K.C. (29th May, 1924) <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Herbert Edward Pratten (13th June, 1924) <i>succeeded by</i> The Right Honorable Stanley Melbourne Bruce, C.H., P.C., M.C. (8th May, 1928).
Minister for Home and Territories	Sensor the Right Honorable Sir George Foster Pearce, P.C., K.C.V.O. <i>succeeded by</i> Senator the Honorable Sir Thomas William Glasgow, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. (18th June, 1926) <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Charles William Clanranold Marr, D.S.O., M.C., V.D. (2nd April, 1927) <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Sir Neville Reginald Howse, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G. (24th February, 1928).
Minister for Defence	The Honorable Eric Kendall Bowden. <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Sir Neville Reginald Howse, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G. (16th January, 1925) <i>succeeded by</i> Senator the Honorable Sir Thomas William Glasgow, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. (2nd April, 1927).
Minister for Works and Railways	The Honorable Percy Gerald Stewart. <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable William Caldwell Hill (8th August, 1924).
Minister for Markets and Migration (from 16th January, 1926, to 19th January, 1928)	Sensor the Honorable Sir Victor Wilson, K.B.E. <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Thomas Paterson (18th June, 1926).

Minister for Markets (from 19th January, 1928) The Honorable Thomas Paterson.

Minister for Health The Honorable Sir Austin Chapman, K.C.M.G.
succeeded by
 The Honorable Sir Littleton Groom, K.C.M.G., K.C. (29th May, 1924)
succeeded by
 The Honorable Herbert Edward Pratten (13th June, 1924)
succeeded by
 The Honorable Sir Neville Reginald Howse, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G. (16th January, 1925)
succeeded by
 The Right Honorable Stanley Melbourne Bruce, C.H., P.C., M.C. (2nd April, 1927)
succeeded by
 The Honorable Sir Neville Reginald Howse, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G. (24th February, 1928).

Minister in Charge of Repatriation The Honorable Sir Neville Reginald Howse, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G. (16th January, 1925).

Honorary Ministers Senator the Honorable Sir Victor Wilson, K.B.E. (to 16th January, 1925).
 The Honorable Charles William Clanan Marr, D.S.O., M.C., V.D. (from 16th January, 1925, to 2nd April, 1927, and from 24th February, 1928).
 The Honorable Sir Neville Howse, V.C., K.C.B. K.C.M.G. (from 2nd April 1927, to 24th February, 1928).
 Senator the Honorable Thomas William Crawford (from 14th February, 1923).
 Senator the Honorable Alexander John McLachlan (from 29th August, 1926).

THE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE.

TENTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION.

(From 1st July, 1926.)

President—Senator the Honorable Sir John Newlands, K.C.M.G., C.B.E.

Chairman of Committees—Senator William Plain.

Abbott, Percy Phipps, C.M.G., V.D.	..	..	..	..	New South Wales
Andrew, David	..	..	..	..	Victoria
Barnes, John	..	..	..	..	Victoria
*Barwell, Hon. Sir Henry Newman, K.C.M.G.	..	..	..	..	South Australia
Carroll, William	..	..	..	..	Western Australia
Chapman, John Hedley	..	..	..	..	South Australia
Cox, Charles Frederick, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D.	..	..	..	..	New South Wales
Crawford, Hon. Thomas William	..	..	..	..	Queensland
¹ Duncan, Walter Leslie	..	..	..	..	New South Wales
Elliott, Harold Edward, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., D.C.M.	..	..	..	..	Victoria
¹ Findley, Hon. Edward	..	..	..	..	Victoria
Foll, Hattil Spencer	..	..	..	..	Queensland
*Gardiner, Albert	..	..	..	..	New South Wales
*Givens, Thomas	..	..	..	..	Queensland
Glasgow, Hon. Sir Thomas William, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D.	..	..	..	..	Queensland
Graham, Charles Montague	..	..	..	..	Western Australia
⁷ Grant, John	..	..	..	..	New South Wales
Greene, Hon. Walter Massy	..	..	..	..	New South Wales
*Guthrie, James Francis	..	..	..	..	Victoria
Hayes, John Blyth, C.M.G.	..	..	..	..	Tasmania
Hays, Hon. Herbert	..	..	..	..	Tasmania
Hoare, Albert Alfred	..	..	..	..	South Australia
¹ Kingsmill, Walter	..	..	..	..	Western Australia
Lynch, Hon. Patrick Joseph	..	..	..	..	Western Australia
¹⁰ M MacDonald, John Valentine	..	..	..	..	Queensland
*McHugh, Charles Stephen	..	..	..	..	South Australia
McLachlan, Hon. Alexander John	..	..	..	..	South Australia
Millen, John Dunlop	..	..	..	..	Tasmania
Needham, Edward	..	..	..	..	Western Australia
Newlands, Hon. Sir John, K.C.M.G., C.B.E.	..	..	..	..	South Australia
¹ Ogden, James Ernest	..	..	..	..	Tasmania
Payne, Hon. Herbert James Mockford	..	..	..	..	Tasmania
Pearce, Right Hon. Sir George Foster, P.C., K.C.V.O.	..	..	..	..	Western Australia
Plain, William	..	..	..	..	Victoria
Reid, Matthew	..	..	..	..	Queensland
*Robinson, Albert William	..	..	..	..	South Australia
Sampson, Burford, D.S.O.	..	..	..	..	Tasmania
Thomas, Hon. Josiah	..	..	..	..	New South Wales
Thompson, William George	..	..	..	..	Queensland
*Verran, Hon. John	..	..	..	..	South Australia

1. Temporary Chairman of Committees. 2. Sworn 8th July, 1926. 3. Death reported 26th September, 1927. 4. Chosen by State Parliament 30th August, 1927. Sworn 28th September, 1927.
5. Resignation reported, 26th April, 1928. 6. Chosen by State Executive 15th April, 1928. Sworn 20th April, 1928. Chosen by State Parliament 15th May, 1928. 7. Death reported 22nd May, 1928. Sworn 20th April, 1928.
8. Chosen by State Parliament 5th June, 1928. Sworn 11th June, 1928. 9. Death reported 29th August, 1928. 10. Chosen by State Parliament 1st August, 1928. Sworn 20th August, 1928.

THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

TENTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION.

Speaker—The Honorable Sir Littleton Groom, K.C.M.G., K.C.

Chairman of Committees—James Garfield Bayley.

Abbott, Charles Lydiard Aubrey	Gwydir (N.S.W.)
Anstey, Frank	Bourke (V.)
Atkinson, Hon. Llewelyn	Wilmot (T.)
Bayley, James Garfield	Oxley (Q.)
Bell, George John, C.M.G., D.S.O.	Darwin (T.)
Blakeley, Arthur	Darling (N.S.W.)
Bowden, Hon. Eric Kendall	Parramatta (N.S.W.)
Brennan, Frank	Batman (V.)
Bruce, Right Hon. Stanley Melbourne, C.H., P.C., M.C.	Flinders (V.)
Cameron, Donald Charles, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D.	Brisbane (Q.)
Cameron, Malcolm Duncan	Barker (S.A.)
¹ Chapman, Hon. Sir Austin, K.C.M.G.	Eden-Monaro (N.S.W.)
Charlton, Matthew	Hunter (N.S.W.)
Coleman, Percy Edmund	Reid (N.S.W.)
Cook, Robert	Indi (V.)
¹² Corser, Bernard Henry	Wide Bay (Q.)
¹³ Corser, Edward Bernard Cresset	Wide Bay (Q.)
¹⁴ Duncan-Hughes, John Grant, M.V.O., M.C.	Boothby (S.A.)
Fenton, James Edward	Maribyrnong (V.)
Forde, Francis Michael	Capricornia (Q.)
Foster, Hon. Richard Witty	Wakefield (S.A.)
Francis, Grosvenor Arundell	Kennedy (Q.)
Francis, Josiah	Moreton (Q.)
Gardner, Sydney Lane	Robertson (N.S.W.)
Gollibrand, Sir John, K.C.B., D.S.O.	Denison (T.)
Gibson, Hon. William Gerrard	Corangamite (V.)
Green, Albert Ernest	Kalgoorlie (W.A.)
Green, Roland Frederick Herbert	Richmond (N.S.W.)
Gregory, Hon. Henry	Swan (W.A.)
Groom, Hon. Sir Littleton Ernest, K.C.M.G., K.C.	Darling Downs (Q.)
Gullett, Henry Somer	Henty (V.)
Hill, Hon. William Caldwell	Echuca (V.)
Howse, Hon. Sir Neville Reginald, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G.	Calare (N.S.W.)
Hughes, Right Hon. William Morris, P.C., K.C.	North Sydney (N.S.W.)
Hunter, James Aitchison Johnston	Maranoa (Q.)
¹⁵ Hurry, Geoffrey, D.S.O., V.D.	Bendigo (V.)
Jackson, David Sydney	Bass (T.)
Johnson, Hon. Sir Elliot, K.C.M.G.	Lang (N.S.W.)
Killen, William Wilson	Riverina (N.S.W.)
Lacey, Andrew William	Grey (S.A.)
¹⁶ Lambert, William Henry	West Sydney (N.S.W.)
Latham, Hon. John Greig, C.M.G., K.C.	Kooyong (V.)
Lazzarini, Hubert Peter	Werrima (N.S.W.)
Ley, Hon. Thomas John	Barton (N.S.W.)
Lister, John Henry	Corio (V.)
Mackay, George Hugh	Lilley (Q.)
¹⁷ Mahony, William George	Dalley (N.S.W.)
¹⁸ Makin, Norman John Oswald	Hindmarsh (S.A.)
Maloney, William	Melbourne (V.)
¹⁹ Mann, Edward Alexander	Perth (W.A.)
Manning, Arthur Gibson	Macquarie (N.S.W.)
Marks, Walter Moffit	Wentworth (N.S.W.)
Marr, Hon. Charles William Clenan, D.S.O., M.C., V.D.	Parkos (N.S.W.)
Mathews, James	Melbourne Ports (V.)
Maxwell, George Arnot, K.C.	Fawkner (V.)
McGrath, David Charles	Ballaarat (V.)
Moloney, Parker John	Hume (N.S.W.)
²⁰ Nelson, Harold George	Northern Territory
Nott, Lewis Windermere	Herbert (Q.)
Page, Hon. Earle Christmas Grafton	Cowper (N.S.W.)

TENTH PARLIAMENT—continued.

*Parkhill, Robert Archdale	Warringah (N.S.W.)
Parsons, Walter Langdon	Angas (S.A.)
Paterson, Hon. Thomas	Gippsland (V.)
*Perkins, John Arthur	Eden Monaro (N.S.W.)
*Pratten, Frederick Graham	Martin (N.S.W.)
*Pratten, Hon. Herbert Edward	Martin (N.S.W.)
*Prowse, John Henry	Forrest (W.A.)
Riley, Edward	South Sydney (N.S.W.)
Riley, Edward Charles	Cook (N.S.W.)
Rodgers, Hon. Arthur Stanislaus	Warranook (V.)
*Ryrie, Hon. Sir Granville de Laune, K.C.M.G., C.B., V.D.	Warringah (N.S.W.)
Scullin, James Henry	Yarra (V.)
Seabrook, Alfred Charles	Franklin (T.)
Stewart, Hon. Percy Gerald	Wimmera (V.)
*Theodore, Hon. Edward Granville	Dalley (N.S.W.)
Thompson, Victor Charles	New England (N.S.W.)
*Watkins, Hon. David	Newcastle (N.S.W.)
Watson, William	Fremantle (W.A.)
Watt, Right Hon. William Alexander, P.C.	Balclutha (V.)
West, John Edward	East Sydney (N.S.W.)
Yates, George Edwin	Adelaide (S.A.)

1. Death reported 13th January, 1923. 2. Temporary Chairman of Committees. 3. Sworn 3rd February, 1926. 4. Elected 8th March, 1926; Sworn 22nd March, 1926. 5. Resignation announced 2nd March, 1927. 6. Elected 26th February, 1927. Sworn 2nd March, 1927. 7. Resignation announced 9th May, 1927. 8. Elected 21st May, 1927. Sworn 28th September, 1927. 9. Death reported 9th May, 1928. 10. Elected 16th June, 1928. Sworn 29th August, 1928. 11. Death reported 29th August, 1928. 12. Elected 3rd September, 1928. Sworn 11th September, 1928. 13. Death reported 7th September, 1928.

THE COMMITTEES OF THE SESSION.

(THIRD PERIOD.)

JOINT.

HOUSE.—The President (Chairman), the Chairman of Committees (Senator Plain), Senator Cox, Senator Graham, Senator Guthrie, Senator Hoare, Senator Sampson, the Speaker, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Foster, Mr. Grosvenor Francis (appointed 30th September, 1927), Mr. Gregory, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Manning, Mr. Marr (discharged 30th September, 1927), and Mr. West.

LIBRARY.—The Speaker (Chairman), the President, Senator Abbott, Senator Graham, Senator Kingsmill, Senator Millen, Senator Needham, Senator Ogden, Mr. Anstey, Mr. Bowden, Mr. Brennan, Mr. Duncan-Hughes, Sir Elliot Johnson, Mr. Maxwell, and Mr. Watt.

MOVING PICTURE INDUSTRY—SELECT COMMITTEE (Converted into Royal Commission).—Mr. Marks (Chairman), Senator Duncan, Senator Grant, Senator Herbert Hays, Mr. Forde, Mr. Gregory, and Dr. Nott.

PRINTING.—Mr. E. B. C. Corser (Chairman) (death announced 29th August, 1928), Senator Andrew, Senator Elliott, Senator Findley, Senator Graham (from 14th June, 1928), Senator Grant (death reported 22nd May, 1928), Senator J. B. Hayes, Senator Hoare (from 30th September, 1927), Senator McHugh (death reported 28th September, 1927), Senator Thompson, Mr. C. L. A. Abbott, Mr. D. Cameron, Mr. R. Green, Mr. E. Riley, Mr. Scullin, and Mr. Watson.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.—Senator Kingsmill (Chairman), Senator J. B. Hayes, Senator Hoare (from 30th September, 1927), Senator McHugh (death reported 28th September, 1927), Mr. C. L. A. Abbott, Mr. Grosvenor Francis, Mr. Gardner, Mr. Lister, Mr. Parker Moloney, Mr. Prowse, and Mr. E. C. Riley.

PUBLIC WORKS.—Mr. Mackay (Chairman), Senator Barnes, Senator Payne, Senator Reid, Mr. M. Cameron, Mr. Cook, Mr. Lacey, Mr. McGrath, and Mr. Seabrook.

SENATE.

DISPUTED RETURNS AND QUALIFICATIONS.—Senator Barnes (from 13th June, 1928), Senator Duncan, Senator Grant (death reported 22nd May, 1928), Senator Guthrie, Senator Hoare, Senator Needham, Senator Payne, and Senator Thompson.

STANDING ORDERS.—The President (Chairman), the Chairman of Committees, Senator Duncan, Senator Findley, Senator Foll, Senator Herbert Hays, Senator Hoare, Senator Kingsmill, and Senator Needham.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

STANDING ORDERS.—The Speaker (Chairman), the Chairman of Committees, Mr. Bruce, Mr. Charlton, Sir Elliot Johnson, Dr. Earle Page, and Mr. Watt.

THE ACTS OF THE SESSION.

(THIRD PERIOD.)

APPROPRIATION ACT 1927-28 (No. 28 OF 1927)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum for the service of the year ending the thirtieth day of June One thousand nine hundred and twenty-eight and to appropriate the Supplies granted by the Parliament for such year.

APPROPRIATION ACT 1928-29 (No. 48 OF 1928)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum for the service of the year ending the thirtieth day of June One thousand nine hundred and twenty-nine and to appropriate the Supplies granted by the Parliament for such year.

APPROPRIATION (WORKS AND BUILDINGS) ACT 1927-28 (No. 26 OF 1927)—

An Act to grant and apply a sum out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the service of the year ending the thirtieth day of June One thousand nine hundred and twenty-eight for the purposes of Additions, New Works, Buildings, &c., and to appropriate such sum.

APPROPRIATION (WORKS AND BUILDINGS) ACT 1928-29 (No. 30 OF 1928)—

An Act to grant and apply a sum out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the service of the year ending the thirtieth day of June One thousand nine hundred and twenty-nine for the purposes of Additions, New Works, Buildings, &c., and to appropriate such sum.

ARBITRATION (PUBLIC SERVICE) ACT (No. 1 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Arbitration (Public Service) Act* 1920.

BANKRUPTCY ACT (No. 39 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Bankruptcy Act* 1924-1927.

BEER EXCISE ACT (No. 38 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Beer Excise Act* 1901-1923.

COMMONWEALTH BANK (SAVINGS BANK) ACT (No. 36 OF 1927)—

An Act to amend the *Commonwealth Bank Act* 1911-1925.

COMMONWEALTH CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT (No. 18 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act* 1904-1927.

COMMONWEALTH ELECTORAL ACT (No. 17 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Commonwealth Electoral Act* 1918-1925.

COMMONWEALTH HOUSING ACT 1927 (No. 35 OF 1927)—

An Act relating to Housing.

COMMONWEALTH HOUSING ACT 1928 (No. 10 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Commonwealth Housing Act* 1927.

COMMONWEALTH PUBLIC SERVICE ACT (No. 41 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Commonwealth Public Service Act* 1922-1924.

CRIMES ACT (No. 13 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Crimes Act* 1914-1926.

CUSTOMS TARIFF 1928 (No. 2 OF 1928)—

An Act relating to Duties of Customs.

CUSTOMS TARIFF (No. 2) 1928 (No. 35 OF 1928)—

An Act relating to Duties of Customs.

CUSTOMS TARIFF (No. 3) 1928 (No. 36 OF 1928)—

An Act relating to Duties of Customs.

CUSTOMS TARIFF (NEW ZEALAND PREFERENCE) (No. 25 OF 1928)—

An Act relating to Duties of Customs on Goods the Produce or Manufacture of the Dominion of New Zealand.

CUSTOMS TARIFF VALIDATION ACT (No. 3 OF 1928)—

An Act to provide for the Validation of Collections of Duties of Customs under Tariff Proposals.

DEFENCE EQUIPMENT ACT (No. 6 OF 1928)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund the sum of Three million two hundred and twenty thousand pounds for Naval Construction, a Reserve for Defence and the Development of Civil Aviation.

DRIED FRUITS ACT (No. 11 OF 1928)—

An Act relating to Trade and Commerce with other Countries and among the States in certain Dried Fruits.

ESTATE DUTY ASSESSMENT ACT 1928 (No. 47 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Estate Duty Assessment Act* 1914-1922, and for other purposes.

EXCISE TARIFF 1928 (No. 4 OF 1928)—

An Act relating to Duties of Excise.

FINANCIAL AGREEMENT ACT (No. 5 OF 1928)—

An Act to approve an agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia of the First Part and the States of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania of the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Parts respectively and for other purposes.

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY ACT (No. 24 OF 1928)—

An Act to provide for carrying out Geophysical Surveys in Australia.

INCOME TAX ACT 1927 (No. 31 OF 1927)—

An Act to impose Taxes upon Incomes.

INCOME TAX ACT 1928 (No. 45 OF 1928)—

An Act to impose Taxes upon Incomes.

INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT 1927 (No. 32 OF 1927)—

An Act to amend the *Income Tax Assessment Act* 1922-1925 and for other purposes.

INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT 1928 (No. 46 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Income Tax Assessment Act* 1922-1927, and for other purposes.

INVALID AND OLD-AGE PENSIONS ACT (No. 31 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend sections four, thirty-one, forty-five and forty-seven of the *Invalid and Old-age Pensions Act* 1908-1926.

INVALID AND OLD-AGE PENSIONS APPROPRIATION ACT 1928 (No. 20 OF 1928)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a Sum for Invalid and Old-age Pensions.

IRON AND STEEL PRODUCTS BOUNTY ACT 1927 (No. 38 OF 1927)—

An Act to amend the *Iron and Steel Products Bounty Act* 1922.

LAND TAX ACT 1927 (No. 29 OF 1927)—

An Act to amend the *Land Tax Act* 1910-1922.

LAND TAX ASSESSMENT ACT 1927 (No. 30 OF 1927)—

An Act to amend the *Land Tax Assessment Act* 1910-1926.

LAND TAX ASSESSMENT ACT 1928 (No. 34 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend sections thirteen, forty-four and forty-nine of the *Land Tax Assessment Act* 1910-1927.

LOAN ACT (No. 2) 1927 (No. 27 OF 1927)—

An Act to authorize the Raising and Expending of certain Sums of Money.

LOAN ACT (No. 1) 1928 (No. 26 OF 1928)—

An Act to authorize the Raising and Expending of certain Sums of Money.

LOAN ACT (No. 2) 1928 (No. 33 OF 1928)—

An Act to authorize the Raising and Expending of certain Sums of Money.

MATERNITY ALLOWANCE ACT (No. 34 OF 1927)—

An Act to amend the *Maternity Allowance Act* 1912-26.

NATIONAL DEBT SINKING FUND ACT (No. 19 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *National Debt Sinking Fund Act* 1923-1925.

OFFICERS' RIGHTS DECLARATION ACT (No. 16 OF 1928)—

An Act Relating to the Rights of Officers.

PARLIAMENTARY ALLOWANCES ACT (No. 9 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend sections four and five of the *Parliamentary Allowances Act* 1920.

PETROLEUM PROSPECTING ACT (No. 8 OF 1928)—

An Act relating to the Encouragement of Prospecting for Petroleum Oil.

RADIUM APPROPRIATION ACT (No. 7 OF 1928)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum for the Purchase of Radium.

REFERENDUM (CONSTITUTION ALTERATION) ACT (No. 42 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Referendum (Constitution Alteration) Act* 1906-1926 and for other purposes.

SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY APPROPRIATION ACT (No. 27 OF 1928)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum for Scientific and Industrial Investigation.

SEAT OF GOVERNMENT (ADMINISTRATION) ACT (No. 44 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Seat of Government (Administration) Act 1924-1926.*

STATE OF GOVERNMENT RAILWAY ACT (No. 40 OF 1928)—

An Act relating to the Seat of Government Railway.

SERVICE AND EXECUTION OF PROCESS ACT (No. 14 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *Service and Execution of Process Act 1901-1924.*

STATE AND TERRITORIAL LAWS AND RECORDS RECOGNITION ACT (No. 15 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend the *State Laws and Records Recognition Act 1901.*

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT 1926-27 (No. 28 OF 1928)—

An Act to appropriate a further sum out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the service of the year ended the thirtieth day of June One thousand nine hundred and twenty-seven.

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (WORKS AND BUILDINGS) ACT 1926-27 (No. 29 OF 1928)—

An Act to appropriate a further sum out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the service of the year ended the thirtieth day of June One thousand nine hundred and twenty-seven for the purposes of Additions, New Works, Buildings, &c.

SUPPLY ACT (No. 2) 1927-28 (No. 25 OF 1927)—

An Act to grant and apply a sum out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the service of the year ending the thirtieth day of June One thousand nine hundred and twenty-eight.

SUPPLY ACT (No. 1) 1928-29 (No. 22 OF 1928)—

An Act to grant and apply a sum out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the service of the year ending the thirtieth day of June One thousand nine hundred and twenty-nine.

TASMANIA GRANT ACT (No. 32 OF 1928)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum for the purpose of Financial Assistance to the State of Tasmania.

TASMANIA SINKING FUND AGREEMENT ACT (No. 43 OF 1928)—

An Act to approve an Agreement made between His Majesty's Government of the Commonwealth of Australia and His Majesty's Government of the State of Tasmania.

TRANSPORT WORKERS ACT (No. 37 OF 1928)—

An Act relating to Employment in relation to Trade and Commerce with other Countries and among the States.

WAR PENSIONS APPROPRIATION ACT 1928 (No. 21 OF 1928)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum for War Pensions.

WAR PRECAUTIONS ACT REPEAL ACT (No. 23 OF 1928)—

An Act relating to section eight of the *War Precautions Act Repeal Act 1920-1923.*

WAR SERVICE HOMES AGREEMENT ACT (No. 33 OF 1927)—

An Act to approve an agreement made between His Majesty's Government of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Commissioners of the Savings Bank of Victoria and for other purposes.

WINE EXPORT BOUNTY ACT (No. 12 OF 1928)—

An Act to amend section five of the *Wine Export Bounty Act 1924-1927.*

WIRELESS AGREEMENT ACT (No. 37 OF 1927)—

An Act to approve the Agreement made between His Majesty's Government of the Commonwealth of Australia and Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Limited.

BILLS OF THE SESSION.

(THIRD PERIOD.)

AUSTRALIAN BRITISH EMPIRE EXHIBITION BILL.
COMMERCE (TRADE DESCRIPTIONS) BILL 1928.
COMMONWEALTH EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION BILL.
CONSTITUTION ALTERATION (STATE DEBTS) BILL.
DEFENCE BILL (No. 1) 1927.
FORESTRY BUREAU BILL.
INVALID AND OLD-AGE PENSIONS BILL (No. 2).
NATIONAL INSURANCE BILL.
NATIONALITY BILL.
NEW GUINEA BILL.
PATENTS BILL.
PORT AUGUSTA TO RED HILL RAILWAY BILL.
POST AND TELEGRAPH BILL.
POST AND TELEGRAPH RATES BILL.

* Passed by both Houses and awaiting a referendum of the people.

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House of Representatives.

Friday, 28 October, 1927.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. Sir Littleton Groom) took the chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

INSURANCE PREMIUM CHARGES.

Mr. COLEMAN.—On the 8th May, 1924, I asked the Prime Minister whether it was a fact that Australian Insurance Companies were charging excessive premiums by basing the expectation of life in Australia on English tables, and whether the Commonwealth Government would introduce an insurance law to compel life insurance companies to adapt their premiums to the actual mortality statistics of Australia. To this the Prime Minister replied that when the Royal Commission on National Insurance had completed its inquiries, the Government would consider its policy on the whole matter of insurance. As the National Insurance Commission has now completed its inquiry, and in view of the complexities of legislation of this character, and the many allegations of roguery and malpractice in relation to the formation of "wild-cat" insurance companies, will the Government cause legislative action to be expedited by the appointment of a select committee to conduct exhaustive investigations into the whole subject of ordinary insurance? Is it not a fact that the Constitution vests in the Commonwealth Parliament complete power to legislate on this subject?

Mr. LATHAM.—The subject of life insurance is being investigated by the Attorney-General's Department, with a view to the preparation of suitable legislation. The Government does not consider it necessary that a select committee should be appointed to inquire into the matter. The Commonwealth Parliament has power to legislate with respect to insurance generally, including life insurance.

AIR FORCE FATALITIES.

Mr. BLAKELEY.—Has the Minister representing the Minister for Defence any information to impart to the House

in connexion with the death of Cadet Seach who "crashed" yesterday when making a flight from Point Cook? In view of the high and disquieting mortality in the Commonwealth Air Force during the last six years, twelve valuable lives having been lost, will the Minister consider the advisability of altering the methods of instruction and training at Point Cook, and also cause an inquiry to be made concerning the suitability of the types of machines used when these crashes have occurred?

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—I regret to announce that, as the result of an accident which occurred while carrying out air investigation exercises at Healesville, Victoria, at about 9 a.m. on Thursday 27th October, Pilot Cadet Clarence Charles Seach was killed. After striking the ground the machine of which he was in charge became ignited and was burnt. The cause of the accident is not, as yet, known. A court of inquiry has been convened by the Air Board to investigate the occurrence, and the members of the court left Melbourne yesterday morning to visit the scene of the accident. The Air Accident Investigation Committee is also conducting an inquiry into the fatality. Cadet Seach was a pupil undergoing instruction at No. 1 Flying Training School, Royal Australian Air Force, Point Cook, and had completed 86 hours flying, 42 hours of which were dual, and 44 hours solo. He had flown 22 hours in a machine of the type in which the accident occurred. He was 24 years of age, was educated at the Sydney High School, and commenced his flying instruction at Point Cook on 2nd May last. I shall be glad if the honorable member will place the second portion of his question on the notice paper, so that the desired information may be obtained.

CANBERRA.

PROHIBITION REGULATIONS.

Mr. COOK.—As the question, "Shall Canberra be wet or dry," is at present receiving considerable attention, will the Minister for Home and Territories say whether it is a fact that eight barrels of beer arrived at the Canberra railway station on Wednesday morning last, consigned to a person residing at

Eastlake? If that is so, what steps does the honorable gentleman propose to take to enforce the prohibition regulations at present applicable to the Federal Capital Territory?

Mr. MARR.—The only beer which I know to be sold in the Federal Capital Territory, is ginger beer. If the honorable member will supply me with particulars as to the introduction of alcoholic liquor for sale, I shall see that action against those concerned is taken immediately.

PRIME MINISTER.

RETIREMENT FROM PUBLIC LIFE.

Mr. FENTON.—A rumour is afloat that the Prime Minister is about to retire from public life in Australia. Will the Treasurer state whether there is any truth in the hint contained in a daily newspaper published in the Commonwealth to the effect that it originated with him?

Question not answered.

CANBERRA.

RAILWAY TERMINUS.

Mr. PERKINS.—In view of the rapid increase of population and the building activity taking place in Ainslie, will the Minister for Works and Railways give consideration to the advisability of extending the present railway terminus in the direction of that centre?

Mr. HILL.—It is intended to introduce a bill for the purpose of taking over the existing line. I understand that, after the line is taken over, arrangements will probably be made for its extension, and for the location of a permanent station, possibly in the vicinity of Ainslie.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE LAWS.

Mr. BOWDEN.—Is it the present intention of the Government to introduce a bill to make uniform the marriage and divorce laws of the Commonwealth?

Mr. LATHAM.—No.

PORT DARWIN JETTY.

Mr. NELSON.—Some time ago I addressed a question to the Minister for Home and Territories relative to the

expenditure incurred in connexion with the Port Darwin Jetty. Has the honorable gentleman yet received any information on the subject? If so, is he willing to impart it to the House?

Mr. MARR.—I have caused inquiry to be made of the North Australian Commission in respect to the question, and am still awaiting receipt of information. As soon as it is available, I shall supply it to the honorable member.

EXPLOITATION OF ABORIGINAL LABOUR.

FORMAL MOTION OF ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. Sir Littleton Groom).—I have received an intimation from the honorable member for the Northern Territory (Mr. Nelson) that he desires to move the adjournment of the House this morning for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, "The exploitation of aboriginal labour in North Australia.

Five honorable members having risen in their places,

Question proposed.

Mr. NELSON (Northern Territory). [11.12].—I regret the necessity for having to move the adjournment of the House on this subject, but, in view of the reply of the Minister for Home and Territories (Mr. Marr) to a question which I asked, I have no alternative. On the 20th October last I asked the Minister for Home and Territories the following question—

I have received the following telegram:—
Sleeper getters employing large number aborigines getting sleepers; many instances on task work. Intense exploitation of aborigines on government contracts where white labour only should be employed. At present unemployment is rife. Relief work is being started. Numbers of workers strongly resent aborigines being exploited on government work, while they have to seek relief work. Get Minister insist white labour getting sleepers.

I should like to know if the Minister for Home and Territories will take immediate action with a view to preventing the exploitation of aboriginal labour on government contracts in the Northern Territory?

The honorable gentleman replied—
I have no information about the matter, but I shall make inquiries, and let the honorable member know the result.

On the 26th October, the Minister having received the information I sought, replied as follow:—

On the 20th October, the honorable member for the Northern Territory (Mr. Nelson) referred to a telegram he had received stating that sleeper getters connected with the railway construction work in North Australia were employing a large number of aboriginals in getting sleepers. The honorable member asked whether immediate action would be taken with a view to preventing the exploitation of aboriginal labour on Government contracts in the Northern Territory. From inquiries I have made it appears that in connexion with the railway construction work in North Australia contracts have been let for the supply of sleepers, and that the contractors are employing a certain number of aboriginals to assist in securing the sleepers. The employment of aboriginals is controlled by the *Aboriginals Ordinance* which provides that no person shall employ an aboriginal unless he has been granted a licence to do so by the Protector of Aboriginals of the district in which he is residing. The aboriginal is a free agent who may leave his employment if dissatisfied. The railway construction camp is under the supervision of a Protector of Aboriginals whose duty it is to see that the aborigines are not exploited. With regard to the general question of employing aborigines in connexion with the work of supplying sleepers, it is considered desirable that they should be given remunerative employment so long as they are not defrauded or exploited. In view of the conditions under which aborigines may be employed in North Australia and of the fact that the railway construction camp is under the supervision of a Protector of Aboriginals, I cannot see how the aborigines employed on the work of getting sleepers can be exploited.

It is unfortunate that the Minister has been wrongly advised. In my question I appealed to him to stop the exploitation of aboriginal labour, while white Australians were being compelled to accept relief work from the administration. Judge Beeby, at great expense to the taxpayers of Australia—and a justifiable expense, I may remark—recently visited the Northern Territory with a view to determining the base rate for different classes of labour in various industries there. After personal experience of the local conditions, and after hearing the evidence submitted, including evidence by the representative of the Commonwealth Railways Commissioner, he came to the conclusion that the base rate for Darwin should be 2s. 6d. an hour, and, in the locality to which my question referred, 2s. 8½d. an hour. It is well-known that for many centuries the north of Australia

Mr Nelson.

was populated by a dense crowd of aborigines, and that there are still many there. Notwithstanding that fact, no attempt has been made by the aborigines themselves to develop that huge tract of country. Consequently we took the land over from them, no doubt proceeding on the assumption, not that the people were intended for the land, but that the land was intended for the people, and that, as the natives had not used it, we had a right to do so.

Mr. JACKSON.—We have not done much to help them.

Mr. NELSON.—That is true; but their exploitation is not justified, even under present conditions. It is claimed that the Government is serious in its endeavour to establish a white population in the far flung spaces of Northern Australia. What encouragement is the Government giving to settlers to open up that country, when it asks them to compete with what may be accurately described as slave labour? As my argument is developed I shall prove that slave labour exists, and that the Minister has been ill advised. He admitted the existence of the condition of affairs of which I complained in my question. I shall again quote from his reply—

From inquiries I have made, it appears that, in connexion with the railway construction work in North Australia, contracts have been let for the supply of sleepers, and the contractors are employing a certain number of aborigines to assist in securing the sleepers.

Mr. SEABROOK.—Does the honorable member object to the black man being employed?

Mr. NELSON.—No; but he should not be exploited. Even the honorable member for Franklin (Mr. Seabrook), who is known to be adverse to the labour conditions ruling generally in Australia to-day, will be convinced, as I proceed, that the natives are being wilfully exploited in the north of Australia. The Minister also said:—

The aboriginal is a free agent, who may leave his employment if dissatisfied.

I shall prove that the native is as securely bound as is possible under an agreement. I draw attention to section 5 of the *Aboriginals Ordinance of 1918-1925*, which deals with the duties of the Chief

Protector. Among the many duties imposed upon him are the following:—

To exercise a general supervision and care over all matters affecting the welfare of the aboriginals, and to protect them against immorality, injustice, imposition, and fraud.

The Minister tells us that they can start work when they like and finish when they like; but section 52 of the ordinance, in conjunction with other sections, clearly shows where they actually stand. It must be understood that they work under an agreement which is signed by the Protector of Aborigines. Section 52 states—

An aboriginal or half-caste who neglects or refuses to obey any order lawfully given under this ordinance shall be guilty of an offence against this ordinance.

I shall show later that very strict conditions are imposed on the natives. In further rebuttal of the Minister's statement, let me quote section 26—

1. Any person residing within any town district, and desiring to employ any aboriginal within any town district, shall, in addition to obtaining a licence to employ aboriginals, enter into an agreement with the aboriginal in the prescribed form:

Provided that if the Chief Protector is of the opinion that the employment is of a temporary nature, and is not likely to exceed one month in duration, he may dispense with the agreement.

2. A copy of the agreement shall be lodged with the Chief Protector, who may at any time investigate any complaint as to any alleged breach of the agreement by the employer or the aboriginal.

That binds the aboriginal definitely to the work, and, if he disobeys, the Chief Protector has the necessary machinery at his disposal to deal with him. Section 27 states—

Any employer or aboriginal, who is guilty of a breach of an agreement made in pursuance of the last preceding section, shall be guilty of an offence against this ordinance. Penalty: In the case of an employer, twenty pounds; and in the case of an aboriginal, forfeiture of wages and cancellation or suspension of permit to enter the town district.

The native not only loses his wages, which I shall show are returned to the employer, but he is even debarred the right of going to the town-district, which may have been his birthplace. In other words, he is banished. Yet the Minister stated in his reply to my question that the native was a free agent. I say that the native is bound hand and foot. The Minister's definite statement that the natives are not

exploited condones the present system, which I shall show is one of wholesale exploitation of native labour. It is regrettable that the Minister or his advisers did not make themselves conversant with the actual conditions. From the regulations under this ordinance I have given a fairly concise idea of the alleged freedom of the natives. Referring to applications for licences to employ aboriginals in a country district, the regulation prescribes the following form of application:—

To the Protector of Aborigines at
I (We) of occupation
do hereby make application for a licence to employ male or female aboriginals.

I (We) undertake to pay wages at the rate of 5s. per week, and provide food, clothing, and tobacco for the aboriginals.

I (We) employ permanently, as specified on the back hereof, and food, clothing, and tobacco to all other aboriginals employed temporarily, and, if requested in writing by the Protector, to pay to the Protector a proportion of such wages, to be held in trust for the aboriginals, such proportion to be not less than 10s. every month.

I (We) undertake—

To observe the provisions of the ordinance and regulations in regard to the employment of aboriginals; and especially—

To keep a record of any native labour employed, nature of employment, and wages paid. Such record to be open for inspection by the Protector at any time;

To employ no children under 12 years of age;

To set aside a portion of the lands occupied by me (us) as a native camp; and

To supply reasonable shelter for the aboriginals I (we) employ.

I (We) enclose herewith the fee of Ten shillings (10s.) for this licence.

.....
Signature of applicant.

It will be noticed that the wages are stated at 5s. a week, and that from that sum 2s. is deducted and placed in a trust fund for the aborigines.

Mr. COLEMAN.—What happens to the money in the trust fund?

Mr. NELSON.—A royal commission which inquired into the administration of the Northern Territory investigated, among other things, the trust fund of the aborigines. Evidence was produced and embodied in the commission's findings, showing that in more than one case the Protector of Aborigines had sold to the

natives bicycles at from £10 to £12 each that were not worth £1. The Protector of Aborigines would make a statement to the officer in charge of the trust fund that he had sold a bicycle to a native, who probably had never seen it, and would then, in acknowledgment of the sale, make the native's sign or "x," which would be witnessed by the officer, and the sum of £10 or £12 would be withdrawn from the fund, the native concerned knowing nothing at all about the transaction.

Mr. ABBOTT.—Is that practice continuing?

Mr. NELSON.—It still can be done.

Mr. COLEMAN.—What happened to the royal commission's report?

Mr. NELSON.—I do not think that the Government acted on that report, otherwise the natives would have been given some form of protection. In many cases the native is employed at some distance from the centre at which the trust fund is administered, and when he leaves his employment and goes "bush," the money in the trust fund in his name is returned to his employer. The Minister has alleged that the natives are free labourers. Let me draw his attention to Form 5 of the regulations, which reads:—

Form of Agreement With Aboriginal or
Half-caste.

Name of employer

Name of employee

Aboriginal-half-caste

I,, agree to keep the said aboriginal-half-caste, clothed and fed to the satisfaction of the Protector, and to supply him (or her) with tobacco, and to pay him (or her) the sum of 5s. per week as wages, of such wages 3s. to be paid weekly to the employee and the balance to be paid to the Chief Protector or Protector in trust for the half-caste-aboriginal, every four weeks.

I,, the Protector, on behalf of the said aboriginal-half-caste, hereby undertake that he (or she) shall work for the said for a period of months, as and I agree to refund to the employer the amount of wages held in trust for him if the said aboriginal-half-caste,, shall fail to remain in the service of the said employer, for the period agreed upon, provided that (1) if the native be dismissed for misconduct or incompetency and a Protector is satisfied such dismissal is fair and reasonable; (2) the service is not terminated by the Protector notifying the said employer, that the undertaking has not been carried out with fairness to the native.

..... Signature of employer.

It must be understood that the half-caste has the full rights of citizenship, and can exercise his franchise, yet a paltry wage of 5s. a week is prescribed for him under an agreement, notwithstanding that he is just as capable as any other man of performing certain classes of work. If the native or half caste leaves his employment the protector of aborigines undertakes to repay to the employer from the trust fund the sum of 2s. a week. That amount is lawfully due to the native. Yet the Minister says that he is not being exploited.

Mr. YATES.—The native may be forced to "go bush."

Mr. NELSON.—That is so, because the inducement is there. The agreement continues—

I certify that the half-caste/aboriginal has had this agreement explained to him (or her) and is reasonably aware of its provisions, and that the prescribed fee of 2s. 6d. for this agreement has been paid by the employer.

Signature of Protector

Mr. G. FRANCIS.—That agreement is almost similar to the one which is working so satisfactorily in Queensland.

Mr. NELSON.—There is no comparison between them. The native is bound hand and foot under this agreement to carry out certain conditions of labour. If he leaves his employment the money paid into the trust fund in his name is refunded to the employer. How a native can be bound by an agreement and yet be perfectly free is beyond my comprehension. I suggest that a royal commission should be appointed to investigate the conditions of employment of the natives and the methods of exploiting them. Under cover of an ordinance the natives are in a condition of slavery while white men are deprived of work. Under the cloak of democracy the hand of the black bird is making itself felt. The aboriginal has no protection and is being wilfully exploited to the detriment of the white worker. I submit not that the aboriginal has no right to work, but that he should receive the full award of his labour. No one can suggest that 3s. a week is sufficient remuneration for a man using an axe. Would the Minister be prepared to allow natives to work in his electorate at 3s. a week when the award rate is £5 a week? We talk of

upholding the dignity of the Arbitration Court, and yet we are trying to destroy its awards by the exploitation of natives in the Northern Territory. Not only exploitation but slavery is rife there, and the sooner the Minister takes action to prevent it the better it will be for the whole community. If the awards of the Arbitration Court are permitted to be abrogated, there will be open revolution in the territory, and when that occurs I shall go there to give the revolutionists a hand. It is dastardly to place the white community of the territory in such a position.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. Sir Littleton Groom).—I ask the honorable member not to continue his remarks in that strain.

Mr. NELSON.—I regret that in the heat of my desire to obtain redress for the natives my remarks should have been somewhat unparliamentary. Does the Minister wish to be known as the Minister for black labour and the advocate of slavery.

Mr. SPEAKER.—The honorable member's time has expired.

Mr. WATKINS.—As the charges that have been made are so serious, would it not be possible to move for an extension of time to allow the honorable member for Northern Territory to continue his remarks?

Mr. SPEAKER.—Standing Order 119, which is applicable to this debate, limits the time for the discussion of the motion to two hours after the time fixed for the meeting of the House. The Standing Order limiting the time of the speeches of members has been approved by the House, and is so framed as to prevent any individual member from unduly taking up the time of the House. If an extension is required the procedure which has been recently followed is to move for the suspension of the Standing Orders, and that motion can be carried only by an absolute majority of the whole of the members of the House.

Mr. MARR (Parkes—Minister for Home and Territories) [11.45].—The charge made by the honorable member for Northern Territory (Mr. Nelson) is that the natives have been exploited. I have listened carefully for evidence supporting the statement, but have not

heard any. The honorable member has said, not once, but on several occasions, that he represents the natives of the Northern Territory, and intends to safeguard their interests. I resent his imputation that I am Minister for a black Australia, and throw the insult back in his teeth. I am as much concerned as he is in safeguarding the interests of both our aboriginal and our white population. I have heard the honorable member say that he believes that our black population should receive the treatment to which it is entitled, and I agree with him that the Australian aboriginal should receive the benefits to which he has a right. The honorable member has said that it is impossible to develop Northern Australia without the help of the black man.

Mr. NELSON.—I deny that.

Mr. MARR.—I have heard him say it several times, and I can give quotations from *Hansard* to prove that not only he, but other honorable members on that side of the House, have made that statement.

Mr. NELSON.—On a point of order, is the honorable member entitled, in the face of my denial, to repeat his statement, and to say the proof of it is contained in *Hansard* without producing that proof?

Mr. SPEAKER.—If the Minister has incorrectly represented anything which the honorable member has said, the honorable member will be entitled, at the conclusion of the Minister's speech, to make a personal explanation.

Mr. MARR.—If the honorable member denies any statement that I have attributed to him, I accept his denial. If I have misrepresented anything that he or any one else on the other side of the House, has said, I am prepared to withdraw the statement. I have said that the North of Australia can only be developed with the assistance of our Australian natives, and members know in their own hearts that that is the only way in which it can be done. The underlying reason for this motion is not a desire to prevent the exploitation of the aborigines. These charges of exploitation are made by the very people in the north who have been exploiting the Northern Territory for years. The development of the north has been retarded because of the action of men who have endeavoured to run the

country in their own interests, and to keep everything in their own grasp. If a ship goes to the Northern Territory it cannot be unloaded unless these gentlemen give their consent.

Mr. NELSON.—The Minister is speaking of Darwin.

Mr. MARR.—Is not Darwin the capital of the Northern Territory? I have heard the honorable member say that somebody in the north is trying to break the awards of the Arbitration Court; but these men of whom I speak have refused to obey those awards. All that we require of these gentlemen in the north is that they shall obey the law. Let us, on both sides, stick to the law, and obey the awards of the court. The honorable member read the ordinance which lays down the terms under which natives may be employed, but he did not cite the rates of wages to be paid to sleeper-getters. He cited the rates for rouseabouts on the stations, and for menial workers.

Mr. MANNING.—He deliberately tried to mislead the House.

Mr. SPEAKER.—The honorable member for Macquarie may not make a reflection of that kind upon any honorable member.

Mr. MANNING.—I said that the honorable member for the Northern Territory had tried deliberately to mislead the House by the statement he made, but at your direction, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that remark.

Mr. MARR.—The argument used by the honorable member for the Northern Territory was unsound. The aborigines, in some cases, are getting sleepers themselves, without working for anybody, and are selling those sleepers to persons who have contracts. The aborigines have the right to do that.

Mr. NELSON.—But there are natives who are being employed by the sleeper getters, and these natives are being exploited. The Minister should stick to the facts.

Mr. MARR.—I am sticking to the facts. The honorable member gave no instances of exploitation. The honorable member for Bass (Mr. Jackson) recently advocated the formation of a native State where the aborigines would be segregated. I say that if you want to destroy our aborigines in the North, the best thing to do is to put them into a

State of their own; they will then annihilate each other. It is altogether wrong to say that the white sleeper contractors are exploiting the natives. Those who are objecting to the present procedure have themselves the opportunity to cut sleepers. The Government has had the greatest difficulty in obtaining sleepers, and if the gentlemen whom the honorable member represents are prepared to supply sleepers, we will buy them and use them on the railways. Those who make the charge of exploitation have never done anything to help the natives in the North; but they would prevent, as they have often done in the past, the natives from getting a job of any kind. Certain portions of the native labour agreement have been read. It is provided in that agreement that no person shall employ an aboriginal or half-caste unless he has obtained a licence on the prescribed form. Before granting such a licence, the Protector of Aborigines must be satisfied that the applicant is a fit and proper person to employ aborigines. If the honorable member for the Northern Territory can give me one case in which the Protector of Aborigines in any part of the North has not carried out the provisions of the act, I undertake to see that that officer is removed from his position. The rate of pay which the honorable member mentioned is that provided for natives working on stations and farm lands. I do not say that any particular government was responsible for fixing that rate. It has prevailed under several governments. The honorable gentleman has admitted that these natives make excellent horsemen, and that the North can only be developed by their help.

Mr. NELSON.—The Minister cannot show me that statement in *Hansard*.

Mr. MARR.—If any person, having been granted a licence to employ a native, who has been signed on to do rouseabout work, puts him on to sleeper-getting, the contract is immediately void. Every employer must make a return as to the labour he employs. The honorable member for the Northern Territory knows the conditions under which natives work, and he also knows the conditions under which, unfortunately, the white men have to live. None of us would like to live under the same conditions as those under

which white people have to live in the North. We in this House should see that the aborigines have a fair share of the good things of life. It has been stated that we have taken the black man's country from him, and if that is so, it should be our duty to give our natives the benefits of civilization, instead of shutting them up in a compound. We should encourage them to work, and to become useful citizens.

MR. THEODORE.—Surely the Minister does not regard it as just to the blacks to employ them at 3s. a week.

MR. MARR.—From memory I would say that the Ordinance covering the conditions of labour for aborigines in the Northern Territory is practically the same as that operating in Queensland.

MR. THEODORE.—The aborigines employed on the Queensland State stations are working under an award of the Court, which gives them considerably more than 3s. a week.

MR. MARR.—In some places in Queensland the blacks may be working under an award, but that award is not equal to the awards provided for white men. I freely admit that the aboriginal is not yet up to the white man's standard, and is therefore not entitled to receive the same remuneration.

MR. McGRATH (Ballarat) [12.0].—I listened very carefully to the remarks of both the honorable member for the Northern Territory (Mr. Nelson) and the Minister (Mr. Marr). The latter failed utterly to answer any of the charges which were made. He simulated intense indignation, and stressed the desirability of uplifting the Australian aboriginal. I have not been to the Northern Territory, but I have had an opportunity to read the telegram that has been received by the honorable member who represents that particular portion of our continent. It contains the specific charge that on the Katherine to Daly Waters railway, the aborigines are being extensively exploited. This is how the wire reads—

Sleeper getters employing large number aborigines getting sleepers; many instances on task work. Intense exploitation of aborigines on government contracts where white labour only should be employed. At present unemployment is rife. Relief work is being started.

I take that to refer to relief work for the whites who are unemployed. The telegram proceeds—

Numbers of workers strongly resent aborigines being exploited on government work, while they have to seek relief work. Get Minister insist white labour getting sleepers.

That charge is clear and definite; but it has not been answered by the Minister. From my reading of the ordinance I should say that a contractor is allowed to pay as low as 5s. a week, from which he may deduct 2s. a week which has to be paid into a trust fund. The Minister has not supplied us with information which would indicate that any other wages are paid. We talk about the necessity to develop the Northern Territory; yet by the action of the Government the whites are being driven out of employment there. There is no desire on our part to deny to the blacks the right to live in the Territory or any other part of Australia; but we shall not civilize them by paying them 5s. a week, and supplying them with a little tobacco. Can it be wondered at that the white residents are dissatisfied, when the Ministry winks its eye at the wilful breaking of Arbitration Court awards?

MR. MARR.—That is an incorrect statement to make.

MR. McGRATH.—The Arbitration Court award lays it down that the wages of white persons shall be 2s. 8½d. an hour. The contractor has been able to overcome that by obtaining the permission of the Government to employ blacks to do the work at a wage of 5s. a week.

MR. ABBOTT.—The wire that has been read by the honorable member does not say that the blacks are employed by the contractors.

MR. McGRATH.—It says distinctly that the employment of aborigines at a wage of 5s. a week by contractors for government railway work has received the sanction of the Protector of Aborigines. If the Minister had a satisfactory answer he should have cleared up the matter long ago. He has inferred that the aborigines go into the forests, cut sleepers, and sell them to the government contractors. That is not so. Their relations are embodied in the agreement, under which the contractor pays them 5s. a week for the work which they do.

Mr. MARR.—That has not been stated.

Mr. McGRATH.—It has been stated clearly and distinctly.

Mr. MARR.—By whom?

Mr. McGRATH.—By the honorable member for the Northern Territory.

Mr. MARR.—He has no grounds for his statement.

Mr. McGRATH.—In accordance with the practice of the Government, the Minister has skillfully evaded the issue by a simulation of anger and indignation. He has carefully drawn a red herring across the trail. This is a most serious matter. A similar problem at one time confronted us in Queensland. The argument was used then that it was necessary to civilize the kanaka and make him a better individual. Boiled down, it was found to be a case of enabling certain individuals to make huge profits. The nation then determined that the kanaka would be better off in his own country.

Mr. MARR.—The blacks are in their own country.

Mr. McGRATH.—We all realize that Australia is open to attack through the Northern Territory, and that we should not be able to offer a successful resistance if the blacks were permitted to remain there practically in their native state. The policy has been to encourage white people to develop that territory; but when the bone and sinew of the southern states have accepted the invitation to go there, they have found themselves replaced in their employment by the unfortunate blacks, who are paid a wage of 5s. a week, from which 2s. is deducted.

Mr. NELSON.—In certain circumstances that 2s. reverts to the employer.

Mr. McGRATH.—If the aboriginal becomes sick, and is unable to cut as many sleepers as the contractor considers he should supply, that is regarded as a breach of contract, and the amount which has been withheld from his wages goes into the pocket of the contractor. That is a shameful practice.

Mr. MARR.—The honorable member's statement is entirely contrary to fact.

Mr. McGRATH.—The honorable member for Bass (Mr. Jackson) has endorsed the statement that frequently the 2s. a week is returned to the employer. There is not the slightest doubt, also, that that assertion was proved to be correct by the royal

commission which investigated the matter. The contractor who is unscrupulous enough to employ black labour in preference to white, will embrace every opportunity to compel the aboriginal to break his agreement, and thus swell his own banking account. I cannot understand the Ministry sanctioning it. It is not in the best interests of either the blacks or the unfortunate whites who have migrated to the Northern Territory. Only a plucky man, who has a big heart and a strong physique, will go to those wild places, and endeavour to wring from them a living for his wife and children. Whatever honorable members opposite may decide to do, the charges that have been levelled at the Government by the honorable member for the Northern Territory will ring throughout Australia, and at no distant date the exploitation of the unfortunate aboriginal may cease, and a better day dawn for him.

Mr. JACKSON (Bass) [12.10].—I appreciate the difficulty in which honorable members of the Opposition find themselves.

Mr. YATES.—The honorable member's own position is a fairly difficult one.

Mr. JACKSON.—Not at all. Honorable members opposite are between two fires. On the humanitarian side they are seized of the necessity to do something to advance the welfare of the aborigines; whilst on the other side, pressure is being put upon them by the unions in the Northern Territory to prevent the aboriginal from earning a living. I wish that I could be clear in my mind that they intend to see that the black man shall be given a fair deal. This debate has furnished another reason for embarking upon the inquiry which I suggested a week or two ago. I congratulate the honorable member for the Northern Territory on the step that he has taken in having brought this matter before the House, because I am not convinced that there are not serious grounds for complaint. The time has arrived to have clearly defined the employment of white and black labour in the Northern Territory. The honorable member alleged that the aborigines had done nothing to develop the lands which they had occupied for so many years. We have been in possession of those lands for nearly 150 years, yet what have we in spite of our superior civilization done towards

educating them along those lines? I assert that more has been done to "syphilize" than to civilize them.

Dr. MALONEY.—And medicine to cure them has been denied them.

Mr. JACKSON.—The Department of Home and Territories on one occasion demanded payment from the officials of the telegraph station for the renewal of the medicine chest, the contents of which were invariably given away to drovers and natives in the district. The honorable member for Ballarat has made certain charges against this Government. I ask him, what did the Fisher Government do when it took over the control of the Northern Territory? It was not until 1918 that an ordinance governing the conditions of labour was brought in. A great deal has been said with regard to unemployment. I cannot admit that that is the fault of this Government. Much of it has been brought about by the conditions that have been forced upon employers by committees representative of the white workers. There is no need to traverse the history of Vestey's Meat Works or to enlarge upon the outbursts of industrial disaffection that have been witnessed there from time to time. The only solution of the white labour problem in the north will be the construction of the north-south line. I do not care whether it goes straight through from Alice Springs to Darwin or across from Camooweal.

Mr. FENTON.—This Parliament must not depart from the obligation imposed upon it by the honorable agreement into which it entered.

Mr. JACKSON.—I do not wish to be misunderstood. I believe in giving effect to that agreement. I want to see the line continued from Alice Springs. But I repeat what I have said previously, that one railway line is not sufficient to develop half a million square miles of territory. I strongly support the proposed extension of the line across the Barkly Tableland to link up with the Queensland railway system. I understand that the majority of honorable members of this House are in favour of that proposal. The construction of either or both of those lines would solve the problem of white labour in the Northern Territory. The honorable member for the Northern Territory (Mr. Nelson) referred to the

wages paid to aborigines engaged in sleeper getting; but it must be remembered that native labour is not as efficient as white labour. The aborigines are provided with food and some clothing; but I admit that its cost is not great.

Mr. NELSON.—The honorable member knows something of the clothing provided.

Mr. JACKSON.—Yes, it is very scanty. As the aborigines in the Northern Territory as in other parts of Australia have a right to work, it is the duty of the Government to see that they are provided with suitable employment rather than that they should be allowed to wander about from place to place as they so often do.

Mr. NELSON.—Does the honorable member think that they should be employed on Government contracts at 3s. per week?

Mr. JACKSON.—I do not. That is one reason why I hope the select committee which I have suggested will be appointed without delay.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. Sir Littleton Groom).—The honorable member will not be in order in discussing that subject on this motion.

Mr. JACKSON.—I thought I should be in order in referring to the suggested committee which I think would be able to submit valuable recommendations to the Government. The aborigines of the Northern Territory are of fine stature, but with the mind of an infant. It is our duty to educate them. They should also be provided with employment at wages commensurate with the services they render. Hundreds of natives along the overland telegraph line do no work, and are being fed by the Government. These men could be employed on road construction, afforestation and water conservation, which would be of benefit to the natives and of advantage to the Commonwealth. The honorable member for the Northern Territory is justified in bringing the matter before the House, and in view of the information which has been given, a thorough inquiry should be made in order to ascertain definitely where the trouble lies. I am sure honorable members on this side of the Chamber will support the Opposition in doing a fair thing not only to the aborigines in the Northern Territory; but also to the white persons who are now settled there.

Mr. LAZZARINI (Werriwa) [12.17].

—The honorable member for the Northern Territory (Mr. Nelson) has rendered a great service to the Commonwealth in bringing this matter under the notice of the House. I was impressed with the attitude of the Minister (Mr. Marr), who, in replying to the charges made by the honorable member for the Northern Territory, delivered one of the most vigorous speeches he has ever made in this Chamber. It appeared to me, however, that he was endeavouring to evade the main issue, and when his bluff was called by two very pertinent interjections, he wilted very badly. He did not attempt to reply to many of the charges made by the honorable member for the Northern Territory. The question we have to answer is whether the natives of the Northern Territory are being exploited in the manner suggested. It has been said that those engaged in sleeper getting are paid 5s. a week, 2s. of which is paid into a trust fund until a contract is completed. Even if the work is carried out to the satisfaction of the contractor I am convinced that the poor unfortunate aborigines are not paid the 2s. of their own money which has been retained. The honorable member for Bass (Mr. Jackson) said that the aborigines are supplied with food; but he will admit that the quantity is sufficient only to keep them alive, and the quality is inferior. I understand they are also supplied with a few rags to cover their nakedness. Is not the payment of 3s. a week exploitation?

Mr. NELSON.—The Minister says that it is not.

Mr. MARR.—I said that the honorable member for the Northern Territory did not say that the payment of that amount was attributable to the action of the sleeper-getters.

Mr. LAZZARINI.—I do not know what opinion the Minister holds on this matter; but he is now faced with the fact that these poor unfortunate human beings are being paid only 3s. a week. The position is infinitely worse when we realize that the sleepers are being used on government railway contracts. The

honorable member for Bass referred to the construction of the North-South railway; but I should like to know if the Government expects that work to be done by aborigines who are to be paid only 3s. a week? The honorable member also referred to the natives as men of fine stature but with a child's mind. That is the material the exploiters are always seeking.

Mr. JACKSON.—The honorable member should not blame me.

Mr. LAZZARINI.—I do not. I do not accuse the honorable member of favouring such a system. The Minister said that natives are engaged on menial work; but I can conceive of no occupation in the Northern Territory or anywhere else that is not worth more than 3s. a week. The Minister also stated that the Northern Territory can be developed only with the assistance of native labour. That is a point that I am not prepared to affirm or dispute; but if colored labour is essential to its development, the natives should be permitted to work under the conditions enjoyed by white men.

Mr. JACKSON.—They would not be employed under such conditions.

Mr. LAZZARINI.—Perhaps not. Inefficient or slow workers are provided for in our Arbitration Court awards, and the Government should see that these men are paid a reasonable rate even if their work is not up to standard of that of the white man. Kanakas were brought to Queensland in droves, and native labour was also exploited.

Mr. JACKSON.—The honorable member must admit that the industry in which the kanakas were engaged benefited.

Mr. LAZZARINI.—That is another matter. This is a national work, as the security of Australia depends largely upon the extent to which the Northern Territory is settled. It is the duty of the Commonwealth Government to develop the Northern Territory, but it should not depend upon the assistance of aborigines who are paid only 3s. a week. The Minister referred to the industrial conditions at Darwin and to the demands made by the workers there. We have

heard a good deal of those who are doing the pioneering work; but to me that is all humbug. Those who have invested money in the Northern Territory, and who are employing labour, have done so with the sole intention of making profits, and not with the idea of developing the country. If the white workers there are sufficiently well organized to demand wages and conditions which the employers think unreasonable, the employers should get out of the Territory. Some pastoralists in the Northern Territory who are holding huge tracts of country say that they cannot carry on profitably because of the ruling labour conditions. That is a stupid argument, because they are not forced to remain. If they cannot pay their workmen decent wages, the country is better without them.

Mr. FENTON.—Vesteys went to South Africa in order to obtain cheap labour.

Mr. LAZZARINI.—And they would return to Northern Australia to-morrow if they could be sure of a similar supply of cheap labour there.

Mr. JACKSON.—On one station in Queensland there is one white man to twenty aborigines.

Mr. LAZZARINI.—I was astonished to hear the Minister say that while it was a fair thing that the aborigines should enjoy some of the good things of life, they were given the opportunity to do so on a wage of 3s. a week. The Minister's attitude indicated that he approved of the payment of that wage.

Mr. MARR.—It did nothing of the kind.

Mr. LAZZARINI.—If the Minister does not approve of the prevailing conditions, why did he attempt so vigorously to justify them?

Mr. MARR.—That statement is quite wrong.

Mr. LAZZARINI.—I trust that one result of this debate will be that the people of Australia will indicate, in an unmistakable way, their desire to have these objectionable conditions remedied. Something has been said about the attitude of former Commonwealth Labour Governments on this matter, but I

point out that until the Northern Territory had direct representation in this Parliament, governments, as well as honorable members generally, had very little information about the conditions that existed there. Since the honorable member for the Northern Territory has been a member of this Parliament he has been able on many occasions to inform us of evils there that required remedies, and I trust that he will continue to bring under our notice direct information of conditions which should not be allowed to prevail. Honorable members should consider this matter in the spirit in which it has been introduced. I trust that we shall do all in our power to treat our aborigines generously as well as justly. We should do so, for the good name of our country.

Mr. YATES (Adelaide) [12.33].—The Minister for Home and Territories altogether failed to make an effective reply to the charges of the honorable member for the Northern Territory. He started to speak at an express rate, and I do not know for how long he would have maintained the speed if the honorable member for Macquarie (Mr. Manning) had not made an injudicious remark. A fact that emerges quite clearly from this discussion is that government by ordinance is quite unsatisfactory. The illustration of the bicycle transaction which the honorable member for the Northern Territory gave is proof positive on that point. The more closely settled our outback areas become the more clearly are we able to observe the failure of control by ordinance. I was in New Guinea recently, and had brought home to me there how unsatisfactory some of our existing administrative methods are. I had the opportunity of perusing the report of a conference that was held there some time ago. Although I understood that the Minister for Home and Territories would table a copy of the report as soon as it was available, I took the precaution to make a few extracts from it. I propose to quote these, for they concern cases which may well be compared with those which the honorable member for the Northern Territory has mentioned to-day, though his deal with Australian aborigines, while mine concern the natives of

New Guinea. The first extract reads as follows:—

The absence of clothes has been found sometimes to lead to pneumonia among natives discharging vessels or doing other heavy work. The most dangerous factor in this disease is unequal overheating of the body, and those who have seen natives perspiring profusely at their work, and stand shivering in the evening breeze, or sleeping on the bare deck of Burns, Philp's vessels, will readily appreciate the reason for the deaths that occur after each voyage.

Honorable members have never been told about these deaths that occur after every voyage which a Burns-Philp boat makes in New Guinea waters, nor do they ever see official reports of the nature that I have read.

SIR NEVILLE HOWSE.—From what report did the honorable member quote?

MR. YATES.—From the annual report of the New Guinea Department of Public Health, 1925-26. The responsibility of remedying grave troubles such as these rests upon us. The honorable member for the Northern Territory made extensive references to the wages and working conditions of our aborigines and said that the 2s. a week which was placed in a fund to be used for their benefit was often estreated. I can quite understand that unscrupulous employers would not hesitate to use every means in their power to regain possession of this money. They could easily make some trumped-up charge against the aborigine concerned and so prevent him from receiving the money and I have no doubt, in such a case, where it would go. Something of the same kind of thing occurs in New Guinea as the following extract from the report from which I have already quoted will show:—

It is common property in Rabaul that when labourers are paid off, illegal means of recruiting are employed to induce them to resign. The boy is taken to a room without witnesses and the third degree is put upon him day after day to make new paper. Even after a boy has been at work many years these practices are more often than not successful. Other boys are paid off and deliberately induced to spend all their money before the departure of the boat conveying them home, with the object of forcing them to make new paper. Another method employed, particularly during the military and German administration, was to employ women as an incentive to recruiting. A man dying, his widow is more often than not offered to a boy

as an inducement to his recruiting; in fact. I personally know that women recruiters carry unmarried girls about with them when recruiting, and the boys were offered a night with these girls in lieu of hand money. These unions with widows of deceased labourers resulted in those marriages of convenience which I now trust have been suppressed. In one case of such a marriage a woman on return to her village in Namatanai was stoned to death as she had committed tribal incest.

It may be said of the New Guinea natives, just as it has been said of the Australian aborigines, that the terms of indenture are all set out in the Ordinances; but that does not by any means ensure that abuses will not occur. In all the circumstances it is not creditable to the Minister for Home and Territories that he should try to ride the high horse. The honorable member for Bass (Mr. Jackson) who has been in Central Australia several times, and knows very well the conditions under which the blacks there have to live, showed quite clearly that he thought there was ground for the charges which have been made this morning. He, unlike the Minister, does not regard the accusations as a mere exhibition of ill temper. The Minister told us that it is the custom for aborigines to go out sleeper-getting on their own account and afterwards sell the sleepers to the contractors; but it must be apparent to honorable members that sleeper-getting requires some equipment. The telegram upon which the honorable member for the Northern Territory has based his charges came from sleeper-getters who employ aborigines. The Minister for Works and Railways shakes his head, but I am sure that there was some good reason for sending the telegram. When the Minister for Home and Territories replied to a question on this matter this morning he said:—

From inquiries I have made it appears that in connexion with the railway construction work in North Australia contracts have been let for the supply of sleepers, and that the contractors are employing a certain number of aborigines to assist in securing the sleepers.

He had ascertained that after inquiry, but he has not told us how many contractors are working. He ought to know how many licences have been issued. That was information he should have given in order to refute the charge that aborigines are being exploited.

Mr. FOSTER.—The House ought to know what the aborigines are really paid.

Mr. YATES.—The honorable member is quite right. Instead of telling us that his inquiries showed that contracts had been let and that the contractors are employing aborigines, the Minister should have given the details sought by the honorable member for the Northern Territory. He has told us that natives go out into the bush on their own to bring in the sleepers and sell them, and that some aborigines are being employed by sleeper-getters. I should like to know under what ordinance they are employed, the wages they receive and the hours they work. Under one ordinance the employers of aborigines must set aside a portion of ground as a housing area for them and provide shelters for them. I should like to know what arrangements are made by the sleeper contractors to house their aboriginal employees.

Mr. MANNING.—Do I understand from the telegram which has been read that the sleeper contracts referred to are in connection with the new railway in course of construction?

Mr. YATES.—The new railway is from Katherine to Daly Waters. If blame is to be attached to anyone for the time of the House being occupied to-day the Minister must accept it because of the lack of information in his reply to the question submitted by the honorable member for the Northern Territory.

Mr. SPEAKER.—The honorable member's time has expired.

Mr. MARR.—I wish to make a personal explanation. The honorable member for Adelaide (Mr. Yates) has just asserted that I said the natives went into the bush to collect sleepers on their own account.

Mr. YATES.—The Minister made the statement.

Mr. MARR.—What I meant to say was that it is possible that natives go out and collect sleepers to sell to some of the

sleeper-getters. This morning I had not had sufficient intimation that this motion was to be moved, but I did my best to secure whatever material was available in the Home and Territories Department. The reply I furnished to the honorable member for the Northern Territory was put together from information obtained from North Australia, but from further information which has come to hand I am now in a position to state that there are no sleeper-getters in the Northern Territory, and that steel, and not wooden, sleepers are used in the construction of the new railway.

Mr. SPEAKER.—Order! the honorable member is going beyond a personal explanation.

Mr. MARR.—I am anxious to correct my statement that natives go out on their own account to get sleepers.

Mr. NELSON (Northern Territory) [12.49].—From personal experience I can state that the Minister is absolutely incorrect in saying that no wooden sleepers are used in the Northern Territory.

Mr. MARR.—I was referring to the new construction.

Mr. NELSON.—Wooden sleepers are still being cut and used for replacements, and whether they are used on the new section or on the existing line does not matter. I defy the Minister for Home and Territories or Minister for Works and Railways to deny that there are no contracts in existence for the getting of sleepers for railway requirements in the Northern Territory. To say that wooden sleepers are not being used for new construction is mere camouflage. Already the Minister in his reply to me has admitted that contracts have been let for the supply of these sleepers and that natives are working for the contractors. Why cannot he frankly admit what he knows perfectly well, that, although wooden sleepers are, perhaps, not required for the building of the new section between Daly Waters and Katherine, they are still being used for maintenance purposes between Katherine and Darwin?

Mr. HILL (Echuca—Minister for Works and Railways) [12.51].—Sir,—

Mr. SPEAKER.—The honorable member for Northern Territory having replied, the debate is closed.

Question put. The House divided.

Ayes	17
Noes	32

Majority	15
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AYES.

Anstey, F.	Riley, E.
Blakeley, A.	Scullin, J. H.
Brennan, F.	Theodore, E. G.
Coleman, P. E.	Watkins, D.
Lacey, A. W.	West, J. E.
Maloney, Dr.	Yates, G. E.
Mathews, J.	<i>Tellers:</i>
McGrath, D. C.	Fenton, J. E.
Riley, C.	Lazzarini, H. P.

NOES.

Abbott, C. L. A.	Latham, J. G.
Bayley, J. G.	Lister, J. H.
Bell, G. J.	Mackay, G. H.
Bowden, E. K.	Mann, E. A.
Cameron, M.	Marr, C. W. C.
Cook, R.	Page, Dr. Earle
Corser, E. B. C.	Parsons, W. L.
Foster, R. W.	Perkins, J. A.
Francis, G. A.	Pratten, H. E.
Francis, J.	Prowse, J. H.
Gellibrand, Sir John	Seabrook, A. C.
Gibson, W. G.	Stewart, P. G.
Hill, W. C.	Thompson, V. C.
Howse, Sir Neville	<i>Tellers:</i>
Hurry, G.	Hunter, J. A. J.
Jackson, D. S.	Manning, A. G.
Johnson, Sir Elliot	

PAIRS.

Charlton, M.	Bruce, S. M.
Forde, F. M.	Marks, W. M.
Green, A.	Paterson, T.
Lambert, W. H.	Cameron, D.
Makin, N. J. O.	Nott, D.
Moloney, Parker	Killen, W. M.

Question so resolved in the negative.

Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.15 p.m.

PAPERS.

The following papers were presented:—

Industrial Delegation appointed by Commonwealth Government to investigate the method employed in, and the working conditions associated with, the manufacturing industries of the United States, and to report thereon—Report.

Ordered to be printed.

Invalid and Old-age Pensions Act—Statement for 1926-27.

Northern Australia Act—

Central Australia—Ordinance of 1927—No. 11—Medical.

North Australia—Ordinance of 1927—No. 11—Medical.

WAR SERVICE HOMES.

ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS—OVERTIME AND SPEEDING-UP METHODS.

Mr. COLEMAN asked the Minister for Works and Railways, *upon notice*—

With regard to the administrative costs entailed for the respective States in the administration of the War Service Homes Act, what are—(a) the total amounts for the various States, including the basis of payment to State banks operating under the scheme, and (b) percentage costs?

Mr. HILL.—The replies to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

(a) State.	Administrative Cost, 1926-27.
New South Wales	£31,791
Victoria	15,037
Queensland	10,732
Western Australia	10,737
South Australia	12,368
Tasmania	4,403

N.B.—This does not include costs of commission's office in Melbourne, which amounted to £16,525.

State instrumentalities act for the commission in Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia, and Tasmania, and the basis of payment is:—

Victoria (State Savings Bank).—15s per cent. calculated on expenditure in the provision of homes, and, after provision of homes, 15s. per cent. on the loans owing by applicants, less arrears and purchase money owing under contracts of sale which have been cancelled.

Western Australia (Workers' Homes Board).—15s. per cent. calculated on expenditure in the provision of homes in mortgage cases only, and, after provision of homes, 15s. per cent. on the loans owing by applicants, less arrears and purchase money owing under contracts of sale which have been cancelled.

South Australia (State Bank of South Australia).—10s. per cent. calculated on the loans owing by applicants for whom homes have been provided, less arrears.

Tasmania (Agricultural Bank of Tasmania).—15s. per cent., calculated on the loans owing by applicants for whom homes have been provided, less arrears and purchase money owing under contracts of sale which have been cancelled.

(b) See answer to (a). On the basis of calculation of payment to the Victorian State Savings Bank, the commission's branches in New South Wales and Queensland cost in 1926-27 the following:—

New South Wales	..	11s. 4½d. per cent.
Queensland	..	11s. 1d. per cent.

Mr. HILL.—On Thursday, 27th October, the honorable member for Reid

(Mr. Coleman) asked me the following questions:—

Is it a fact, that owing to the failure of the central administration of the War Service Homes Commission to authorize the employment of additional staff, the employees of the New South Wales branch are being overworked? In addition to much overtime, are the employees compelled to take work home to enable them to overtake arrears, for which they receive no remuneration? Has the Commonwealth Medical Officer for New South Wales made a report to the Chief Medical Officer of the Commonwealth on these speeding-up methods, directing attention to several break-downs which are attributed to this cause? Will the Minister for Works and Railways ask the Public Service Board to conduct an inquiry into the working conditions of this department?

I now have pleasure in furnishing the following replies to the questions:—

1. No. There was a very large increase of applications in May, June, July, August, and September, and requests from applicants for additional advances following the 1927 amendment of the War Service Homes Act. This was only a temporary phase, and after inquiries, it was decided that extra staff was not necessary. The applications are being dealt with in the order of priority, and no officer is required to complete more than a fair day's work, the hours of duty being from 9 a.m. to 4.45 p.m., with one hour for lunch, and 9 a.m. until noon on Saturdays.

Having regard to the hours of duty in business houses and industries generally, it is not considered that those in the commission are unduly long.

2. During the year 49 officers worked an average of 44 hours overtime each—an average per officer of 4½ hours per month. Officers receiving over £450 per annum are not entitled to overtime. No officer has been asked to take work home. It has been found that several officers have acted in this way, the reason being that the matters so dealt with were somewhat difficult, and they preferred to handle them in the quietude of their homes. This has only happened in the case of several senior officers.

3. Not that I am aware of. I should also say that speeding-up methods have not been adopted in the New South Wales branch, and this may be gauged from the fact that the administrative costs of the New South Wales branch are greater in proportion than those of the Queensland branch. Five officers have been examined by the Commonwealth Medical Officer at the request of the commission. In one case the illness was neurasthenia, and before its onset the officer stated that he had not properly recovered from influenza and was excessively worried over certain private matters. In two cases the illness was debility; in another furunculosis, and in the other hyperpæria and nerve fatigue. It is not considered that official duties were responsible for these illnesses.

4. No. The officers employed are granted eighteen days' recreation leave each year and only in seven cases will 1927 leave not be taken this year. The leave in these latter instances should be disposed of early in 1928.

ROTTNEST ISLAND CABLE.

Mr. MANN asked the Postmaster-General, *upon notice*—

What is the present position with regard to the provision of improved cable communication between Rottneest Island and the mainland, concerning which representations have been made to him by the honorable members for Perth and Fremantle?—

Mr. GIBSON.—The matter of providing a new cable between Rottneest Island and the mainland is in abeyance owing to agreement not having yet been arrived at with the State authorities in connexion with the leasing of one channel of communication for their own use.

IMPORTS.

MOTOR CHASSES.

Mr. COLEMAN asked the Minister for Trade and Customs, *upon notice*—

1. What were the imports of chasses—(a) assembled and (b) unassembled during the last financial year; what were the respective countries of origin, and (if possible) the makes of cars?

2. What British and foreign companies are following a policy of assembling cars in Australia?

Mr. PRATTEN.—The information will be obtained as far as possible.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACT.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES.

Mr. MANNING asked the Prime Minister, *upon notice*—

Will he introduce legislation to amend the Public Service Act with a view to temporary employees being placed in the same position as permanent officers in regard to their indebtedness to traders?

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—The matter will receive consideration, and a reply will be furnished as early as possible.

MAIN ROADS ACT.

PAYMENTS TO STATES.

Mr. COLEMAN asked the Minister for Works and Railways, *upon notice*—

What amounts were paid to the respective States under the Main Roads Act for the last financial year, and what are the amounts outstanding?

Mr. HILL.—The reply to the honorable member's question is as follows:—

MAIN ROADS DEVELOPMENT ACTS 1923, 1924, 1925—£1,750,000.

State.	Expenditure by Commonwealth during Financial Year, 1926-27.	Amounts Outstanding at 30th June, 1927.	Amounts Outstanding at 27th October, 1927.	
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	
New South Wales ..	178,945 13 6	55,016 5 8	31,628 9 0	Repaid unexpended balance of advance
Victoria ..	43,316 17 10	nil	..	
Queensland ..	49,139 8 2	nil	..	
South Australia ..	417 6 6	nil	0 4 3	
Western Australia ..	15,457 13 2	5,667 0 3	23 19 0	
Tasmania ..	24,816 9 0	8,088 3 3	2,734 11 11	
Total ..	312,093 8 2	68,771 9 2	34,387 4 2	..

If the honorable member is referring to the Federal Aid Roads Act, the information desired will be obtained and supplied at a later date.

CANBERRA.

HOUSING—ABATTOIRS—MOTOR REGISTRATION—BANKS—GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

Mr. BLAKELEY (through Mr. FENTON), asked the Minister for Home and Territories, *upon notice*—

Will the Government favorably consider the question of allowing public servants, whose homes in Melbourne were purchased by the Government, to make a deposit of about £100 on a house in Canberra, the remainder of the money held to be handed to the officer?

Mr. MARR.—Favorable consideration cannot be given to this suggestion, as its adoption would involve a material variation of the terms and conditions of the offer which was made to and accepted by the officers concerned, and would be unfair to other officers who might have accepted the offer had the suggested provision formed one of its original conditions.

Yesterday the honorable member for Eden-Monaro (Mr. Perkins) asked me the following questions:—

1. How many beasts have been condemned during the past six months at the Canberra abattoirs as unfit for slaughter for human consumption?

2. What number were similarly condemned during the past twelve months?

3. Is meat killed at Canberra sold in New South Wales without the necessity of a New South Wales certificate before slaughter?

4. Is it permissible to sell at Canberra meat that is slaughtered outside the Federal Territory?

I have now received the following particulars from the Federal Capital Commission:—

1. 1 sheep, 21 pigs, 5 cattle, condemned after slaughter.

2. 3 sheep, 28 pigs, 18 cattle, condemned after slaughter.

3. Yes; but all such meat must be passed by the Inspector before leaving the Canberra abattoirs.

4. Ordinarily, no; but under the provisions of the Meat Ordinance 1920-1927 the Federal Capital Commission may, if considered necessary, prescribe special conditions under which this may be done.

Yesterday the honorable member for Hunter (Mr. Charlton) asked me the following questions:—

1. What is the reason for charging motor registration and licence fees in the Federal Territory similar to those prevailing in the States, when there is such a vast difference between the area of the Territory as compared with that of any State?

2. Will he review these rates with a view to making substantial reductions?

I have now received the following information from the commission:—

1 and 2. The charges in respect to motor registration in the Federal Capital Territory are on a similar basis to those in force in New South Wales, but are £1 per vehicle less. It is not considered that "area" affords a satisfactory basis of comparison. It is considered that motorists in the Federal Capital Territory enjoy facilities equal to those in the various States, and that they, therefore, suffer no hardship which would justify making any further reduction in fees, particularly as the number of motorists in the Territory is considerably less than in any State. The cost of providing services in the Federal Capital Territory is at least as great as in the States, and the roads more than favorably compare with those in many parts of Australia where motorists are required to pay higher fees.

The honorable member for Hunter (Mr. Charlton) also asked me yesterday the following questions:—

1. Is it a fact that the owner of a motor car registered in the Federal Territory, who wishes to enter New South Wales, has first to report to the police of that State and obtain another number plate?

2. If so, will he endeavour to enter into reciprocal arrangements with the New South Wales authorities with a view to allowing cars registered in the Territory to travel unhampered through that State?

I am now in a position to furnish the following particulars:—

1. Yes. It is provided, however, that, if a vehicle is not driven to any place which is more than 100 miles beyond the boundary of New South Wales, and does not remain in New South Wales for a continuous period exceeding 14 days, the regulation shall not apply if the driver notifies the entry of such vehicle at the police station nearest to the place of entry.

2. The difficulty mentioned is not peculiar to the Federal Capital Territory, but exists between all States of the Commonwealth, and there have been several conferences between the motor registration authorities with the object of evolving some reciprocal arrangements which would be simpler than the existing procedure. The difference in the basis of the motor registration law, particularly in regard to fees, is an obstacle. The Federal Capital Commission is still in touch with the New South Wales authorities in regard to the matter.

Yesterday the honorable member for Hunter (Mr. Charlton) asked the following question:—

Is it a fact that banks will not be allowed to operate at Eastlake in the future; if so, what action is proposed to meet the convenience of shopkeepers and residents in that area?

I have now received the following information from the Federal Capital Commission:—

Provision has been made for the main banking establishments to be located at the principal commercial centre of Canberra. Eastlake is definitely a suburban shopping centre only, and arrangements made for banking in the past were of a temporary nature pending the opening of the Civic Centre. It is realized that the convenience of shopkeepers and residents at Eastlake should be met in this regard, and a conference of banking representatives was recently held with the object of meeting this demand by the establishment of a limited number of agencies which would serve all banks desiring these facilities at Eastlake.

On the 20th October, the honorable member for Yarra (Mr. Scullin) asked me a question without notice regarding a reply that had been given to him respecting the purchase of some addressograph machines for use at

the Government Printing Office, Canberra, in which it had been stated, *inter alia*, that a tender had been received from Messrs. Spicers and Detmold for £872 13s. plus packing, freight, &c., £100, making a total of £972 13s. I have made inquiry as to the correctness of the figures quoted, and am now in receipt of the following report from the Chief Inspector, Stores and Transport, which, I think, will explain the position to the satisfaction of the honorable member:—

I have to intimate that the original quotation of Messrs. Spicers and Detmold Ltd., was:—

1 "Electric" addressograph machine	£150	0	0
Selecting attachment	35	0	0
Listing attachment	12	10	0
1 "Graphotype" embossing machine, 80 character ..	230	0	0
30,000 addressograph plates and frames at £6 per 1,000 ..	180	0	0
6 ribbons at 60s. per dozen ..	1	13	0
3 cabinets for plates at £37 ..	111	0	0
	£720	3	0

"Upon receipt of this quotation Messrs. Spicers and Detmold were informed by telephone that the "Electric" addressing machine quoted for was not what was required and that we desired a quotation for a reel feed machine. A further letter was received from the firm quoting a price of £350 at Works, London, for such a machine. Mr. Overington, the manager of the Systems Branch of Spicers and Detmold, indicated verbally that the cost of packing, freight, etc., on this machine would be approximately £100.

"The amended offer of this firm for the equipment required was, therefore:—

1 Reel feed addressing machine ..	£350	0	0
Packing, freight, &c. ..	100	0	0
1 "Graphotype" embossing machine	230	0	0
30,000 plates at £6 per 1,000 ..	180	0	0
6 ribbons, at 60s. per dozen ..	1	13	0
3 cabinets, at £37 each ..	111	0	0
	£972	13	0

All prices include Customs duty; assuming that Mr. Overington overstated the cost of packing, freight, &c., and that his figure of £35 quoted to Mr. Scullin is correct, the cost of Spicer and Detmold's equipment would have been £907 13s., as against £841 0s. 3d. duty paid tendered by B. J. Ball Limited, and accepted.

The question has nothing to do with the Federal Capital Commission or with the Home and Territories Department, and should have been addressed to the Treasurer. I now have possession of all particulars, including the contract, and I shall be glad to afford the honorable member an opportunity of perusing them in my office.

PUBLIC SERVICE.

CLERICAL VACANCIES.

Mr. COLEMAN asked the Prime Minister, *upon notice*—

1. What is the number of existing vacancies for clerks in the New South Wales branch of the Commonwealth Public Service?

2. Is any additional staff contemplated under the Bankruptcy Act and the amended Customs Act?

3. When will the vacancies, if any, be filled, and what is the cause of delay in filling such vacancies?

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—The replies to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. 78.

2. As to the Bankruptcy Act, staff will be transferred from the State Service. No amendment of the Customs Act involving additional staff is at present contemplated. No increase to the existing staff other than such as is required to meet the normal development of the department under the existing act is proposed.

3. Vacancies are filled as soon as possible after occurrence either by provisional promotion or new appointments. Seventy-eight is not an abnormal number of vacancies to exist in New South Wales on any date, and there has been no undue delay.

NORTHERN TERRITORY.

SHIPPING SUBSIDY.

Mr. NELSON asked the Minister for Home and Territories, *upon notice*—

1. How many shipping services are receiving subsidy for coastal shipping in the Northern Territory?

2. What is the total subsidy paid, and to whom?

3. What are the freights charged by such shipping services to the various ports in North Australia?

Mr. MARR.—The replies to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. Two.

2. (a) £2,500 to Messrs. John Burke Limited.

(b) £3 10s. per ton to Messrs. Jolly and Company.

3. Freights charged by Messrs. John Burke Limited are as follow:—

From Albert Bar (Burketown) to Leichhardt Bar in Roper River, and Borroloola in McArthur River—

SCHEDULES.

(Per ton equals 40 cubic feet or 20 cwt.)

Ordinary rates—100s.

Timber, per 100 square feet—20s. 10d.

Minimums—

Under 1 cubic foot and 56 lb. weight—3s. 6d.

Up to 2 cubic feet and 1 cwt.—5s.

SPECIAL RATES.

Double Rate—Double Minimum.	Additional 2s. 6d. on rates—Double Minimum.
Acids	Wire (barbed)
Gas in cylinder	
Chaff, undumped	Additional 2s. 6d. on rates
Curved iron	Iron and steel in bars and bundles
Sandalwood (20 cwt.)	
Carbide	Additional 5s. on rates
	Wines and spirits, tobacco, cigars, and cigarettes
Rate and Half— $1\frac{1}{2}$ Minimum.	Half Rates.
Cartridge Safety	Empties
Chaff, dumped	
	40 cubic feet; $1\frac{1}{2}$ minimum.
Rate and quarter; $1\frac{1}{2}$ minimum	Skin, marsupials
Bran	

The following goods are less 10s. on the respective freight rates:—Barley, flour, lactogen, maize, onions, pollard, potatoes, rice, salt, soap, sugar, wheat.

From Leichhardt Bar and Borroloola to Albert Bar (Burketown):—

Ordinary rates—40s.

Special rates—

Ore—30s.

Hides (in bags)—30s.

Wool (per bale)—10s.

Empties—Half rates.

All mails to be carried free between Burketown, Roper River, and Borroloola.

Freight charged by Messrs. Jolly and Company, Darwin, to Victoria River is at the rate of £6 10s. per ton.

QUEENSLAND COAL.

PURCHASES FOR NAVY AND LIGHTHOUSE SERVICES.

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—On the 21st October the honorable member for Wide Bay (Mr. Corser) asked the following questions:—

1. Has the Navy (service ships *Moresby* and *Biloela*) up to recently been supplied with coal by the Queensland Collieries Company, Limited, of Howard, Queensland, and the Burgowen Coal Company, and at what price?

2. Has a contract recently been entered into or an order given; if so, with what firm or mine owner, and at what price and terms?

I am now in a position to furnish the following replies:—

1. The following supplies of Burrum coal have recently been made by Queensland Collieries, Limited, to H.M.A.S. *Moresby* at Gladstone:—

Date.	Quantity.	Rate per ton, delivery alongside side.
1/7/27.	245 tons.	£1 11 0
5/8/27.	235 tons.	£1 11 0

No supplies have been received from the Burgoon Coal Company for some considerable time.

1,300 tons of Cambria coal were supplied to *Biloela* at Port Alma on 2nd September, 1927, by Messrs. Lamberton and Co., at £1 5s. per ton, delivered alongside ship.

2. No contract exists for the supply of any Queensland coal to the Naval Service.

AERIAL MAIL SERVICE.

SYDNEY-BRISBANE.

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—On the 21st October, the honorable member for Richmond (Mr. R. Green) asked the Postmaster-General the following questions:—

1. Is it the intention of his department to establish an aerial mail service between Sydney and Brisbane?

2. If so, when is it proposed to inaugurate such service?

The Postmaster-General replied that proposals of this nature come within the province of the Minister for Defence, to whom the question would be submitted for a reply. I am now in a position to furnish the honorable member with the following replies:—

1. Yes.

2. No date can yet be fixed.

RIFLE CLUBS.

FREE AMMUNITION.

Mr. MARR.—On the 20th October, the honorable member for Hunter (Mr. Charlton) asked the following question:—

How many rounds of ammunition have been issued free to rifle clubs by the Defence authorities in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania respectively, since 1st July last?

I am now in a position to inform the honorable member that the quantity of ammunition issued free to rifle clubs since 1st July, 1927, is as follows:—

New South Wales ..	1,283,000 rounds.
Victoria ..	1,495,100 rounds.
South Australia ..	551,665 rounds.
Western Australia ..	250,220 rounds.
Tasmania ..	273,200 rounds.

It is pointed out that all the free ammunition due for the current financial year has not yet been issued.

CITIZEN FORCES.

EQUIPMENT OF FORTS.

Mr. MARR.—On the 20th October, the right honorable member for North Sydney (Mr. Hughes) asked the following questions:—

1. In view of the fact that the Inspector-General of the Commonwealth Military Forces in his last annual report states that the number under training in the Citizen Forces is only 42,000, will the Minister supply the following information:—

(a) What was the number of Citizen Force registrations for the three quotas in training?

(b) What is the male population of the Commonwealth at Citizen Force age, i.e. 18 to 20 years, both inclusive?

2. In view of the fact that the Inspector-General complains that signs are not lacking that the organization may fail in its object of producing its own leaders, since the service offers few attractions:—

(a) What steps does the Minister propose to take to remedy this?

(b) Is it a fact, speaking of the higher formations, that senior officers have no opportunity of exercising their commands, because of the short period of training, which permits only of work in the lower formations, of the merest elementary character, being carried out?

(c) If so, what is to be done for the training of leaders in the field, apart from exercises without troops?

3. Since the Inspector-General records that the present nucleus has been found insufficient for the accomplishment of the approved policy of the army and that an increase in numbers is essential, what is it proposed to do to remedy this?

4. How long is it estimated it would take to put an infantry division with auxiliary troops into the field equipped and trained for active service?

5. Are any steps being taken to decentralize the mobilization and equipment stores to facilitate rapid mobilization should the emergency arise?

6. When might it be expected that the forts guarding capital cities will be equipped with heavier and more up-to-date armament?

I am now in a position to furnish the following replies:—

1. (a) 93,375.

(b) Approximately 160,000.

(N.B.—From statistics compiled by Commonwealth Statistician).

2. (a)—1. By allocating an increased amount from existing appropriations for the Army for the training of officers, and

COTTON-GROWING.

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—On the 6th October the honorable member for Wide Bay (Mr. Corser) asked the Prime Minister the following question:—

In view of the invaluable assistance rendered the African cotton-growers through the recent visit of the chairman of the Empire Cotton Corporation, Sir James Currie, and Sir William Himbury, leading authorities in the cotton industry, will he extend a similar invitation to these gentlemen to visit Queensland so as to more effectively advance Empire interests by the development of cotton-growing in the Commonwealth?

The Prime Minister replied that the matter would receive consideration. I am now in a position to advise the honorable member that the Government has communicated in the matter with the Queensland Government, which is primarily interested in cotton-growing in Australia, and which has at its command an expert staff. If on receipt of a reply it is deemed advisable, the Government will then approach the cotton-growing association.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. PERKINS.—I desire to make a short statement by way of personal explanation. On Wednesday evening, smarting under a rather severe criticism published in one of the Sydney newspapers, I had occasion to offer certain remarks by way of protest. These have been incorporated in *Hansard*, and I have no wish to retract any of them. I still say that to the best of my knowledge and belief my statements were correct, and, therefore, I should have no hesitation in repeating them. Last evening, however, I received a letter, written on behalf of a number of the reporters in the press gallery, somewhat in the form of a challenge, inviting me to furnish the names of the persons who supplied me with the information on which my statements were based. I do not intend to accept that challenge, because I cannot see that any good purpose would be served by doing so. I have every respect for the occupants of the press gallery. My attack was directed to one particular quarter, and I have no desire to continue that attack. As far as I can learn, the Sydney newspapers up to the present have been silent regarding the incident, and so far as I am concerned it

may be considered closed. But it would be wrong on my part to divulge the names of the persons who gave me my information. I can only leave the matter to honorable members to say what they would have done in similar circumstances. I can vouch for the accuracy of the information, and I hope that the young man who wrote the article complained of will profit by my protest, which was designed to protect not only myself but other honorable members. It was not intended as a personal attack, and if he takes it in the right spirit it will do him good.

Mr. CHARLTON.—Action will have to be taken if he does not heed it. This sort of thing cannot go on much longer.

NATIONALITY BILL.

Motion (by Mr. MARR), proposed—

That he have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Nationality Act 1920-1925.

Mr. THEODORE (Dalley) [2.35].—This is an amending measure, and no doubt the House will be greatly restricted as to what it may do in the way of further amendments. Will the Minister indicate in a general way the nature of the proposed amendments? That would be a guide to honorable members.

Mr. MARR.—To-day I merely intend to present the bill and move the first reading. My second-reading speech will be made next week, when the object of the bill will be explained.

Mr. THEODORE.—We ought to know what the bill contains, because it may be necessary to widen its scope.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill presented by Mr. MARR and read a first time.

PORT AUGUSTA TO RED HILL
RAILWAY BILL.

SECOND READING.

Debate resumed from 12th October (*vide* page 433), on motion by Mr. HILL—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr LACEY (Grey) [2.39].—The subject-matter of this bill has already been considered by the House, and the measure should receive the approval of honorable members generally. In 1925 the Prime Minister (Mr. Bruce) and the then Premier of South Australia (Mr. Gann),

came to an agreement, afterwards termed the Bruce-Gunn agreement, which provided for the construction of a railway known as the north-south line, to connect Port Augusta and Alice Springs. It also provided for the project now before the House. The Railways Acceptance Bill passed through this chamber with very little discussion. After the Minister for Works and Railways had made his second-reading speech, I followed him, and the matter was further debated by the honorable member for Swan (Mr. Gregory), the honorable member for Adelaide (Mr. Yates), the honorable member for Richmond (Mr. R. Green), the honorable member for Angas (Mr. Parsons), and the honorable member for Boothby (Mr. Duncan-Hughes). The second reading was carried on the voices, and the bill went through the committee stage without discussion, the third reading being agreed to immediately. Thus the project received the unanimous support of the House. Since it accepted the agreement in the first instance, one can only assume that it is now prepared to carry it out. Therefore, the measure should receive a speedy passage. During the previous discussion at least one honorable member mentioned that it might be necessary to inquire into the third-rail project. No third-rail section of considerable length is to be found in any part of Australia. The agreement set out where the line was to start and end, and other matters relating to the productivity of the country to be served were agreed upon. It was then necessary to refer the proposal to the Public Works Committee, of which I have the honour to be a member. The committee pays careful attention to all matters placed before it; but because of the technical problems that arose in this particular case, special attention was given to it. When the committee was completing its report, I voted for an amendment submitted by the honorable member for Swan, who was then a member of the committee. That amendment provided that the 5 ft. 3 in. gauge from Salisbury to Red Hill should be continued as far as Port Pirie, a break of gauge station established there and the 4 ft. 8½ in. gauge constructed from that point to Port Augusta. At that time I considered that it would be

Mr. Lacey.

possible to do something to bring about the unification of the gauges. When this railway project was being investigated by the Public Works Committee, the branch lines from Hamley Bridge to Balaklava and thence to Port Wakefield, and from Brinkworth to Snowtown and thence to Wallaroo were of 3 ft. 6 in. gauge. Those lines have now been converted to the 5 ft. 3 in. gauge. When the honorable member for Swan framed his amendment his idea, no doubt, was to open negotiations with the South Australian Government with a view to converting the railway from Red Hill to Port Pirie and the two branch lines to the 4 ft. 8½ in. gauge. By that means the railways on the western side of South Australia would have been of uniform gauge. It is, however, too late to open up negotiations with a view to doing away with the third-rail project, because the South Australian railways which were of the 3 ft. 6½-in. gauge have been converted to the 5 ft. 3-in. gauge, and, if the 4 ft. 8½-in. gauge went through from Salisbury to Red Hill alone it would mean a break of gauge at every junction on the Red Hill to Port Augusta line. That, of course, would not be in the interests of South Australia. I consider that the South Australian Government has not been fair to the Commonwealth Government so far as the conversion of gauges is concerned. In 1921 the Prime Minister and State Premiers conferred respecting the unification of our railway gauges. The following resolution was arrived at—

The Commonwealth and the Premiers of the States agree to appoint a Railway Commission and affirm that the Ministers for Railways of New South Wales, Victoria and the Commonwealth shall select the two members of the commission who are to be appointed from outside. The Commonwealth and the States agree to abide by the decision of this tribunal. The Commonwealth to bear one-fifth of the total cost, and four-fifths to be borne by the five States concerned on a *per capita* basis.

The commission was appointed, and in November, 1921, its report was considered at a conference of Premiers with the Prime Minister in Melbourne, when it was resolved—

That the adoption of a uniform gauge is in the opinion of this conference essential to the development and safety of the Commonwealth. That the commission's recommendation of a 4 ft. 8½-in. gauge is accepted. The

Commonwealth shall prepare and circularize to the States a draft agreement to give effect to the recommendations of the commission. That steps shall be at once taken by the Premiers of all States to consult their Governments with regard to the said agreement and the financial obligations of the parties thereunder, and that the conclusions arrived at shall be communicated to and considered at a further conference in January, 1922.

That further conference was held in Melbourne, but no decision was arrived at. South Australia, when considering the conversion of a section of its railways from 3 ft. 6 in. to 5 ft. 3 in., should have adopted the 4 ft. 8½-in. gauge, and then there would have been no necessity for a third rail as is proposed under the bill. I voted for the amendment moved by the honorable member for Swan, not because I feared that there would be any element of danger in the adoption of the third rail principle. I do not think that any member of the Public Works Committee who took part in the inquiry considered the third rail to be unsafe. The evidence in favour of the third rail overweighed that in opposition to it. I shall refrain from quoting the evidence of Commonwealth officials, because it may be said that their opinions would be biased. I shall quote first the evidence of Mr. Webb, the Chief Railways Commissioner of South Australia.

Mr. STEWART.—Would he not be a little biased?

Mr. LACEY.—As a matter of fact a newspaper report published the other day showed that he had a distinct bias the other way, so that I shall be safe in quoting his evidence. He said—

I was associated with a Colorado railway in the United States of America for twenty years, and I know that we had no difficulty with mixed gauges in that system. They proved to be entirely practical and safe, and presented no complications. Denver City, which is a larger railway centre than any city in Australia, has mixed gauges. We found it practicable to do all our railway work with mixed gauges there.

Mr. Webb was dealing, not with the third-rail principle, but with four rails on one permanent way. He also stated that some of the carriages of a train were of different gauges, and yet no accidents occurred. His evidence continued—

With 80 lb. rails on this section we get an average speed of 26 miles an hour. This speed could be increased with larger locomotives. There would be no necessity to limit the speed

on the third rail. There are 21 station yards, and in addition three passenger stopping places between Adelaide and Red Hill. The third rail would offer no complications in station yards. When we first discussed the third-rail proposal between Red Hill and Adelaide, we thought it might be necessary, in order to avoid complications, to run around certain stations, but we are now in a position to say positively that there will be no additional risk and no mechanical difficulties by running through the stations. In Colorado we had a large mileage of two mixed gauges, and over a small mileage we worked even three gauges on one set of sleepers, namely, 2 ft., 3 ft., and 4 ft. 8½ in. lines. In some cases we had three gauges in station yards. They were all worked without additional risk, but necessarily they were more expensive to maintain. I regard the third rail as an expedient to meet such problems as we have in Australia, but every case should be considered on its merits. I should have no hesitation in recommending the third rail in certain circumstances, because I know from experience that it does not mean additional risk.

Mr. James McGuire, South Australian Railways Commissioner, gave the following evidence—

The additional cost of maintenance of a mixed gauge line would not be great. With the third rail in operation there would be no difficulty with the interlocking gear, or any additional risk of derailment. Whether a third rail is used or not, it is always easy to derail a train deliberately. There is nothing in connexion with the third rail which would tend to cause more derailments. There is no more danger of sand drift with a third rail than there is now where the guard rail is used. We have many miles of guard rail in South Australia, and sometimes it is within two inches of main rail. We have experienced no special trouble from sand drifts because of the existence of the guard rail. It is all a matter of maintenance. We have had two or three nasty smashes because of debris falling off trains and causing derailments. I have known of a bag of chaff causing a derailment. That risk would not be greater with a third rail. In my opinion the third rail would neither increase nor decrease the danger of derailment. At any time material falling from a truck constitutes a risk. I am satisfied that the risk is not increased by the third rail.

Mr. STEWART.—What is a guard rail?

Mr. LACEY.—A guard rail is one that is placed adjacent to another rail, generally at a curve, for the purpose of making the flange of the wheels take the proper course. Guard rails are sometimes used for considerable lengths at crossings and curves. Mr. McGuire pointed out that there is a space between the main running rail and the guard rail, just as there is in the third rail systems. The space, he

said, was smaller than in the third rail system, and a jamb was, therefore, even more likely to take place. I have quotations here from the evidence given by experts before the committee. We had before our committee Mr. Ernest Stanley, the late representative and resident engineer for the Transandine Railway Company. He stated—

In the Argentine Republic I had actual experience from 1912 to 1918 of the operation of a mixed-gauge system, over a section which handled very heavy freight and passenger traffic. I was the supervising engineer for the Transandine railway, which was constructed on the metre gauge. As each section was completed it was let to the Great Western Railways Company which operated it. The Great Western Company's main system was constructed on the 5 ft. 6 in. gauge. The mixed gauge section was about 4½ miles in length, and had a ruling grade of 1 in 50; the lowest curve was of 9 chains radius, and the maximum speed was about 35 miles an hour. During the time the third rail was under my observation no accident occurred, and no trouble was experienced in operating the system. The points for the 3 ft. 6 in. and the 5 ft. 6 in. lines were operated by one action. I can conceive that there would have been greater danger from obstacles lodging on the line if a 4 ft. 8½ in. gauge were built within the 5 ft. 3 in. gauge, but I would not be afraid to install such a device. It seems to me suitable for the Adelaide to Port Augusta line, and I apprehend no constructional difficulties or danger to human life.

That is evidence that should convince most people, but in addition, there is the evidence of Mr. Wilkin, a gentleman who has given more consideration to the third rail system of railway construction than anybody else in Australia. Mr. Wilkin was inter-locking engineer in the New South Wales Railways Department, and also held a similar position in the South Australian Railways Department. This is what Mr. Wilkin had to say on the subject—

I was interlocking engineer in the New South Wales Railway Department from 1891 to 1913, and I held a similar position in South Australia from 1882 to the end of 1890. I have had experience of every railway in England, particularly the Great Western line, as well as experience on the continent of Europe, and in other parts of the world. For 37 years that is from 1852 in 1889, a third rail was in operation on the Great Western line, over which trains ran at a speed that will never be attained in this country, namely, from 60 to 80 miles an hour. I suppose that the heaviest rail in the early days would be about 70 lb., although latterly a heavier rail has been employed. The gauges that were mixed were 7 ft. 0½ in. and 4 ft. 8½ in. For the last

thirteen years I have devoted the whole of my time to the problem of unifying the 5 ft. 3 in. and the 4 ft. 8½ in. gauges, because, so far as my experience goes, and from what information I can gather in other countries, the combination of these two gauges has never been attempted on the third-rail system.

Mr. Wilkin had very definite ideas on the subject of railway points and crossings, and his evidence should be sufficient to answer anybody who might criticize the construction of this railway from the point of view of safety and efficiency. The evidence that has been given was sworn testimony, and some of the witnesses had no interest in the matter other than to do their best in the interests of the people of Australia. When this inquiry was taking place, some witnesses expressed themselves as being afraid that the proposed third rail system would prove dangerous. One witness, in the very early stages of our inquiry, said that it would not be possible to lay this track at all. Therefore, the peculiar position arose that we were inquiring into the construction of a railway that one engineer said it was not possible to construct. The argument used by him was that the space between the 4 ft. 8½ in. rail and the 5 ft. 3 in. rail would not be sufficient to allow of the dog spikes being driven in to fasten down the rail. Later, however, when we were taking evidence in Adelaide, we had a practical demonstration of the laying of such a line. New sleepers, new rails and new dogs were used for the construction of one length of line, and there was no difficulty at all in driving the dog spikes. The whole objection was a bogey placed before the committee with the idea of prejudicing them in their finding. It was also stated that if the railway was built to the suggested gauge, it would not be possible to place the bolts through the rails alternately—that is, one bolt from one direction and another bolt from the opposite direction. A man who is supposed to be a very eminent engineer gave that as one of his reasons why the line should not be constructed. Since that time I have taken notice of the methods of railway construction, and I have found that only now and again are the bolts put through from opposite directions, as stated by this engineer. It is not by any means the practice. He said it was necessary to place the bolts

through the rails in this way because otherwise the flange of the wheels might cut all the nuts off, and allow the rails to spread. The obvious remedy, of course, would be to place all the bolts through the other way, and then none of the nuts would be cut off. When the honorable the Minister was introducing this bill, he pointed out the very many advantages that would accrue from the building of this line, but as there seems to be some opposition to the proposal at the present time, I shall enumerate some of the benefits as pointed out to the commission—

(1) It would reduce by about 70 miles the length of the journey between Adelaide and Port Augusta, and the time occupied from eleven and a half hours to six and a half hours.

(2) It would permit of passengers and loading being conveyed direct from Adelaide to Kalgoorlie, obviating the delay and expense at present incurred in transshipment at Terowie and Port Augusta.

(3) It would curtail by eight and a half to nine and a half hours the time at present occupied in the train journey from Adelaide to Perth.

(4) It would enable live-stock from the trans-Australian railway to be conveyed from point of loading to market in the same vehicles.

(5) It would permit of live stock being conducted from Port Augusta to Dry Creek in ten to twelve hours. At present 25 hours elapse between the arrival of live-stock at Port Augusta and time of arrival at Dry Creek.

(6) It would provide a line on which on each train 85 per cent. more loading could be carried from Port Augusta, and 54 per cent. to Port Augusta.

(7) It would accelerate the mail service to and from Western Australia; the outward English mail would leave Melbourne and Adelaide later, and the inward English mail would be delivered in Adelaide on Fridays instead of Saturdays, and would arrive in sufficient time in Melbourne to enable delivery to be effected on the first round on Saturday morning instead of Monday.

(8) It would be sufficiently revenue producing to at once pay working expenses, and a considerable portion, if not the whole, of the interest.

(9) It would permit of the quotation of a through rate to Adelaide for live-stock from the trans-Australian and the railway to Alice Springs, instead of being compelled to adopt the South Australian rate for portion of the distance.

The last point raised, that of the minimum rates, is a burning question at the present time. Another reason given to the commission was that it would in-

crease the revenue of the trans-Australian railway by approximately £35,000, due to the stimulation of through traffic. World tourists who have travelled over the trans-Australian railway, always speak eulogistically of the journey between Port Augusta and Kalgoorlie. Only recently I did the trip myself, and coming back, I met a much-travelled gentleman with whom I discussed the subject of railway facilities. I said that I considered the trans-Australian train was the best in the Commonwealth. He replied that it was not only the best in the Commonwealth, but was, in his opinion, the best in the world. I should also like to mention something that happened on the same trip. We arrived at Port Augusta on Sunday morning. A bus runs from Port Augusta to Adelaide every morning, and, notwithstanding the fact that the passengers had through tickets from Perth to Adelaide, some of them got off at Port Augusta, and went by bus to Adelaide.

Mr. MANN.—There is an increasing number of people who do the same thing.

Mr. LACEY.—It is no loss to the railway, because the passengers have bought tickets through to Adelaide, but it is a poor advertisement for our railways. While passengers are waiting at Port Augusta for transshipment, it would be possible, during those two and a half hours, to get right down past Red Hill. The construction of this line would "boost" the railway to such an extent that the revenue would increase greatly, because of the advertisement given to the system, and the increased facilities afforded to the public. Those who have advocated the construction of this line have never claimed that it would lead to the development of the country through which it would pass. They have based their advocacy on other grounds. But I maintain that it will have an effect upon the development of the country which it will traverse. On the 19th October last, the *Adelaide Advertiser* published what was allegedly an interview with Mr. W. A. Webb, Commissioner of Railways in that State. Immediately it was brought to my notice I submitted to the Prime Minister a question relating to it, and received a satisfactory reply. The article

is headed "Federal Railway Schemes"; "Red Hill Line of no Advantage"; "Port Augusta-Hay Line Unnecessary"; "Uniform Gauge the Height of Folly." It reads—

The Railways Commissioner (Mr. W. A. Webb) does not view with favour the proposal of the Federal Government to construct a line of railway from Port Augusta to Red Hill and a third rail from Red Hill to Adelaide. Among his objections are the following:—

Such construction would not develop one additional acre of land, and would be a needless duplication of existing rail facilities.

The present business interchanged at Port Augusta, both passenger and freight, is so small there cannot be found any business or economic reason for the expenditure of the money required. It would take a very large volume of freight traffic to justify the necessary expenditure, and the following statement, showing total tonnage, east and west, through Port Augusta, shows the total absence of any reason for the new construction:—

1920-21	..	..	3,207 tons.
1921-22	..	..	2,389 "
1922-23	..	..	1,827 "
1923-24	..	..	2,340 "
1924-25	..	..	3,175 "
1925-26	..	..	3,608 "
1926-27	..	..	2,508 "

Some time ago, Mr. Webb, as I have already mentioned, gave evidence before the Commonwealth Public Works Committee. Only the other day I heard an honorable member of this House say that Mr. Webb had not given his approval to the building of this railway. Here is his sworn evidence on the point:

My approval was sought concerning the general terms of the agreement, but not specifically as to its details. Generally speaking, it meets with my approval, although I do not think that South Australia will gain very much from it. That State will have the advantage of the third rail connexion between Red Hill and Port Pirie, and it is giving the Commonwealth Government a very valuable concession by allowing it to bring its railway line through the heart of the best area in the State and into the Adelaide railway station yard. The users of the Commonwealth railway will gain very much by this concession.

Further on he stated—

The proposed line may take some live stock revenue, and, perhaps, a little passenger business from the State railway system. The Commonwealth and State will have joint use of the permanent way, station yards, and buildings, and although there may be differences of opinion, and, perhaps, occasionally family quarrels, we do not expect that serious friction will result from the arrangement.

According to the newspaper report, he condemned the railway; yet in his evidence before the committee he approved

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of its construction, and said that no difficulties would arise because of it. One cannot escape the conclusion that he has been misreported by the press. His sworn evidence is the best guide that we could have in coming to a decision on this matter. I claim that the facilities which will be provided will have a tendency to promote closer settlement along the portion of the route that is in South Australia. Mr. Coffey, of Lake View, a large landholder and a most prosperous farmer in that district, in evidence before the Public Works Committee, said—

The distance from Red Hill to Wallaroo is 56 miles, and from Red Hill to Port Pirie it is 28 miles. The line would take the wheat from at least half the distance between Port Pirie and Wallaroo to Port Pirie as the shipping port. Last year we reaped 23,000 bags at Lake View. All this wheat would naturally go to Port Pirie. I believe that the higher price for wheat which would then be realized at Port Pirie would result in certain properties, which are now carrying sheep, being turned over for wheat production. Some of the land in my district is not being utilized to its fullest capacity, and I feel sure that country which carries only a sheep or a little more to the acre, and which is capable of producing up to 35 bushels to the acre, will eventually be put to better use.

It is well known that the nearer you are to a port the better is the price you obtain for your produce. In addition to that advantage, the extra facilities will induce settlers to plant wheat instead of to graze sheep, and a greater number of people will be settled on the land. Giving evidence at Port Pirie a representative of shipping interests said that wheat was being carted to Port Pirie from Wandearah, a distance in some instances of 22 miles; but with the construction of the line the longest cartage for farmers there would be only about 12 miles, and the average about 7 miles, assuming that sidings were placed in the most convenient places. Honorable members can appreciate the fact that if farmers are faced with the necessity to cart wheat up to a distance of 22 miles, they will engage in grazing to a much greater extent. The Wandearah district, which is between Red Hill and Port Pirie, does not produce only a few bags of wheat; it is one of the best wheat-growing centres in South Australia. The evidence given by Mr. R. J. Davidson was as follows:—

There is a good number of settlers on land between the 3-chain road and the coast. For

the last 40 years we have had to cart our produce to Port Pirie, in some instances a distance of 18 or 20 miles. The roads are fairly good. My place is in Wandearah West, 18 miles from Port Pirie. I am on the 3-chain road near Butler's Bridge, and about 10 miles from the surveyed route. I would cart my produce to the railway. At present it takes me two days to go to Port Pirie and return. I could do a trip a day to the railway line.

At a later stage, he said—

There is a good deal of settlement further out south and south-west of my place. All those people are interested in this proposal. Farmers from the Hundred of Mundoorra would cart to the line.

I should like honorable members to note particularly the following quotation from the evidence of the same gentleman:—

We would use the railway in preference to motor lorries for the cartage of our produce. About 100,000 bags of wheat were produced here last year, as well as a fair number of cattle and sheep.

Is there any district in Australia whose production equals that but which does not possess greater facilities for sending produce to market than haulage over 22 miles of road? The same witness also stated—

It costs me from 1s. to 1s. 2d. a bag to cart my wheat to Port Pirie. The suggested deviation will mean a difference in cartage of 3 miles to me. This represents about 2d. a bag.

He was referring to a deviation which was being sought at that time. In connexion with the development of that district, the witness stated—

There is a possibility of developing market-gardening operations along the Broughton River if the railway facilities are satisfactory. Some excellent fruit is grown under irrigation in the district.

Mr. Brechin, of the same district, stated in evidence—

Since 1915 my average production has been about 16 bushels an acre. . . . I could carry more stock if we had better railway facilities, but I doubt if a greater area will be put under cultivation for wheat, as we crop practically all the land that is available. It costs from 1s. 2d. to 1s. 3d. a bag to cart wheat to Port Pirie, a distance of about 20 miles. Land along the river Broughton is splendid lucerne country, and suitable for dairying.

That should remove from the minds of honorable members any idea that this railway will pass through desert or even barren country.

Mr. SCULLIN.—Has it a good rainfall?

Mr. LACEY.—Yes. It is one of the best districts in South Australia. Some honorable members may ask what the production is likely to be this year. Unfortunately, it has suffered from drought conditions, but it is not alone in that respect. This will be only the second failure that has been experienced by the district. That takes us as far as Port Pirie, up to which the 5 ft. 3 in. gauge will be constructed. On the other side of Port Pirie, where the gauge will be 4 ft. 8½ in., the country for the first 26 to 30 miles consists of good wheat-growing land. The portion of the country to be served by the proposed railway is in the Hundred of Baroota. I am fully conversant with the country along the proposed route, as I live in the locality, and have been over it on many occasions. Mr. Hillam, who lives 18 miles north of Port Germein, which is 18 miles by road from Port Pirie, and 26 miles by rail, in giving evidence before the Public Works Committee said—

Wheat is carted 18 miles to Port Germein from the north and east, and from the south for a distance of about 7 miles. As a practical farmer I would say that if I were 12 miles from Port Germein, and if there were a railway siding within 4 miles, I would send my wheat over the line. Usually the price at Port Pirie is a ¼d. a bushel better than at Port Germein. Very rarely is it a penny higher. I would rather ship wheat from this port than from Port Pirie, because we have a good port here, and if we had railway connexion it would develop.

Later on, Mr. Hillam stated—

This is an early district for fattening stock. If we had the railway, we would have a good outlet at Port Pirie. Many farmers do not care to send their fat sheep and lambs to market, owing to the distance and the absence of railway facilities. I believe that the railway will induce many stock-owners to raise fat lambs for the Adelaide market. . . . Stock-raising on the country to the north of my place will probably be developed with the railway line.

That is the evidence of an experienced farmer who lives in the district, and which disproves the suggestion that the proposed route is through very poor country. The position is the reverse, as the line will serve country capable of heavy production. The construction of the railway will also expedite transport over the east-west line, and will provide facilities which are badly needed in the immediate locality. It has been suggested

recently that a technical difficulty is likely to prevent the construction of the line. If that is the case it is not due to the terms of the agreement entered into between the Premier of South Australia and the Prime Minister. The clause in the schedule of the Railway Agreement Act of 1926 relating to the construction of this line reads—

(d) In approving and consenting to the said railway from Port Augusta to Red Hill the State may if it thinks fit provide that such approval and consent shall lapse and be of no effect if the construction of that railway is not commenced by the Commonwealth within a period to be specified by the Premier of the State not being less than three years from the date of such approval and consent.

If construction is started within three years, South Australia can raise no objection. If there is any technical difficulty it is not due to the terms of the agreement to which I have referred, and which the South Australian Parliament ratified shortly after it had been adopted by this Parliament. The proposed route is, in my opinion, not altogether the best that could be obtained. I have always been of the opinion that on approaching Port Pirie the railway should extend a little to the westward, and thus avoid dividing many agricultural farms in the locality. I do not stress the point to the extent of holding up the bill now, but merely mention it, so that the Minister may give the matter consideration. The Public Works Committee, as I have already said, obtained valuable evidence from Mr. Wilkin, who is an expert on the third-rail system. The members of the committee regard Mr. Wilkin as an authority who can give the Commonwealth valuable advice. A paragraph in the report of the committee on this phase of the project reads—

During the progress of its investigations, the committee took evidence from Mr. Charles Wilkin, formerly Interlocking Engineer in the New South Wales Railway Department, and examined models submitted by him for dealing with break of gauge between 4 ft. 8½ in. and 5 ft. 3-in. railway tracks. The committee was much impressed with the system described, and recommends that careful consideration be given to this scheme before deciding on the system of points and crossings to be adopted.

I bring that under the notice of the Minister in the hope that his department will confer with Mr. Wilkin, who, since

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he has retired from the service, has given the third-rail system very close attention. The Works and Railways Department should also negotiate with the Western Australian Government and endeavour to facilitate the conversion of the gauge of the railway from Perth to Kalgoorlie to that of the East-West line. Under an agreement, which has since lapsed, that work should have been undertaken on the completion of the East-West railway. Nothing, however, has been done, and the passengers travelling from Perth to the East, and vice versa, incur considerable inconvenience owing to the break of gauge at Kalgoorlie. I also direct the attention of the Minister to the fact that although second class sleeping accommodation is provided on the East-West line—

Mr. MANN.—On the Western Australian section, too.

Mr. LACEY.—Yes; but such accommodation is not provided between Adelaide and Melbourne. There should not be any hostility between the Commonwealth and State railway authorities in this matter. The conditions throughout such a long journey should be uniform. I trust the Minister for Works and Railways will negotiate with the Victorian Railways Commissioners with a view to second class sleeping accommodation being provided between Adelaide and Melbourne. This convenience is provided on the Commonwealth railways between Kalgoorlie and Port Augusta, but not between Quorn and Oodnadatta. From time to time money is voted for ballasting the East-West line, and each year a small section is completed; but, as the line will eventually be ballasted for its full length, it seems false economy to do the work in sections. When the work is completed trains will be able to travel faster, and with the added facilities provided in this bill it may then be necessary to run a train each day instead of three trains a week as at present.

Mr. MANN.—By reducing the time taken fewer stations would be required and the housing accommodation on the plains would be greatly improved.

Mr. LACEY.—Yes; that is another important phase of the question, and one which I have not time to deal with now. As there are large numbers of

unemployed in South Australia at present—the position having become aggravated owing to a dearth of overseas shipping—I ask the Minister if construction work on the proposed railway cannot be commenced at Port Augusta and Red Hill simultaneously. Immediate attention should be given to the laying of a third rail from Adelaide to Red Hill, as provided for in this bill, and that work could be started very soon. The labour position in South Australia is at present very acute, and if any relief can be given in the direction suggested a large number of deserving men in South Australia will benefit. I trust this proposal will be discussed on its merits, and that the Minister will give serious consideration to the points I have raised.

Mr. FOSTER (Wakefield) [3.44].—I consider it obligatory upon me to commence my speech on this important proposal at this juncture, as the honorable member for Grey (Mr. Lacey) has, unwittingly, I think, done an injustice to an important officer in the South Australian Public Service. I refer to the Chief Commissioner of Railways in that State (Mr. Webb), who, I submit, was not asked by the Labour Government in South Australia to make a report, and, to put it bluntly, was not allowed to do so. Mr. Webb was not asked by the South Australian Labour Government to report upon the proposal which has now become the subject of an agreement between the Commonwealth and South Australian Governments.

Mr. LACEY.—I say that he approved of it.

Mr. FOSTER.—He did not, nor would he do so. He was not asked to express his opinion upon it. I have a document of six pages from which I shall quote to establish my assertion. I do not know whether an instance of this kind has ever before occurred in South Australia or elsewhere. I ask leave to continue my remarks at a later date.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.

Motion (by Dr. EARLE PAGE) agreed to—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Wednesday next at 3 p.m.

House adjourned at 3.48 p.m.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.