



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



# House of Representatives Official Hansard

No. 36, 1932  
Thursday, 8 September 1932

THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION—THIRD PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

# PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION: THIRD PERIOD.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

His Excellency the Right Honorable SIR ISAAC ALFRED ISAACS, a Member of His Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Commonwealth of Australia.

## LYONS GOVERNMENT.

(FROM 12TH APRIL to 13TH OCTOBER, 1932.)

Prime Minister and Treasurer ..	The Right Honorable Joseph Aloysius Lyons.
Attorney-General, Minister for External Affairs and Minister for Industry	The Honorable John Greig Latham, C.M.G., K.C. (Senator the Honorable Alexander John McLachlan, Acting Attorney-General and Minister for Industry—from 1st March to 17th August, 1932; the Right Honorable Stanley Melbourne Bruce, C.H., M.C., Acting Minister for External Affairs—from 1st March to 22nd June, 1932. The Right Honorable Joseph Aloysius Lyons—Acting Minister for External Affairs—from 23rd June to 25th July, 1932.)
Assistant Minister ..	The Right Honorable Stanley Melbourne Bruce, C.H., M.C.
Minister for Defence ..	Senator the Right Honorable Sir George Foster Pearce, K.C.V.O.
Postmaster-General ..	The Honorable James Edward Fenton.
Minister for Trade and Customs	The Honorable Henry Somer Gullett; (the Honorable John Arthur Perkins, Acting Minister—from 23rd June to 24th September, 1932.)
Vice-President of the Executive Council	Senator the Honorable Alexander John McLachlan.
Minister for the Interior ..	The Honorable Robert Archdale Parkhill.
Minister for Commerce ..	The Honorable Charles Allan Seymour Hawker (to 23rd September, 1932).
Minister for Health and Minister for Repatriation	The Honorable Charles William Clanan Marr, D.S.O., M.C., V.D.
Assistant Minister ..	Senator the Honorable Walter Massy Greene.
Assistant Minister ..	The Honorable Josiah Francis.
Assistant Minister ..	The Honorable John Arthur Perkins.

(For designations of Ministers prior to 12th April see preface to volume 133.)

(FROM 13TH OCTOBER, 1932.)

Prime Minister and Treasurer ..	The Right Honorable Joseph Aloysius Lyons.
Attorney-General, Minister for External Affairs and Minister for Industry	The Honorable John Greig Latham, C.M.G., K.C.
Minister with Portfolio ..	The Right Honorable Stanley Melbourne Bruce, C.H., M.C.
Minister for Defence ..	Senator the Right Honorable Sir George Foster Pearce, K.C.V.O.
Minister for Trade and Customs	The Honorable Henry Somer Gullett.
Postmaster-General ..	The Honorable Robert Archdale Parkhill.
Vice-President of the Executive Council and Minister administering the Development Branch and the Commonwealth Council for Scientific and Industrial Research	Senator the Honorable Alexander John McLachlan.
Minister for Health and Minister for Repatriation	The Honorable Charles William Clanan Marr, D.S.O., M.C., V.D.
Minister for the Interior ..	The Honorable John Arthur Perkins.
Minister for Commerce ..	The Honorable Frederick Harold Stewart.
Assistant Minister (Treasury) ..	Senator the Honorable Walter Massy Greene.
Assistant Minister for Defence, and Minister administering War Service Homes	The Honorable Josiah Francis.
Assistant Minister ..	The Honorable James Allan Guy.

## THE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE.

THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION : THIRD PERIOD.

*President*—Senator the Honorable P. J. Lynch.

*Chairman of Committees*—Senator the Honorable Herbert Hays.

*Temporary Chairmen of Committees*—Senators William Carroll, Micheal Rapheal O'Halloran, the Honorable Herbert James Mockford Payne, Matthew Reid and Burford Sampson.

*Leader of the Opposition*—Senator the Honorable John Barnes.

*Deputy Leader of the Opposition*—Senator Micheal Rapheal O'Halloran.

Badman, Albert Oliver	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	South Australia
Barnes, Hon. John	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Victoria
Brennan, Thomas Cornelius, K.C.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Victoria
Brown, Gordon	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Queensland
Carroll, William	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Western Australia
Colebatch, Hon. Sir Hal Pateshall, K.B., C.M.G.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Western Australia
Collings, Joseph Silver	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Queensland
Cox, Charles Frederick, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	New South Wales
Crawford, Hon. Thomas William	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Queensland
Daly, Hon. John Joseph	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	South Australia
Dooley, Hon. John Braidwood	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	New South Wales
Duncan-Hughes, John Grant, M.V.O., M.C.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	South Australia
Dunn, James Patrick Digger	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	New South Wales
Elliott, Robert Charles Dunlop	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Victoria
Foll, Hattil Spencer	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Queensland
Grant, Charles William	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Tasmania
Greene, Hon. Walter Massy	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	New South Wales
Guthrie, James Francis	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Victoria
Hardy, Charles	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	New South Wales
Hayes, John Blyth, C.M.G.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Tasmania
Hays, Hon. Herbert	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Tasmania
Hoare, Albert Alfred	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	South Australia
Johnston, Edward Beirtram	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Western Australia
Kingsmill, Walter	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Western Australia
Lawson, Hon. Harry Sutherland Wightman	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Victoria
Lynch, Hon. Patrick Joseph	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Western Australia
MacDonald, John Valentine	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Queensland
McLachlan, Hon. Alexander John	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	South Australia
Millen, John Dunlop	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Tasmania
O'Halloran, Micheal Rapheal	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	South Australia
Payne, Hon. Herbert James Mockford	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Tasmania
Pearce, Right Hon. Sir George Foster, K.C.V.O.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Western Australia
Plain, William	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Victoria
Rae, Arthur	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	New South Wales
Reid, Matthew	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Queensland
Sampson, Burford, D.S.O., V.D.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Tasmania

# THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

## THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION: THIRD PERIOD.

*Speaker*—The Honorable George Hugh Mackay.

*Chairman of Committees*—George John Bell, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D.

*Temporary Chairmen of Committees*—Malcolm Duncan Cameron, James Allan Guy (to 13th October, 1932), George William Martens, John Henry Prowse, David Riordan, Victor Charles Thompson, Edward John Ward, and Thomas Walter White, D.F.C., V.D.

*Leader of the Opposition*—The Right Honorable James Henry Scullin.

*Deputy Leader of the Opposition*—The Honorable Francis Michael Forde.

*Leader of the Country Party*—The Right Honorable Earle Christmas Grafton Page.

*Deputy Leader of the Country Party*—The Honorable Thomas Paterson.

*Leader of the Australian Labour Party, New South Wales*—The Honorable John Albert Beasley.

Abbott, Hon. Charles Lydiard Aubrey .. . . . .	Gwydir (N.S.W.)
Anstey, Hon. Frank .. . . .	Bourke (V.)
Baker, Francis Matthew John .. . . . .	Oxley (Q.)
Beasley, Hon. John Albert .. . . . .	West Sydney (N.S.W.)
Bell, George John, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. .. . . . .	Darwin (T.)
Blacklow, Archibald Clifford, D.S.O. .. . . . .	Franklin (T.)
Blakeley, Hon. Arthur .. . . . .	Darling (N.S.W.)
Bruce, Right Hon. Stanley Melbourne, C.H., M.C. .. . . . .	Flinders (V.)
Cameron, Malcolm Duncan .. . . . .	Barker (S.A.)
Casey, Richard Gardiner, D.S.O., M.C. .. . . . .	Corio (V.)
Collins, Thomas Joseph .. . . . .	Hume (N.S.W.)
Corsier, Bernard Henry .. . . . .	Wide Bay (Q.)
Dein, Adam Kemball .. . . . .	Lang (N.S.W.)
Dennis, Samuel .. . . . .	Batman (V.)
Fenton, Hon. James Edward .. . . . .	Maribyrnong (V.)
Forde, Hon. Francis Michael .. . . . .	Capricornia (Q.)
Francis, Hon. Josiah .. . . . .	Moreton (Q.)
Gabb, Joel Moses .. . . . .	Angas (S.A.)
Gander, Joseph Herbert .. . . . .	Reid (N.S.W.)
Gardner, Sydney Lane .. . . . .	Robertson (N.S.W.)
Gibson, Hon. William Gerrand .. . . . .	Corangamite (V.)
Green, Hon. 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.)
Gullott, Hon. Henry Somer .. . . . .	Henty (V.)
Guy, Hon. James Allan .. . . . .	Bass (T.)
Harrison, Eric Fairweather .. . . . .	Bendigo (V.)
Harrison, Eric John .. . . . .	Wentworth (N.S.W.)
Hawker, Hon. Charles Allan Seymour .. . . . .	Wakefield (S.A.)
Hill, Hon. William Caldwell .. . . . .	Echuca (V.)
Holloway, Hon. Edward James .. . . . .	Melbourne Ports (V.)
Holman, Hon. William Arthur, K.C. .. . . . .	Martin (N.S.W.)
Hughes, Right Hon. William Morris, K.C. .. . . . .	North Sydney (N.S.W.)
Hunter, James Aitchison Johnston .. . . . .	Maranoa (Q.)
Hutchin, Arthur William, D.S.O. .. . . . .	Denison (T.)
Hutchinson, William Joseph .. . . . .	Indi (V.)
James, Rowland .. . . . .	Hunter (N.S.W.)
Jennings, John Thomas .. . . . .	South Sydney (N.S.W.)
Lane, Albert .. . . . .	Barton (N.S.W.)
Latham, Hon. John Greig, C.M.G., K.C. .. . . . .	Kooyong (V.)
Lawson, George .. . . . .	Brisbane (Q.)
Lawson, John Norman .. . . . .	Macquarie (N.S.W.)
Lyons, Right Hon. Joseph Aloysius .. . . . .	Wilmot (T.)
Mackay, Hon. George Hugh .. . . . .	Lilley (Q.)
Makin, Norman John Oswald .. . . . .	Hindmarsh (S.A.)
Maloney, William .. . . . .	Melbourne (V.)
Marr, Hon. Charles William Clanan, D.S.O., M.C., V.D. .. . . . .	Parkes (N.S.W.)
Martens, George William .. . . . .	Herbert (Q.)
Maxwell, George Arnot, K.C. .. . . . .	Fawkner (V.)
McBride, Philip Albert Martin .. . . . .	Grey (S.A.)
McClelland, Hugh .. . . . .	Wimmera (V.)
McGrath, David Charles .. . . . .	Ballarat (V.)
McNicoll, Walter Ramsay, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. .. . . . .	Werriwa (N.S.W.)
Nairn, Walter Maxwell .. . . . .	Perth (W.A.)
Nelson, Harold George .. . . . .	Northern Territory

THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT—*continued.*

Nock, Horace Keyworth .. .	.. .	.. .	.. .	Riverina (N.S.W.)
Page, Right Hon. Earle Christmas Grafton ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Cowper (N.S.W.)
Parkhill, Hon. Robert Archdale ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Warringah (N.S.W.)
Paterson, Hon. Thomas ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Gippsland (V.)
Perkins, Hon. John Arthur ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Eden-Monaro (N.S.W.)
Price, John Lloyd ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Boothby (S.A.)
Prowse, John Henry ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Forrest (W.A.)
Riley, Edward Charles ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Cook (N.S.W.)
Riordan, David ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Kennedy (Q.)
Rosevear, John Solomon ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Dalley (N.S.W.)
Scholfield, Thomas Hallett, M.C., M.M. ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Wannon (V.)
Soullin, Right Hon. James Henry ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Yarra (V.)
Stacey, Fred Hurtie ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Adelaide (S.A.)
Stewart, Hon. Frederick Harold ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Parramatta (N.S.W.)
Thompson, Victor Charles ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	New England (N.S.W.)
Thorby, Hon. Harold Victor Campbell ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Calare (N.S.W.)
Ward, Edward John ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	East Sydney (N.S.W.)
Watkins, Hon. David ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Newcastle (N.S.W.)
Watson, William ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Fremantle (W.A.)
White, Thomas Walter, D.F.C., V.D. ..	.. .	.. .	.. .	Balaclava (V.)

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## THE COMMITTEES OF THE SESSION.

(THIRD PERIOD.)

## JOINT.

**HOUSE.**—The President (Chairman), Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees in the House of Representatives, Senator Brennan, Senator Carroll, Senator Daly, Senator Dunn, Senator Foll, Senator Hoare (appointed 25th November, 1932), Senator O'Halloran (discharged 25th November, 1932), Mr. Gardner, Mr. Hunter, Mr. James, Mr. Martens, and Mr. Price.

**LIBRARY.**—Mr. Speaker (Chairman), the President, Senator Sir Hal Colebatch, Senator Collings (appointed 25th November, 1932), Senator Daly, Senator Dooley (discharged 25th November 1932), Senator Elliott, Senator Millen, Senator Sampson, Mr. Abbott, Mr. Hughes, Dr. Maloney, Mr. Nairn, Mr. Rosevear, and Mr. White.

**PRINTING.**—Senator Cox, Senator Hardy, Senator J. B. Hayes, Senator Hoare (discharged 25th November, 1932), Senator Lawson, Senator MacDonald (appointed 25th November, 1932), Senator Rae, Senator Reid, Mr. Gander, Mr. A. Green, Mr. E. F. Harrison, Mr. Jennings (appointed 24th November, 1932), Mr. McBride, Mr. McNicoll, Mr. Stewart (discharged 24th November, 1932), and Mr. Thompson.

## SENATE.

**DISPUTED RETURNS AND QUALIFICATIONS.**—Senator Crawford, Senator Dooley, Senator Elliott, Senator Guthrie, Senator Hoare, Senator O'Halloran, and Senator Payne.

**REGULATIONS AND ORDINANCES COMMITTEE.**—Senator Sir Hal Colebatch (Chairman), Senator Barnes (discharged 26th November, 1932), Senator Brennan, Senator Dooley, Senator Duncan-Hughes, Senator Elliott, Senator O'Halloran (appointed 25th November, 1932), and Senator Rae.

**STANDING ORDERS.**—The President (Chairman), the Chairman of Committees, Senator Brown (appointed 25th November, 1932), Senator Crawford, Senator Dooley (discharged 25th November, 1932), Senator E. B. Johnston, Senator Kingsmill, Senator McLachlan, Senator O'Halloran, and Senator Rae.

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

**STANDING ORDERS.**—Mr. Speaker (Chairman), the Prime Minister, the Chairman of Committees, the Leader of the Opposition, Sir Littleton Groom, Mr. Makin, and Dr. Earle Page.

# THE ACTS OF THE SESSION.

(THIRD PERIOD.)

## APPROPRIATION ACT 1932-33 (No. 49 of 1932)—

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 thirty-three and to appropriate the Supplies granted by the Parliament for such year.

## APPROPRIATION ACT (No. 2) 1932-33 (No. 62 of 1932)—

An Act to grant and apply an additional sum out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the service of the year ending the thirtieth day of June, One thousand nine hundred and thirty-three and to appropriate such sum.

## APPROPRIATION (WORKS AND BUILDINGS) ACT (No. 2) 1932-33 (No. 63 of 1932)—

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

## APPROPRIATION (WORKS AND BUILDINGS) ACT 1932-33 (No. 33 of 1932)—

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 thirty-three, for the purposes of Additions, New Works, Buildings, &c., and to appropriate such sum.

## BEACHES, FISHING GROUNDS AND SEA ROUTES PROTECTION ACT (No. 73 of 1932)—

An Act relating to the protection of Beaches, Sea Fishing Grounds and Routes used by Vessels engaged in Trade and Commerce with other countries and among the States.

## BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT (No. 61 of 1932)—

An Act to amend the *Bills of Exchange Act 1909-1912*.

## COLONIAL LIGHT DUES APPROPRIATION ACT (No. 67 of 1932)—

An Act relating to Colonial Light Dues.

## COLONIAL LIGHT DUES COLLECTION ACT (No. 66 of 1932)—

An Act to provide for the collection, on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of Colonial Light Dues (Bahamas and Leeward Islands).

## COLONIAL LIGHT DUES (RATES) ACT (No. 66 of 1932)—

An Act to impose Colonial Light Dues.

## COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS ACT (No. 58 of 1932)—

An Act to suspend the operation of the *Committee of Public Accounts Act 1913-1920*.

## COMMONWEALTH PUBLIC SERVICE ACT (No. 72 of 1932)—

An Act to amend the *Commonwealth Public Service Act 1922-1931*.

## COMMONWEALTH PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE ACT (No. 52 of 1932)—

An Act to suspend the operation of the *Commonwealth Public Works Act 1913-1921*.

## DEFENCE ACT (No. 50 of 1932)—

An Act to amend the *Defence Act 1903-1927*.

## DESIGNS ACT (No. 53 of 1932)—

An Act to amend the *Designs Act 1906-1912*.

## FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT (No. 35 of 1932)—

An Act to amend the *Financial Emergency Acts 1931*, and for other purposes.

## FINANCIAL RELIEF ACT (No. 64 of 1932)—

An Act to reduce Taxation ; to remove anomalies in relation to Invalid and Old-age Pensions ; to provide Financial Relief for Wheat-growers and other Primary Producers ; and for other purposes.

## HIGH COMMISSIONER ACT (No. 34 of 1932)—

An Act to amend the *High Commissioner Act 1909*.

## INCOME TAX ACT (No. 75 of 1932)—

An Act to impose Taxes upon Incomes.

## INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 76 of 1932)—

An Act to amend the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1922-1931*.

## INVALID AND OLD-AGE PENSIONS APPROPRIATION ACT (No. 2) (No. 69 of 1932)—

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

## JUDICIARY ACT (No. 60 of 1932)—

An Act to amend the *Judiciary Act 1903-1927*.

## JURY EXEMPTION ACT (No. 59 of 1932)—

An Act to amend the *Jury Exemption Act 1905-1922*.

## NAURU ISLAND AGREEMENT ACT (No. 54 of 1932)—

An Act to approve an Agreement made between His Majesty's Government in London, His Majesty's Government of the Commonwealth of Australia, and His Majesty's Government of the Dominion of New Zealand, in relation to the Island of Nauru.

## NEW GUINEA ACT (No. 61 of 1932)

An Act to amend the *New Guinea Act 1920-1926*.

THE ACTS OF THE SESSION—*continued.*

PATENTS, TRADE MARKS AND DESIGNS ACT (No. 70 of 1932)—  
An Act relating to Patents, Trade Marks and Designs.

SALES TAX ACT (No. 6) (No. 48 of 1932)—  
An Act to amend the *Sales Tax Act (No. 6)* 1930–1931.

SALES TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 1) (No. 39 of 1932)—  
An Act to amend the *Sales Tax Assessment Act (No. 1)* 1930–1931.

SALES TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 2) (No. 40 of 1932)—  
An Act to amend the *Sales Tax Assessment Act (No. 2)* 1930–1931.

SALES TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 3) (No. 41 of 1932)—  
An Act to amend the *Sales Tax Assessment Act (No. 3)* 1930–1931.

SALES TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 4) (No. 42 of 1932)—  
An Act to amend the *Sales Tax Assessment Act (No. 4)* 1930–1931.

SALES TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 5) (No. 43 of 1932)—  
An Act to amend the *Sales Tax Assessment Act (No. 5)* 1930–1931.

SALES TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 6) (No. 44 of 1932)—  
An Act to amend the *Sales Tax Assessment Act (No. 6)* 1930–1931.

SALES TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 7) (No. 45 of 1932)—  
An Act to amend the *Sales Tax Assessment Act (No. 7)* 1930–1931.

SALES TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 8) (No. 46 of 1932)—  
An Act to amend the *Sales Tax Assessment Act (No. 8)* 1930–1931.

SALES TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 9) (No. 47 of 1932)—  
An Act to amend the *Sales Tax Assessment Act (No. 9)* 1930–1931.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA GRANT ACT (No. 36 of 1932)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum for the purposes of Financial Assistance to the State of South Australia.

SUGAR AGREEMENT ACT (No. 74 of 1932)—

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 Queensland and for other purposes.

SUPPLY ACT (No. 2) 1932–33 (No. 32 of 1932)—

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 thirty-three.

TASMANIA GRANT ACT (No. 38 of 1932)—

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

UNITED KINGDOM AND AUSTRALIA TRADE AGREEMENT ACT (No. 57 of 1932)—

An Act to approve the provisions of an agreement made between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia and arising out of the Conference of Representatives of the Governments of the British Dominions held at Ottawa in July and August, One thousand nine hundred and thirty-two.

WAR SERVICE HOMES AGREEMENT ACT (No. 56 of 1932)—

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

WAR SERVICE HOMES ACT (No. 2) (No. 68 of 1932)—

An Act to amend section twenty-nine of the *War Service Homes Act* 1918–1929, as amended by the *War Service Homes Act* 1932.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA GRANT ACT (No. 37 of 1932)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund a sum for the purposes of Financial Assistance to the State of Western Australia.

WHEAT BOUNTY (CLAIMS) ACT (No. 71 of 1932)—

An Act relating to the making of claims under the *Wheat Bounty Act* 1931.

WIRE AND WIRE NETTING ACT (No. 55 of 1932)—

An Act to amend the *Wire and Wire Netting Act* 1927.

## BILLS OF THE SESSION.

(THIRD PERIOD.)

COMMERCE (TRADE DESCRIPTIONS) BILL.

COMMONWEALTH CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION BILL.

COMMONWEALTH PUBLIC SERVICE BILL (No. 1).

CRIMES BILL (No. 2).

CUSTOMS BILL.

HIGH COURT PROCEDURE BILL.

SEAT OF GOVERNMENT (SUPREME COURT) BILL.

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ment have been made? If not, what action does the Government intend to take to recover the amount due to the Commonwealth?

Mr. LYONS.—The matter is at present receiving the close consideration of the Government.

Mr. WARD.—The right honorable gentleman said that six months ago.

Mr. LYONS.—The position is still difficult, and I am not in a position to make any announcement at this stage. As soon as any definite information can be given I shall make a statement to the House.

## House of Representatives.

Thursday, 8 September, 1938.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. G. H. Mackay) took the chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

### PRICE OF PETROL.

Mr. CAMERON.—Will the Prime Minister state whether the Government proposes to investigate the high cost of motor spirit, particularly in view of the fact that the Commonwealth Oil Refineries Limited has, apparently, had no influence in reducing prices?

Mr. LYONS.—The matter is at present receiving consideration by a sub-committee of Cabinet.

### COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING.

Mr. HOLLOWAY.—I ask the Minister representing the Minister for Defence whether there is any foundation for the newspaper report that the Government proposes to re-introduce compulsory military training when the state of the finances permits?

Mr. FRANCIS.—For a considerable time a disarmament conference has been in session, and obviously until the results of its deliberations are known no announcement can be made on the subject mentioned by the honorable member.

### AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH LINE OF STEAMERS.

Mr. MAKIN.—Will the Prime Minister inform the House whether the arrears of payments due to the Commonwealth in respect of the sale of the Commonwealth Line of Steamers have been met by the purchasers, or if arrangements for pay-

### COMMONWEALTH PUBLIC SERVICE.

Mr. JOHN LAWSON.—Will the Prime Minister furnish the House with a statement of the number of Commonwealth public servants who are receiving salaries of £400 a year or more, and the aggregate annual amount of such salaries?

Mr. LYONS.—Many requests for information involve the preparation of returns at considerable cost and I am not sure that this question does not come within that category. But if the required information can be prepared without undue expense I shall obtain it for the honorable member.

### RESIDENT MINISTER IN LONDON.

Mr. BEASLEY.—I ask the Prime Minister to state, for the guidance of honorable members, whether they are to look to newspaper reports of statements by the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Bruce) regarding loan conversions and other financial negotiations in London, or whether such information will be furnished to the House?

Mr. LYONS.—As soon as the Minister without Portfolio reaches London he will attend to those matters which are the primary purpose of his mission. Honorable members need not rely upon the newspapers or any other unofficial source for information of his doings. The statements made by Ministers in this Parliament from time to time will be the only authoritative information.

## WIRE NETTING.

**Mr. GREGORY.**—Has the Acting Minister for Trade and Customs taken any action to honour the promise of the Government that the Tariff Board would be asked to advise whether wire netting is covered by the provisions of the Australian Industries Preservation Act, and therefore subject to a dumping duty?

**Mr. PERKINS.**—I understand that that matter is now being considered by the board.

## PRINTING OF POSTAGE STAMPS.

**Mr. A. GREEN.**—Yesterday I asked questions, upon notice, regarding the printing of postage stamps. The replies I received were incomplete. I asked to be informed of the difference in cost, by the computation usually made, between recess and surface printing, and the answer of the Postmaster-General was "The difference is as much as 400 per cent." Hitherto, great care has been taken in the engraving of stamps, and recently rather a slip-shod method of surface printing has been adopted. I desire to know the exact difference in cost per 1,000 between recess and surface printing.

**Mr. FENTON.**—If practicable, I shall supply the honorable member with the information he desires; but I do not think he is justified in suggesting that the present method of printing stamps is more dangerous than the old method. All reasonable care is taken.

## CONVERSION OF GOLD RESERVE.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR.**—About a week ago I asked, upon notice, a question of the Prime Minister regarding the conversion of the Commonwealth gold reserve into sterling. So far I have received no reply. Was my question so involved that more than a week is required for the preparation of an answer? Does not the right honorable member think that he, as Treasurer, and custodian of the Commonwealth finances, should be able to answer such a question readily?

**Mr. LYONS.**—The matter was referred to the Commonwealth Bank Board, the only authority which could supply the information. The answer is to hand, and will be tabled this afternoon.

## PIPES AND TUBES.

**Mr. WHITE.**—Primage and sales tax on piping, Item 125A of the Customs Tariff have been lifted in respect of pipes "used for agricultural purposes." As this will cause great difficulty when landing shipments in determining which pipes will be used by farmers and which by builders, gate makers, and plumbers, and will necessitate sworn declarations in respect of the different portions, and price disparity between different buyers, will the Acting Minister for Trade and Customs consider the desirability of making the change apply uniformly to all galvanized and black piping?

**Mr. PERKINS.**—At first glance, the difficulties mentioned by the honorable member seem likely to occur. The honorable member's suggestion will be considered.

## CORN SACKS.

**Mr. BLAKELEY.**—Attention has been drawn to the apprehension of farmers with regard to the importation of inferior cornsacks, which, it is said, are being sold as standard sacks. As the railways refuse to carry inferior sacks when they are filled with wheat, will the Minister for Commerce inquire as to the justification for such apprehension?

**Mr. HAWKER.**—Certain matters dealing with the quality of cornsacks which have been offered to farmers this year have been brought under my notice, and have been referred for report to some of the Customs officials. As I understand the position, the Customs Department exercises rigid supervision over the importation of cornsacks, but some doubt has arisen as to the quality of the jute imported in the roll for the manufacture of sacks locally, and in that case it is much more difficult to exercise full supervision. But further investigation is being made, to see whether the farmers can be protected to the full against purchasing cornsacks that will not stand up to the work for which they are intended.

## WAR SERVICE HOMES.

## EVICTIONS.

**Mr. JAMES.**—In view of the statement made to the House last week that no evictions of returned soldiers from war service homes have occurred since

the present Government came into power, and in view of the assurance of the Assistant Minister for Defence (Mr. Francis) that before any eviction takes place, the matter will be submitted for his signature, how does the honorable gentleman account for the statement published in the *Sun Pictorial* of the 1st September, and the *Newcastle Herald* of 6th January, that the War Service Homes Commission had obtained eviction orders against Arthur Joseph Bell, and Ernest Lyle Williams, both returned soldiers of Monash-street, Footscray. The evidence was that Bell agreed in November, 1924, to purchase a property—

**Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. G. H. Mackay).**—The honorable member may only ask a question.

**Mr. JAMES.**—Bell paid off £325, and his arrears accumulated owing to fourteen months' unemployment. Williams had also paid a similar sum. The case of Kenneth Colin Mackenzie was brought before the court at Cessnock only last Tuesday. Eviction orders were granted in each case. How then does the Minister justify his statement that no returned soldiers have been evicted since this Government took office?

**Mr. FRANCIS.**—The honorable member raised this matter a few days ago, and I asked him to give me the names of any returned soldiers likely to be ejected, promising to inquire into their cases. Until this moment the honorable member had not accepted my invitation. No Minister signs ejection orders, but ministerial approval must now be given before action can be taken to bring a matter before the court. Since this Government took office, no purchaser or borrower has been ejected from his war service home. What the honorable member has referred to is a procedure for making a purchaser or an occupier of a war service home who is unwilling to keep up his contributions recognize his obligations, but up to date no order issued by the court against a purchaser or a borrower has been given effect by the department.

**Mr. HOLLOWAY.**—Has the Minister administering the War Service Homes Department yet negotiated with the War Service Homes department of the State Savings Bank of Victoria with the object

of arriving at a mutual understanding to ensure that persons buying war service homes through the bank will receive the same protection as those who have acted through the War Service Homes Commission? If the negotiations have not been set on foot, will the Minister give attention to the matter as early as possible?

**Mr. FRANCIS.**—The Government has treated this matter as urgent, and negotiations are now proceeding. I hope to be able to make a definite statement on the subject at an early date.

**Mr. GANDER.**—Will the Minister give an assurance that no ex-soldier or soldier's widow will be evicted simply because of failure to make payments on account of lack of employment, rationing of work, or sickness?

**Mr. FRANCIS.**—The war service homes policy of the Government has been enunciated clearly on a number of occasions, both in this House and in the press. The circumstances of each case are carefully investigated before any decision is reached. Ex-sailors' and ex-soldiers' widows are required to make payments only according to their ability to pay.

#### THE TARIFF.

**Mr. McGRATH.**—Are the new duties under the tariff schedule laid on the table a few days ago, which provide for a reduction of the tariff, now in operation, or must the schedule be passed by the Parliament before they come into operation?

**Mr. PERKINS.**—Taking the schedule generally, the majority of the duties will not operate until they have been authorized by Parliament. But in a few instances in which the Government has reverted to the 1921-28 tariff, they become operative immediately.

#### SHEET GLASS, IRON PIPES AND TUBES.

**Mr. RILEY.**—In view of the proposed decrease in the duties on plain sheet glass, and the proposal to remove the deferred duties on iron pipes and tubes, will the Assistant Minister for Trade and Customs consider the advisability of either prohibiting or rationing the imports of those articles, owing to the grave danger of importers bringing in goods far in excess of ordinary requirements?

**Mr. PERKINS.**—I have already given consideration to the matter, in response to a telegram received from one of the firms concerned. It is practically impossible to do what the honorable member suggests; but the position of the sheet glass industry has received close attention from myself, from my predecessor, and also from the last government. Public attention has been concentrated upon it recently because it was said that a certain number of employees had been discharged, and the industry was to close down. That is hardly the position. A week or ten days ago, prior to the laying of the tariff schedule on the table of the House, word was received from an investigator who visits the glass works weekly, because of the number of complaints made from time to time. The firm in question has made earnest efforts in the last few years to meet the requirements of the public of Australia, but has hopelessly failed. Honorable members will realize this when the report of the Tariff Board on the matter is placed before them. The Minister for Trade and Customs (Mr. Gullett) was consequently compelled to allow the admission of glass under by-law. After his departure for Ottawa, the duties came into operation again; but within a few weeks I received letters from all parts of Australia saying that the requirements of glass were not being met. Therefore, as Acting Minister, I was compelled to admit glass again under by-law.

**Mr. SCULLIN.**—Is that all the proof on which the Government acted?

**Mr. PERKINS.**—No. If the right honorable member for Yarra (Mr. Scullin) will look at an advance copy of the Tariff Board's report, I shall be able to convince him that the Government had good grounds for the action taken. The following is an extract from the report of an investigating officer dated the 23rd August, 1932:

Mr. Smith added that it is possible that the production of plain clear sheet glass will be temporarily stopped in a very short time by his company to enable the necessary reconstruction of the tank to be effected. He expects that plain clear sheet glass will be again produced not later than six weeks after the date of closing of the works.

I point out that before the tariff schedule was tabled, Mr. Smith did contemplate closing down his factory for some time.

On the 30th August, the day before the tariff schedule was tabled, the following report was submitted by the investigating officer:

Mr. W. J. Smith, managing director, Australian Window Glass Proprietary Limited, informed me that his company will be in a position after this week's production (28th August, 1932, to 3rd September, 1932) to determine on which date the plant will be closed down for reconstruction. It is the intention of Australian Window Glass Proprietary Limited to execute all outstanding orders prior to ceasing production of plain clear sheet glass.

I have a good deal of sympathy with the company which has invested its money in this industry. I believe that it has tried to produce window glass. But the general public must be considered. The deferred duty provided in the 1921-28 schedule still stands, and if made operative will assist the company. The Government has acted wisely, in the best interests of the company itself and of the people generally.

#### OIL SURVEY.

**Mr. A. GREEN.**—Will the Minister for the Interior undertake to make available to honorable members as soon as possible the report which Dr. Woolnough submits to the Government on his aerial survey of the potential oil-producing areas of Australia?

**Mr. ARCHDALE PARKHILL.**—Yes.

#### SALES TAX AND PRIMAGE DUTIES.

**Mr. STACEY.**—Will the Treasurer take steps to exempt from sales tax seed peas and other seed used for gardening purposes? This is a matter which vitally affects the welfare of the primary producers?

**Mr. LYONS.**—In preparing the budget, the Government gave the fullest consideration to the scope of the exemptions that could be allowed from sales tax and primage duty. The position of the primary producers was most carefully investigated. I shall consider the request of the honorable member, but I cannot give any assurance that additional exemptions will be granted.

**Mr. PATERSON.**—I have just received a telegram which reads—

In interest primary producers strongly advocate remission sales tax all lime used for agricultural purposes.

In view of the fact that fertilizers generally have been exempt from this taxation, will the Government sympathetically consider the exemption of lime used for agricultural purposes?

Mr. LYONS.—I can only repeat the reply that I have already given to the honorable member for Adelaide. The Government will undertake to consider the matter, but can give no promise of a favorable decision.

#### SUGAR INDUSTRY.

Mr. FORDE.—Is the Prime Minister in a position to make a statement to Parliament respecting the conference held last Saturday between representatives of the sugar industry and the Commonwealth Government? Honorable members have gleaned a certain amount of information from the press, but would be glad to hear a statement from the Prime Minister?

Mr. LYONS.—An agreement was reached at the conference that certain proposals of the Government would be submitted to the various interests associated in the production and manufacture of sugar. At the request of the parties, an undertaking was given that until those affected by the proposal had been consulted no public statement would be made. It was promised that the matter would be dealt with promptly, and a promise was made that a decision would be reached within a fortnight. Immediately the Government is informed of the decision of the interested parties an announcement will be made.

#### UNLAWFUL ASSOCIATIONS.

Mr. ROSEVEAR.—Will the Attorney-General inform me whether officers of his department were responsible for the threats of penalties recently made to the proprietors of certain public halls in Sydney if they allowed lectures to be given in their buildings under the auspices of a certain organization? If so, was the action taken under the Crimes Act? Is it not necessary to institute judicial proceedings in order to have certain organizations declared unlawful before threats are made? If so, will the honorable gentleman see that in the future such threats are not held over the heads of property owners until the provisions of the law have been observed?

Mr. LATHAM.—I am responsible for the action taken. The officers of my department acted under my personal direction. The attention of certain owners of property was called to the fact that their properties were being used for the holding of meetings of certain associations which were defined in the Crimes Act as unlawful. It was considered fair to give the owners of these halls an opportunity to cease committing breaches of the law before prosecutions were launched against them. The action was taken in accordance with the law. The Crimes Act provides that certain associations are unlawful, but there must be judicial proceedings before any fine or other penalty can be inflicted. In the course of such proceedings, the defendants will have an opportunity to establish, if they can, that the associations concerned are not unlawful. There is no need to institute proceedings in the High Court for a formal declaration that certain associations are unlawful before taking action of the nature to which I have referred. All defendants will have the amplest opportunity to show, if they can, that the associations concerned are not unlawful.

Mr. ROSEVEAR.—In view of the fact that the Attorney-General has just stated that these associations must be declared illegal before any penalty—

Mr. SPEAKER.—It is quite out of order for any honorable member to ask a question based upon the answer to a previous question.

Mr. ROSEVEAR.—Then I ask the Attorney-General whether he is aware that the notice issued to proprietors of these halls last Saturday week was not a warning but a threat of what would happen?

Mr. LATHAM.—I am not particularly concerned whether the notice is described as a warning or a threat. In the existing circumstances, I am quite prepared to have it regarded as a threat to enforce the law of the Commonwealth.

#### DEPORTATIONS.

Mr. MARTENS asked the Minister for the Interior, *upon notice*—

1. What number of persons has been deported from the Commonwealth since the present Government took office?

2. What were the reasons for such deportations, and the dates of same?

3. What are the names of the persons deported?

**Mr. ARCHDALE PARKHILL.**—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1 and 2. From the 1st January, 1932, to the 31st August, 1932, 80 persons were deported from Australia under the Immigration Act on account of illegal entry, criminal offences, health reasons, and other causes.

3. It is not the practice to disclose the names of persons deported.

### ENTERTAINMENTS TAX COLLECTIONS.

**Mr. GABB** asked the Treasurer, *upon notice*—

What was the amount collected in entertainments tax for the financial year 1931-32?

**Mr. LYONS.** — The collections amounted to £138,072.

### QUESTIONABLE TAXATION RETURNS.

**Mr. GABB** asked the Treasurer, *upon notice*—

1. Is it a fact that, according to the Fourteenth Report of the Commissioner of Taxation, of the 163 taxpayers penalized for submitting questionable returns, not one South Australian taxpayer is included therein?

2. Is this an indication of a higher moral stand-point on the part of the South Australian taxpayers compared with those of other parts of Australia?

3. Is the departmental investigation as keen in South Australia as in other parts of the Commonwealth?

**Mr. LYONS.**—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. Yes.

2 and 3. During the period covered by the Commissioner's report on questionable returns, practically no income tax investigation work was undertaken in South Australia owing to inadequate staff. The position has since been remedied by the appointment of additional officers in that State.

### SUBSIDIZED INDUSTRIES.

**Mr. BEASLEY** asked the Treasurer, *upon notice*—

What industries are subsidized by the Government, and what amount is obtained by each industry?

**Mr. LYONS.**—Subsidies paid to industries by way of bounty in 1931-32 were as follow:—

	£
Iron and steel products bounty	7,392
Sulphur bounty ..	30,962
Wine export bounty ..	130,753
Flax and linseed bounties ..	1,561
Cotton industries bounty ..	158,601
Gold bounty ..	80,904
New Guinea bounty ..	831
Wheat bounty ..	<u>3,296,464</u>
	3,707,468

In addition, other assistance was given by the Commonwealth during 1931-32 as under—

	£
Expenditure under Export Guarantee Act—Publicity, &c..	19,500
Assistance to coal and shale oil industries (experimental and developmental work and freight subsidy) .. ..	59,873

### QUOTA SYSTEM ON IMPORTS.

**Mr. PERKINS.**—Information is being obtained in reply to a question asked by the honorable member for Newcastle (Mr. Watkins), *upon notice*, in regard to the application of a quota system on imports.

### COST OF VISITS OF OVERSEAS ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ADVISERS.

**Dr. MALONEY** asked the Prime Minister, *upon notice*—

1. What was the total amount of money expended in connexion with the group of invited guests known as "The Big Four"?

2. Which Government and which Minister invited them?

3. What was the total amount of money expended in connexion with the visit to Australia of Sir Otto Niemeyer?

4. Which Government and which Minister invited him?

5. What was the total amount of money expended in connexion with the visit of the Canadian expert on sales tax?

6. Which Government and which Minister invited him?

7. In view of the large amount of money expended on the above items, and with the view of making use of the accumulated public and private wealth of Australia (now estimated at £4,000,000,000), in order to pay dividends instead of over-taxing the citizens of Australia, will the Government consider the question of inviting Major Douglas to Australia to explain his system of credit?

**Mr. LYONS.**—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. I refer the honorable member to a detailed statement of expenditure furnished in reply to a question, upon notice, asked by him on the 17th March, 1931. (*Hansard* No. 2, page 297.)

2. Negotiations were initiated by the right honorable member for Flinders (Mr. Bruce), as Prime Minister, during his visit to England in connexion with the Imperial Conference of 1926.

3. The expenses of Sir Otto Niemeyer and party were not paid by the Commonwealth.

4. A statement made by the right honorable member for Yarra (Mr. Scullin), as Prime Minister, on the 18th June, 1930 (*Hansard* No. 23, page 2933), deals with the negotiations leading up to Sir Otto Niemeyer's visit to Australia.

5. £873.

6. The papers show that negotiations for the visit were conducted by the right honorable member for Yarra, as Prime Minister, at the instance of the Honorable E. G. Theodore, Treasurer.

7. It is not considered desirable to take action on the lines suggested by the honorable member.

## AUSTRALASIAN PERFORMING RIGHT ASSOCIATION.

### ROYALTIES.

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

Whether any royalty has been paid by the Australian Broadcasting Commission to the Australasian Performing Right Association since the 1st July last in respect to copyright music used in providing programmes for the national broadcasting services; if so, what amount?

**Mr. FENTON.**—The commission states that no such payment has been made.

### NEW GUARD.

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

1. In view of the promise of the Commonwealth Government to set up an inquiry into the activities of the "New Guard", particularly with relation to the alleged "frame-up" of the attack on Alderman Garden, will the Prime Minister take all steps necessary to prevent witnesses whose evidence is necessary from leaving the Commonwealth?

2. Will he ascertain and inform the House whether Captain W. W. Sutherland, formerly chief secretary of the "New Guard", has booked his passage to England by the *Nieuw Holland*, which leaves Sydney on 21st September, 1932?

3. Will he ascertain and inform the House whether Major George Knox, lately second-in-command of the "New Guard", whose offices

were raided by the New South Wales police, is about to leave Australia for South Africa?

4. Will he ascertain and inform the House whether a man named Macgillicuddy, who also occupied a very prominent position in the "New Guard", has already secretly left Australia?

5. Will he ascertain whether the Attorney-General of either the Commonwealth or of the State of New South Wales was consulted before passports were issued to the persons mentioned?

**Mr. LYONS.**—For reasons already stated in the House, the Government does not propose to have an inquiry into the activities of the New Guard.

### GOLD RESERVE.

**Mr. WATSON** asked the Treasurer, *upon notice*—

1. What was the amount of our gold reserve exported during the financial year 1931-32, and was the amount included in our exports?

2. What is the amount at credit of our gold reserve?

**Mr. LYONS.**—The following replies have been furnished by the Commonwealth Bank:—

1. The amount exported was £2,000,000, and was included in our exports.

2. £8,499,338 10s.

### PRIMARY INDUSTRIES.

#### BENEFITS OF EXCHANGE AND TARIFF PREFERENCES.

**Mr. R. GREEN** asked the Minister for Commerce, *upon notice*—

1. Is it a fact that a strong belief exists among Australian wool-growers that a considerable proportion of the benefits obtained for them through the exchange premium and through reduced handling charges, has been seized by organizations of middlemen?

2. Is it a fact that Australian tallow-producers are receiving no benefit from the British tariff preference of 10 per cent., and that the benefits derived from the increased prices of tallow bought by Britain have been absorbed by interests other than primary producers?

3. Will the Government make inquiries in regard thereto?

**Mr. HAWKER.**—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follows:—

1. The Wool Inquiry Committee now sitting is expected to deal with this matter in its report which it is hoped will be received by the Government at an early date.

2. Since the preference of 10 per cent. was obtained by the dominions under the British tariff in March last, prices of tallow have not increased, although it is reported that there is a better inquiry and firmer prices in Great Britain to-day. Japan is Australia's best

market for tallow, but increased quantities are being shipped to Great Britain. The preference is therefore enabling Australia to secure a larger share of the British market.

3. If the honorable member will submit any cases with regard to wool, I should be glad to forward them to the Wool Inquiry Committee.

### PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA.

#### TARIFF CONCESSIONS.

**Mr. R. GREEN** asked the Minister for Commerce, *upon notice*—

1. Has his attention been drawn to the following statement made by the Chairman of Directors (Mr. W. R. Carpenter) at the annual meeting of Messrs. W. R. Carpenter and Company Limited (Islands merchants), in Sydney, on the 24th ultimo:—"At the Ottawa Conference many concessions were made to foster inter-Empire trade and give the dominions a better price for their products. I sincerely hope that this will result, but cannot help expressing a doubt. On the concessions originally granted, copra is included, but producers have not received any benefit, and, to-day get only the same price for their produce as if sold elsewhere. The prices of most of our commodities are controlled by combines, who look upon any concession given by the Government as their legitimate plunder. The only way for the dominions producers to get any benefits would be for the British Government to collect the duty and remit it to the dominions for distribution to the producers."?

2. If he agrees with this considered statement, does he propose any action to combat the disability exposed therein?

**Mr. HAWKER.**—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follows:—

1. Yes.

2. Considerably more than half of the exports of copra from Papua and the Mandated Territory of New Guinea is marketed in foreign countries. Therefore a preferential duty on the small portion sold in the United Kingdom would not enable producers to raise prices above those which they receive for the much larger portion disposed of elsewhere. Nevertheless, producers of commodities, of which the price is based upon world conditions, were anxious to obtain preferential rates in the British market from which they expect to derive shelter in that market on portion of their output, which will facilitate the disposal of the whole.

### RESIDENT MINISTER IN LONDON.

#### VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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

1. What Government business did the right honorable member for Flinders (Mr. Bruce) attend to during his recent visit to the United States of America?

2. How many persons did the delegation comprise, and what was the daily cost of same to the Commonwealth?

**Mr. LYONS.**—The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. In addition to the discussion with representatives of the British Government in the United States of America of matters of mutual concern to the British and Australian Governments, the objects of the right honorable member's visit included an examination of the question of the arrangements to be observed in the future in connexion with the representation of Australia in the United States of America.

2. These details are not available at present.

### COST OF LIVING.

**Mr. LYONS.**—On the 31st August the honorable member for Hindmarsh (Mr. Makin) asked the following question, without notice:—

Can the Minister say whether the investigation by the Statistician's Department as to the method of computing the cost of living figures has been finalized, and whether in future the calculations which so vitally affect the lives of a great number of the people of this country will be placed on a new basis?

The answer to the honorable member's question is as follows:—

Investigations made by the Acting Commonwealth Statistician show no reason why the computation of the retail price index should be placed on a new basis. The honorable member may be referred to the report entitled "Wages and Prices", issued by the Bureau of Census and Statistics. There are certain amendments and improvements therein recommended, and I am informed that these either have been, or are now being, put into effect. In respect to rent, further improvements are perhaps possible, and the matter is being further investigated. The use made of the retail-price index to adjust wages is a matter entirely in the discretion of the Arbitration Courts and other wage-fixing authorities.

### OTTAWA AND GENEVA CONFERENCES.

#### PERSONNEL AND COST.

**Mr. LYONS.**—On the 2nd September, the honorable member for East Sydney (Mr. Ward) asked me the following questions, *upon notice*:—

1. What are the names of the people belonging to or connected with the Australian delegation who journeyed to Geneva for the Disarmament Conference, and what was the total and individual expense to the Commonwealth?

2. What are the names of the people belonging to or connected with the Australian delegation who journeyed to the recent conference at Ottawa, and what was the total and individual expense to the Commonwealth?

The reply to the honorable member's questions are as follow:—

1. Sir Granville Ryrie, delegate (for opening sessions of conference only), succeeded by the Honorable J. G. Latham, delegate; Mr. V. C. Duffy, adviser (for opening sessions of conference only), succeeded by Mr. F. G. Sheddell, adviser and substitute delegate; Major O. C. W. Fuhrman, secretary to delegation (for opening sessions only); Mr. H. A. Standish, private secretary to the Honorable J. G. Latham; and typist. The conference has not concluded, and accounts in connexion with the delegation are therefore not yet complete—see Estimates (page 252), miscellaneous services.

2. Ottawa Conference.—The Right Honorable S. M. Bruce, C.H., P.C., M.C., Assistant Treasurer; the Honorable H. S. Gullett, Minister for Trade and Customs; Professor A. E. V. Richardson, Professor of Agriculture, University of Adelaide, and Director of Waite Agricultural Research Institute; Mr. E. Abbott, Deputy Comptroller-General, Department of Trade and Customs; Mr. J. F. Murphy, Development Branch, Prime Minister's Department (secretary to the delegation); Mr. L. E. Stevens, Department of Commerce; Mr. C. B. Carter, private secretary to Right Honorable S. M. Bruce; Mr. A. C. Moore, Department of Trade and Customs; Mrs. F. M. Grant, private secretary to Honorable H. S. Gullett; Mr. M. B. Duffy, member of Commonwealth Bank Board (business consultant); Mr. F. L. McDougall, C.M.G., High Commissioner's Office, London; Mr. L. R. Macgregor, Australian Trade Commissioner, Toronto, Canada; Messrs. J. Garside and J. H. Tindale of the New York office. Business consultants who are meeting their own expenses—Mr. S. McKay, H. V. McKay-Massey Harris Proprietary Limited, Sunshine, Victoria; Mr. R. W. Knox, of Knox, Schlapp and Company, Melbourne, former President of Melbourne Chamber of Commerce; Mr. F. H. Tout, President, Graziers Association of New South Wales, and Mr. H. W. Osborne, Western District Co-operative Produce and Insurance Company Limited. Expenditure on account of the delegation is still being incurred, and a final statement will not be available until outstanding accounts, and statements of expenditure from members of the delegation, have been received and dealt with—see Estimates, page 252.

#### **KALGOORLIE TO PORT AUGUSTA RAILWAY.**

Mr. ARCHDALE PARKHILL.—On the 2nd September, the honorable member for Hindmarsh (Mr. Makin) asked me, without notice, whether I would lay on the table of the House an audited statement of the accounts of the stores connected with the Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta railway.

I now desire to advise the honorable member, that, as soon as the Auditor-General has completed his audit of the

accounts of the stores, I shall be glad to make it available to the honorable member.

#### **CONVERSION OF GOLD RESERVE.**

Mr. LYONS.—On the 1st September, the honorable member for Dalley (Mr. Rosevear), asked the following questions, upon notice:—

1. Has the Commonwealth Bank Board exercised the powers conferred upon it by the Commonwealth Bank Act 1932, to convert any portion of the Commonwealth gold reserve it deems advisable into sterling?
2. Has any gold been shipped overseas for this purpose?
3. If so, what amount, and on what date?

The following replies have been furnished by the Commonwealth Bank:—

1. Yes.
2. Yes.
3. £2,000,000 in June, 1932.

#### **CENSUS.**

##### **APPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT.**

Mr. LYONS.—On the 7th September, the honorable member for Brisbane (Mr. George Lawson) asked the following question, without notice:—

A circular recently issued by the Acting Commonwealth Statistician contains instructions to applicants for employment in connexion with the taking of the 1933 census, and states that candidates will be examined in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne. Will the Prime Minister include Brisbane in the examination centres, and thereby give to the unemployed of that city the same opportunity as has been afforded the unemployed in other States to secure work in connexion with the census?

The answer to the honorable member's question is as follows:—

It has not been decided to limit examinations to Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne, but the question of holding examinations in all capitals will be fully considered. It is, however, considered unlikely that persons resident in distant States will be attracted to this work as the work will be of a temporary nature only, and in most cases only a few months' employment will be available.

#### **PAPERS.**

The following papers were presented:—  
Trade between Australia and the Far East  
—Report by Mr. H. W. Gepp, Consultant on Development to the Commonwealth Government.

Defence Act—Regulations amended—Statutory Rules 1932, No. 88.  
 Naval Defence Act—Regulations amended—Statutory Rules 1932, No. 89.  
 New Guinea Act—Ordinances of 1932—  
 No. 13—Fisheries.  
 No. 14—Land.  
 No. 15—Administrator's Powers.  
 No. 16—Supply (No. 2) 1932-33.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

Motions (by Mr. LYONS)—*by leave*—agreed to—

That leave of absence for two months be given to the right honorable member for Flinders (Mr. Bruce), on the ground of urgent public business.

That leave of absence for two months be given to the right honorable member for North Sydney (Mr. Hughes), on the ground of urgent private and public business.

## HIGH COMMISSIONER BILL.

Bill brought up by Mr. LYONS, and read a first time.

## SALES TAX ASSESSMENT BILLS.

Mr. LYONS (Wilmot—Prime Minister and Treasurer) [3.2].—I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the questions in regard to the introduction, first and second readings, committee's report stage, and third readings being put in one motion covering several or all of the Sales Tax Assessment Bills Nos. 1 to 9, and the consideration of several or all of such bills together in a committee of the whole.

The object of the motion is to shorten the procedure which would normally be involved in the presentation of the nine measures necessary to amend the sales tax law. A similar motion was moved by my predecessor in office. If the motion is carried, it will mean that, in one instance, seven instead of 63 motions will be needed, and in another six in lieu of 54, while the Clerk will have to read only three instead of 27 titles.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion (by Mr. LYONS) agreed to—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the Sales Tax Assessment Bills Nos. 1 to 9 being passed through all stages without delay.

Leave given (on motions by Mr. LYONS) to bring in bills to amend the Sales Tax Assessment Acts Nos. 1 to 9.

## COMMERCE (TRADE DESCRIPTIONS) BILL.

Motion (by Mr. LYONS, for Mr. HAWKER) agreed to—

That he have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Commerce (Trade Descriptions) Act 1905-30, and for other purposes.

## NEW GUINEA BILL.

Bill brought up by Mr. MARR, and read a first time.

## SUPPLY BILL (No. 2) 1932-33.

Message recommending appropriation reported.

*In Committee of Supply* (Consideration of Governor-General's Message):

Mr. LYONS (Wilmot—Prime Minister and Treasurer) [3.6].—I move—

That there be granted to His Majesty for or towards defraying the services of the year 1932-33 a sum not exceeding £3,285,350.

When Parliament adjourned before the close of the last financial year, Supply was granted to carry on the services of the Commonwealth for two months of this year, and to meet the first pay day in September. Further Supply is now desired to continue services pending the passing of the Estimates. The amount which the committee is asked to appropriate will meet requirements for two months, and includes the following sums for ordinary services:—

	£
Departments and services other than business undertakings and territories ..	882,840
Business undertakings (post office and railways) ..	1,291,750
Territories of the Commonwealth .. ..	60,760
	<hr/>
	2,235,350

The items making up these sums are based on respective provisions contained in the Estimates for this year which have just been submitted to Parliament. In addition, the usual provisions are made for "Refunds of Revenue" and "Advance to the Treasurer." The amount set down for "Refunds of Revenue" is £300,000, and for "Advance to the Treasurer," £750,000. The last item is required mainly to carry on additions, new works, &c., and to meet exchange on remittances to London.

The financial position was fully explained in the budget submitted to honorable members last week, and it is, therefore, unnecessary for me to go into detail in connexion with this bill.

**Mr. SCULLIN** (Yarra) [3.10].—This is a Supply Bill to meet the Government's requirements for September and October of this year, but as the budget debate will be continued very soon, I shall reserve until then my remarks on the general financial position. There is, however, one urgent matter with which I propose to deal; I refer to the subject which we discussed yesterday. It was not then definitely known that Supply would come on to-day, and as I regarded the matter as urgent and important I took the responsibility of formally moving the adjournment of the House then to give opportunity for its immediate discussion, hoping that the Government would see its way to agree to reconsider its action, or to suspend action in the meantime. The Minister's statement yesterday was unsatisfactory. A blow has been struck at a vital principle, the like of which has never been experienced in this Commonwealth Parliament before, no matter how difficult the circumstances may have been. The Minister would not give any assurance on behalf of the Government that the pay of these adults in the Public Service would not be reduced below the basic wage. Some of these adults are being paid the miserable pittance of £2 12s. a week. That position should not be allowed to continue without honorable members expressing their opinion regarding it. We were denied that opportunity yesterday because of the motion being talked out, and in order to enable honorable members to register a vote on this subject, I shall move an amendment on Supply. The main argument of the Minister was that the alternative to the reduction below the basic wage was dismissal. The Government condemns itself if it makes that the alternative, because it is declaring to Parliament and to the country generally that unless it can save a few thousand pounds in wages it is prepared to dismiss 800 employees. I do not intend to traverse the ground which I covered yesterday in dealing with this subject, but in order to ascertain whether Parliament agrees

with the Government's action in striking a blow at a long established principle, I move—

That the amount be reduced by £1.

If the amendment is carried, it must be taken as an instruction to the Government not to proceed with the disallowance of the Public Service Arbitrator's award which preserves the principle of a minimum basic wage for adults employed in the Public Service.

**Mr. BEASLEY** (West Sydney) [3.12].—I wish to know from the Minister whether an opportunity will be given to us to discuss the items under the different departments, because I wish to raise a number of matters, and to obtain certain explanations from the Ministers who control certain departments.

**Mr. LATHAM**.—We are now engaged in discussing, in committee, a motion for a resolution upon which a bill will be based. The schedule to the bill will contain headings covering the expenditure of all the departments, and honorable members will have an opportunity to discuss any particular matter affecting a department when the bill is before the House.

**Mr. BEASLEY**.—I take it that, at the moment, we are dealing with a motion covering items relating to the activities of the various departments.

**Mr. LATHAM**.—If the honorable member looks at the bill, which has already been circulated, he will see that the expenditure of every department is set out in the schedule. I suggest, therefore, that it would be more convenient to discuss any matters affecting departments when the bill is before the House, than on the motion now before the committee.

**Mr. BEASLEY**.—I am prepared to reserve what I have to say in respect of most of the departments until the bill is before the House; but I shall now deal with the matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition which, I believe, comes under the Postmaster-General's Department.

**Mr. LATHAM**.—As an amendment has been moved, it would be as well to discuss that subject now.

**Mr. BEASLEY**.—I second the amendment, and support the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Scullin) regarding the Public Service Arbitrator's award. It is unnecessary

for me to traverse the whole of the ground covered during yesterday's debate on this subject, but I am pleased that we are to have this opportunity to obtain an expression of opinion from this Parliament regarding the action of the Senate in disallowing an award of the Public Service Arbitrator.

**Mr. HOLLOWAY** (Melbourne Ports) [3.15].—I support the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Scullin). I have no desire to take up the time of honorable members, because this subject was thoroughly thrashed out yesterday. The action of the Government in interfering with and overriding the decision of the Public Service Arbitrator is so serious that we on this side of the chamber, at any rate, wish to force a division on the matter. I take this opportunity to reply to one or two statements made by the Minister yesterday which I do not think are correct. The Postmaster-General (Mr. Fenton) said that the practice adopted by the Government in reducing the wages of adults to juvenile rates, does not conflict with action taken by employers outside of the Public Service. He suggested that the practice of rationing work and spreading employment was similar to the proposed action of the Government.

**Mr. FENTON**.—I did not say that at all. I merely mentioned the rationing of work as an incident which has taken place in the industrial world.

**Mr. HOLLOWAY**.—Some one made that statement yesterday, and I submit that it is incorrect. The State Governments have requested the Arbitration Court to reduce the rates of pay for adults to below the basic wage, but the judges have refused to do that. Only recently, the Victorian State Government held a number of conferences on this particular subject, and ultimately decided that the basic wage must be preserved. The action of the Government is quite a new development. It violates a principle that is fixed in the minds of the people. Such an action should not for one moment be tolerated by this Parliament. We have always endeavoured to improve our apprenticeship system. It is difficult to place our young men and women in positions after their term of training has been completed, and that fact has caused

a great deal of trouble and industrial unrest among employers and employees. The public, generally, have always sympathized with the effort of the industrial movement to prevent apprentices, after their training has expired, from being dismissed. If occupations cannot be found for these young people after they have finished their term of training, their lives are practically ruined, because it is impossible for them to undertake any other calling. The Government has said that dismissal is the only alternative to any refusal on the part of adults to accept juvenile rates of pay.

**Mr. LATHAM**.—The men concerned are practically all messengers.

**Mr. HOLLOWAY**.—That is not so. It is incorrect to say that the men who are being asked to accept juvenile rates of pay are carrying out duties valued at only £74 a year, because it is obvious to anybody that the 800 or 900 adults concerned are in various stages of their apprenticeship. They are being asked to accept rates of pay for work associated with the lowest status in the Service. The men who are to be retained at juvenile rates of pay will do work which normally is done by those in their nineteenth and twentieth year. A good deal of the work is of a kind that, in normal years, they would have been called upon to do at adult rates of pay after they had attained their twenty-first year.

We on this side of the House take this matter so seriously because the action of the Government violates several important principles. Indeed, those who support the Government have in the past accused the Labour party of having treated those principles with disrespect, and have taken them to task for it. In the first place, the action of the Government violates the principle of arbitration and conciliation. Further, it violates the principle of non-interference with institutions set up by Parliament to keep the Public Service free from political influence. Parliament has set up a system of arbitration to fix wages and working conditions for federal public servants. An arbitrator has been appointed who, all his life, has been associated with this particular class of work.

**Mr. LATHAM**.—The honorable member should be accurate. The arbitrator has

held his present position for two years only.

**Mr. HOLLOWAY.**—There is no doubt that he is well qualified to adjudicate on this class of work because he has himself served many years in the Postal Department. After hearing all the evidence which could be adduced, he decided that there was no need to keep these men on juvenile rates of pay. The suggestion that this has been done in outside industrial circles is wrong, as is also the suggestion that it has been done previously in the Service.

The Government has gone out of its way to interfere with an institution created by this Parliament to control conditions and remuneration within the Public Service. If this had been done by a Labour Government, honorable members opposite would not have been slow to tell the world about it. The Opposition has no wish to prevent the Government from obtaining Supply, but so important are the principles involved that it is taking this step to test the feeling of Parliament.

**Mr. LATHAM** (Kooyong—Attorney-General) [3.25].—This matter was fully discussed yesterday, and I propose to deal only shortly with the points raised. In the first place, it has been contended that the action of the Government, and of another place, in disallowing, in accordance with the provisions of the Arbitration (Public Service) Act, a particular determination of the Public Service Arbitrator, is a violation of the principle of arbitration. That, obviously, is not true. The arbitration system operating in the Public Service is a highly specialized form of arbitration.

**Mr. SCULLIN.**—That is merely a technical point.

**Mr. LATHAM.**—It is not merely a technical point. This is a highly specialized form of arbitration, the nature of which is defined by the act under which the Arbitrator operates. The system which Parliament—not the Government—has adopted, under which either House of Parliament has the right of disallowing a determination of the Arbitrator, is being strictly observed by the Government in this instance. If honorable members opposite had disapproved of the statute to which I have referred, it was

open to them at any time during the last two years to propose an amendment to it, but no suggestion of that kind was ever made by them. Accordingly the arbitration system which in fact exists in the Public Service by the will of Parliament, is now being applied—just that precise system and no other. So much for the contention that the action of the Government is a violation of arbitration.

It has been further stated that the Government's action amounts to political interference with the determination which has been disallowed. It must be obvious to every one why Parliament has retained this measure of control. Parliament retains control because there may be direct legislation on the subject by Parliament in addition to, or notwithstanding, the disallowance of a determination by a single House. Parliament must determine all matters affecting public finance. It was held by previous Parliaments, which passed and amended from time to time the Public Service Arbitration Act, that it was not proper to allow the taxation of the people of the Commonwealth to be determined by an arbitrator, even though appointed by the Commonwealth Government. If there were a system under which the arbitrator were able to determine wages, salaries, and conditions in the Service quite independent of parliamentary control, an impossible position might arise. It is for Parliament to determine whether it will exercise its control, as it is for each House to determine whether it will disallow a particular determination. So much for general matters of principle, which cannot be dismissed by saying that they are technical. The principle of parliamentary control of public finance is very far from being merely technical.

Much was said yesterday on the merits of the case. It must be well known to every honorable member that in normal times a considerable number of these young men would go out of the Service altogether. Some would be carried on and placed in higher positions, but, unfortunately, at the present time, positions cannot be found for most of them. The question arises, which is the kinder thing to do? Surely the more humane course is to allow them the opportunity of staying on if they are prepared to do so, even

though at a regrettably lower rate of pay.

The honorable member for Melbourne Ports. (Mr. Holloway) mentioned the matter of apprenticeship, and the difficulty which arises when youths grow up and become entitled to the adult rate of pay. There is a wide difference of opinion on this matter, and even many of the young men themselves do not agree with the view held by the honorable member. Any one with a knowledge of the engineering industry knows that this difficulty has now become acute. Apprentices, upon attaining a certain age, become suddenly entitled to the full adult rate of pay. In these hard times employers have to watch expenditure very closely, and since they can, in many instances, get the work done by other youths, apprentices are dismissed as soon as they complete their term. It is this sudden jump in wages payable to youths when they become 21 years of age which is depriving many young men in Australia to-day of an opportunity of earning a livelihood. The honorable member for Melbourne Ports should not accept as dogma, the theory that when a youth reaches 21 years of age, he immediately, and as a matter of course must receive the basic wage framed to meet the requirements of a man with a wife and three children. In prosperous times such generosity was within our means, and its continuance would be pleasing to all if we could afford it. But the practice should not be regarded as fundamental and unassailable. The principle involved will have to be considered in the interests of the youths, and it may be necessary to substitute a system of tapered increases for the sudden jump to the basic adult wage at 21 years. Youths are losing opportunities of employment, and employers' organizations and trade unions might, with advantage, bring their minds to bear on this very difficult problem. After all, the compulsory payment of an adult wage to a person on his reaching maturity is not founded on any ultimate principle of reason. Members should not mistake a practice for a fundamental principle.

Mr. MAXWELL.—Did not the Public Service Arbitrator step outside his province when he declared that the Go-

vernment should retain the services of these young men, even although positions corresponding to the higher rates of pay were not available?

Mr. LATHAM.—I do not know that the arbitrator made that declaration.

Mr. BAKER.—He said also that the Service is not overstaffed.

Mr. LATHAM.—Of that I have no knowledge, but I do know that work is not available for these young men at adult rates. I understand that the arbitrator has said in effect that in accordance with a principle which has been generally applied these employees should receive the adult wage on attaining the age of 21, and that he will apply that principle until Parliament instructs him otherwise. Either House of this Parliament was entitled to instruct him otherwise; the Senate has done so, and, presumably, the disallowance of his determination will influence his discretion in future cases. I have met repeatedly men who had attained a certain degree of skill in their trade, particularly engineering, and then when they should have been on the threshold of a career, were dismissed because an award or determination required that they should be raised suddenly to the adult minimum wage.

Mr. BEASLEY.—Has the Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) no consideration for the parents, who, probably for five years maintained these youths during their apprenticeship?

Mr. LATHAM.—The hardship imposed on the parents forms, I contend, one of the elements to be considered. Because of the arbitrary operation of this principle, the young men are dismissed, and they and their parents suffer. Is it not possible for those interested in industry to devise something better than this rough and rather unintelligent method of dealing with a very real problem, in order to avoid throwing young men out of work to the disadvantage of themselves and their families? The belief of some honorable members that they are doing a service to the workers by maintaining a particular standard, even though it results in throwing men out of work, requires reconsideration. I would like honorable members of the Opposition to investigate this problem

instead of bigotedly adhering to a practice, regardless of its merits, its effect upon the community, and particularly, its effect upon the youths and the parents who have made real sacrifices to give them training.

Mr. SCULLIN (Yarra) [3.37].—The Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) has raised an issue which is bigger and wider than that which I raised, and has said that this furnishes an opportunity for honorable members to express their opinions.

Mr. LATHAM.—I merely appealed to honorable members to give thought to the problem.

Mr. SCULLIN.—Members of the Opposition are always willing to consider these problems, and to examine any proposal to improve our industrial legislation.

Mr. LATHAM.—We cannot solve the problem here now.

Mr. SCULLIN.—That is so, and we cannot apply a particular policy to 800 men and leave others untouched. The burden of the Attorney-General's statement was that a generally accepted principle is being departed from in this instance because he believes that the principle should be departed from in all cases. He outlined the difficulties experienced, not only in the Public Service; but throughout industry, because of awards or determinations requiring that youths on reaching 21 years of age shall receive the adult minimum wage. I do not accept his contention that that wage should not be paid, but assuming that there is ground for a general review of the basic wage and arbitration awards, is it the province of the Government, and particularly of this Parliament, to attack first the rights of 800 public servants in order to start a general downward revision of wages? I protest against the action which the Government has taken. It violates a vital principle that has been accepted and operative throughout the history of the federal Arbitration Court.

Mr. PATERSON.—In private employment this principle would generally mean that such young men as those whose case is being considered would be sacked.

Mr. SCULLIN.—I dispute that. This issue arose two years ago. It faced my

Government at a time when public revenues were collapsing, and when the basic wage was higher than it is to-day. The alternative then to the payment of the adult wage was not dismissal; why should dismissal be the only alternative now?

Mr. FRANCIS.—Thousands of government employees were dismissed by the last Government.

Mr. SCULLIN.—That is not so. The Minister for Health (Mr. Marr) gave to the House yesterday a tissue of misrepresentations on this subject. It is true that a number of temporary government employees for whom there was no longer any work had to leave the Service.

Mr. PERKINS.—How long had they been in the Service?

Mr. SCULLIN.—Some of them for a long time, although many of them were not employed so long as these 800 young men who are affected by the disallowance of the Arbitrator's determination. No young man in the Public Service was dismissed by my Government on reaching 21 years of age on the ground that there was no adult job for him. We set our faces against the dismissal of permanent employees who since leaving school had devoted their whole time to training for a public service career. On one occasion great hardship was about to be inflicted by the dismissal of 60 or 70 cleaners, many of whom were returned soldiers, and some of whom had been in the Service for fourteen and fifteen years, because employment had to be found for junior mechanics. The then Postmaster-General (Mr. A. Green) and I reversed the departmental decision and retained those men, although they were only temporary employees. We had then to decide what we should do with the junior mechanics and others who were entitled to receive the adult wage. We retained their services; it is true that some of them were given the work of telephonists and messengers, but even as a messenger an adult of 21 years would give greater value for the salary he received than would a youth of fifteen or sixteen years. Though both did the same work, the adult would do it more intelligently and efficiently.

**Mr. PATERSON.**—In private employment the obligation to pay the adult wage generally means the sacking of young men.

**Mr. SCULLIN.**—Does the honorable member suggest that the Government should follow the example of the callous employer?

**Mr. PATERSON.**—I do not suggest that.

**Mr. SCULLIN.**—Callous employers may dismiss their apprentices when they become 21 years of age, but a government should not do that. I draw attention to the Arbitrator's pointed statement, in reply to the suggestion that it was fair to withhold the adult wage from unmarried men, that no distinction had been made between married and unmarried men, for the reason that when a man becomes an adult he should receive a wage which would enable him to marry and live in reasonable comfort. The wage in question is the minimum living wage, the basis below which, in the opinion of the Court, no man can maintain a family in decency and comfort. The present Government is dragging men below that level, and endeavouring to distinguish between married and unmarried men. I know of unmarried public servants who have responsibilities at least as great as those of married men; but their circumstances are to receive no consideration. The Government adopts the miserable pittance of £2 12s. 6d. a week. Will this regression never stop? Of course I shall be told that my Government reduced wages. That is true, but it did insist that the principle of a minimum living wage should be observed. The present Government is violating that principle, and the only justification offered by the Attorney-General is that the alternative is to dismiss young men when they reach the age of 21 years. The Government would be guilty of callousness if, in the event of Parliament refusing to disallow the Arbitrator's determination, it were to dismiss these men in order to avoid paying them an extra £6 to £12 a year. Would ministerial supporters consent to 800 young men being dismissed because Parliament would not disallow the Arbitrator's determination? Would the Postmaster-General sack these men if

Parliament insisted that they should be paid an adult wage?

**Mr. FENTON.**—We are doing the best we can for them.

**Mr. SCULLIN.**—If either branch of the Legislature refused to allow the award, would the Postmaster-General dismiss these men?

**Mr. FENTON.**—I am quite prepared to stand up to my responsibilities.

**Mr. SCULLIN.**—Would the Minister dismiss these particular men?

**Mr. FENTON.**—I would do what could be done for them.

**Mr. SCULLIN.**—The Minister is equivocating. He is not prepared to face the consequences of giving effect to the award, and is not standing up to his responsibilities.

**Mr. FENTON.**—I am as ready to stand up to my responsibilities as the right honorable member was.

**Mr. SCULLIN.**—The honorable member was a Minister in the Government of which I was the leader, and he was the first to run away from that Government when a crisis occurred in its career. I feel very warm when honorable members opposite say that unless a cutting down of the salaries of these men to the rate mentioned is agreed to, the men must be sacked. That is not so. By its present action, the Government brands itself as the most callous of employers, and this stigma upon it will remain for a very long time.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR (Dalley)** [3.46].—The whole issue seems to be the maintenance or destruction of the principle of arbitration. It has been argued by the Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) that members of the Public Service are subject to a system of arbitration that leaves it in the power of the Government finally to review the decisions of the Public Service Arbitrator. Accepting that as being correct, the Government's interference with the Arbitrator's decision shows clearly what the attitude of the Government is to the arbitration principle. The Government evidently believes in low wages. The Attorney-General not only seeks to justify the action of the Government in advocating a low-wage policy, but he also claims that private employers would be justified in taking similar action in the present circumstances. This

Parliament has been legislating from time to time to deal with persons outside this House who oppose constituted authority. The Parliament has passed measures providing for the deportation of those who urge trade unionists to reject arbitration decisions; and yet the Government sets a shining example to the rest of the community by refusing to accept the decision of the Public Service Arbitrator with regard to the wages to be paid to certain members of the Public Service. The other evening, the Attorney-General, when questioned by the honorable member for West Sydney (Mr. Beasley) as to the Government's reason for allowing naval ratings to do certain work in Melbourne and in other places, which was usually done by trade unionists at award rates, claimed that the Government was justified in allowing the work to be done by naval ratings, because they had a smattering of knowledge of the class of work required, and he justified the action taken on the ground of the financial stringency.

If the Government is entitled to plead financial stringency as an excuse for cutting down wages below those fixed by the Public Service Arbitrator, there is no reason why a similar policy should not be adopted by employers throughout Australia. Does the Government stand for such action, or is it giving an indication to employers throughout the Commonwealth that if they take similar action, the Government will be prepared to back them up? The Attorney-General has stated that the issue raised goes to the very root of parliamentary control of public finance. If this Government is so jealous of its powers of controlling public finances, why have a Public Service Arbitrator at all? If the Arbitrator's decision had gone against the men whose position is under consideration, would the Government have urged Parliament to disallow the decision? The Attorney-General's attitude clearly indicates that Ministers accept the decisions of the Arbitrator when they suit them, but they are prepared to plead financial stringency when the decisions go against them. That attitude has been adopted by employers from time immemorial. The arbitration laws of New South Wales once allowed an employee who was 21

years of age to be classed as a slow worker. The result was that men in full health and strength, who were quite as efficient as their fellow workers, were placed within that category. The employers took advantage of the position to such an extent that the provisions relating to slow workers at the age of 21 years had to be deleted from the arbitration laws of that State. That provision was so abused that even the Government of the day was not prepared to allow it to remain on the statute-book. The Attorney-General contends that we should taper off the age at which the adult wage should be paid. That is what the right honorable member for Flinders (Mr. Bruce) said regarding unemployment. He argued that he would taper it off gradually, so that those concerned would get used to it. The Attorney-General says "Why not deal with employment in the same way, and taper off the age at which men shall draw the full adult wage?"

*Mr. SCULLIN.*—Honorable members opposite would taper it off at both ends.

*Mr. ROSEVEAR.*—Yes. The question has arisen whether the Public Service Arbitrator is competent to give a decision in this matter. One honorable member interjected that he had been an arbitrator for years, but the Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) scathingly remarked "Only two years." Apparently, the Arbitrator has some qualifications, or he would not have been placed in a judicial position. What does it matter whether he has been an arbitrator for 2 or for 20 years? The day after a judge is appointed, he can sentence a prisoner to be hanged. The period for which he has occupied his position does not affect his power to determine matters of law or of fact. It cannot be contended that the Public Service Arbitrator is prejudiced in favour of the employees. If anything, he would be more likely to favour those who created his position; but the very men who placed him in his office now refuse to accept his decisions. Either we stand for arbitration, or we do not. In my opinion, a Government that is prepared to support the specious argument advanced by the Attorney-General, who attempts to justify the Government's action because of the hard times,

is merely adopting the attitude frequently taken up by employers in the past, who plead inability to pay, although they have repeatedly been shown to be well able to observe arbitration decisions. I urge honorable members to vote in support of the motion submitted by the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. BAKER** (Oxley) [3.55].—Honorable members on this side yesterday accused the Government of departing from a settled principle of arbitration, but Ministers denied that that was the effect of their action. The Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) now states that the great principle laid down by Mr. Justice Higgins in 1907 should be departed from. That principle was that at 21 years of age a man was entitled to a wage sufficient to enable him to keep himself, his wife, and three children as decent citizens, living in a civilized community. The Attorney-General's argument on behalf of the Government is that we should depart from that basic principle, not only as regards government employees, but also men in private employment. I believe that the great majority of the people of Australia hailed the Higgins decision as a step in the right direction, and as something of which to be proud. It was never imagined that the day would come when that principle would be jettisoned. Yesterday, argument was advanced on behalf of the Government on entirely different premises. It was declared that, if the men concerned were paid the salary fixed by the Public Service Arbitrator, it would be necessary to dismiss a large number of them. The Government has come to a decision very different from that of the Arbitrator, who carefully investigated the position, although most members of the Ministry have probably not read his judgment. The Arbitrator said—

Despite certain limitations, which indicate an understatement of the staff position, the figures show that the permanent personnel as a whole is numerically under requirements. It has been necessary to supplement it by full-time temporary employees. The real difficulty is correct adjustment of the personnel.

The Arbitrator pointed out as an example of this that there were approximately 330 mechanics redundant in all States, and over 100 redundant linemen

in three States, as against a shortage of about the same number in other States, showing that all that is required is a correct distribution of the men now employed. The Arbitrator further stated—

The analysis made of the staffing position in the Postmaster-General's Department, however, indicates that that department as a whole is not over-manned. As to the future, the financial outlook for Australia is not so black as to preclude an expectation of a reasonable improvement in business.

Mr. Watt appeared for the Government when the case was heard by the Arbitrator, and put its claims strongly before him; but, despite that fact, the Arbitrator saw fit to reject the Government's view of the matter. Another point that has not been stressed sufficiently is that it was laid down some time ago that, from the 11th February, 1931, officers attaining 21 years of age should retain their positions, but that on and after that date they should not receive more than the basic wage. Later, action was taken to reduce other officers who had reached the age of 21 years before the 11th February, 1931, to the basic wage. These men were previously on a classification ranging from £81 to £238 per annum, which is considerably above the basic wage. Since that date they have been reduced under the Financial Emergency Act, and they have suffered a further reduction to the basic wage. Single men and married men without families in receipt of the basic wage also suffer a reduction to help to provide £13 per annum per child for child endowment. That amount is subtracted from the total sum payable to Commonwealth public servants, so that their basic wage is considerably less than that of workers outside the Service.

The Arbitrator also observed—

The principle of reasonable equality of treatment is fundamental in the administration of the Public Service. In the course of discussion I pointed out to Mr. Watt the seriousness of this phase of the question, but he has not satisfactorily explained the important differentiation in treatment which is involved.

That factor has evidently not been considered by the Government. If the Government is not prepared to concede all that we are asking, I urge it to give special consideration, not only to married men, but also to employees who have dependants. In these difficult days many

single men have womenfolk and unemployed relatives dependent upon them, and their responsibilities are of much the same nature as those of married men with wives and families to keep. As this Government prates a great deal about its honesty, it is little enough to expect it to adopt the course which it expects trade unionists to adopt, and to obey arbitration decisions.

**Mr. BEASLEY** (West Sydney) [4.1].—It appears to me that the Government is making every possible use of the unfortunate depression through which the country is passing to heap difficulties on the shoulders of those least able to bear them. Honorable members on the Government side of the committee are never tired of arguing that wages and conditions should be determined by a properly constituted authority. During election campaigns they are specially insistent on this point. I believe that the honorable member for Denison (Mr. Hutchin) was the industrial officer of a large concern in Tasmania before he became a member of this Parliament. I have a clear recollection of the honorable gentleman arguing in this chamber that wages and conditions should be determined by a properly constituted authority and that the decision of such a body should be accepted by all parties. This being so, I trust that the honorable member will support our contention on this occasion. It seems, however, that the Government and its followers are willing to abide by the decisions of the courts and of arbitrators only when these are acceptable to it. A couple of weeks ago, when the textile workers of certain States refused to accept a decision of the Arbitration Court in regard to their wages and conditions, the press which supports the parties opposite published columns of matter in condemnation of their attitude. The argument was advanced with great vehemence that the employees should accept the decision of the court. If that argument was applicable to the textile workers, then it is applicable to the Government now. If it was wrong for the textile workers to refuse to accept the award of the court it is equally wrong for the Government to refuse to accept the determination of the Public Service Arbitrator. Do honorable gentlemen who support the Government realize

the implications of the proposal now under consideration? It seems to me that an endeavour is being made to give a lead to private employers to use the existing financial stringency as an excuse for reducing wages and breaking down standards. But if the Government may reject a decision by the Public Service Arbitrator, the workers in industry may as justly say that they are not willing to abide by decisions which they regard as inequitable.

We have heard on many occasions in this House the argument that certain matters should be placed beyond political control. That argument was used *ad nauseam* in connexion with the Broadcasting Commission Bill. I hope later to have a few words to say on that subject. We have also been told times out of number that the Commonwealth Bank Board and other public and semi-public bodies should be entirely removed from political control; but apparently the fixing of wages and conditions may be politically controlled. The Government is not willing to allow political control of private enterprises or even certain public institutions, but it is quite willing to allow it in respect of the wages and conditions of the workers when it suits it.

Something has been said on the subject of apprenticeship. Some honorable gentlemen in this chamber must have made considerable sacrifices in years past in order to allow their sons to pass through an apprenticeship. Certainly very many citizens of this country have willingly made sacrifices in order to feed and clothe their children during the long period of low wages which is inseparable from apprenticeship under existing conditions. They have done so in the hope that ultimately their children would be able to take their place as worthy citizens of this country. We know very well that apprenticeship invariably involves hard work and long hours. Apprentices not only work eight hours a day but are obliged to attend technical or other classes two or three times a week. This involves in most cases a great deal of travelling. Yet the Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) has suggested that even after reaching the age of 21 years the apprentices should not be entitled to the ordinary living wage.

Mr. SCULLIN.—The Government is trying to make these 800 officers the spearhead of a general attack.

Mr. BEASLEY.—It is deplorable that in difficult times like these the threat of dismissal if they refuse to accept low wages should be held over the heads of these unfortunate people. Does the Government intend to use the economic stick on these young folk? Does it desire to see them lined up at various benevolent institutions for food relief in order to supplement their meagre earnings. Whatever may be said in the attempt to justify the attitude which the Ministry has adopted, it cannot be argued that any of these young men are responsible for the chaotic conditions which prevail throughout the world, nor does the blame lie at the door of the adult workers of any country, and the responsibility should not be placed upon their shoulders.

I make an appeal to the Postmaster-General (Mr. Fenton) to reconsider his attitude. For very many years he was associated with the working class organizations of this country, and he pleaded the cause of the workers from hundreds of platforms throughout the Commonwealth. This is surely a sorry day for him, for he is now attempting to break down the very standards which, during the greater part of his life, he assisted to build up. I can hardly believe that in his heart he desires to follow the course the Government is pursuing. He is, at present, in charge of a large public department, and I urge him to use his influence to protect the interests of the young men employed in it. Surely he must appreciate the hardship and suffering that these workers will be called upon to bear if this policy is approved.

It has already been stressed that many of these young men are carrying heavy responsibilities because of the unemployment of other members of their families. The parents of these young men have doubtless made considerable sacrifices to enable their sons to fit themselves for worthy positions in life. When young men reach the age of 21 years or thereabouts, their parents naturally expect some slight return to come into the home as an offset against the cost of preparing their children for their life's work. It cannot be suggested that it costs less to

feed and clothe a young man or woman of 21 years than a person of maturer years. As a matter of fact it often costs more, because it is necessary for young people in the early years of their working life to preserve the best possible appearance, so that they may win good positions and be regarded as good citizens. We are dealing with a most important subject. There is a grave danger that the Commonwealth Government will lead the way to a violation of certain cherished principles of our industrial life which have been established only after great struggles. I appeal to honorable members opposite to reconsider their position, and to avoid setting an example to private employers, which may have the effect of robbing the young people of this community of their just rights.

Mr. MAKIN (Hindmarsh) [4.10].—I greatly deprecate the attitude which the Government is adopting in regard to the 800 young men whose positions are now being considered, and I warmly support the amendment of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Scullin). We often hear of the disabilities which result from youth, but the Government is now seeking to do something which will place disabilities upon the youth of this community from which they may never recover. The present economic depression should not be used as a justification for the application of a policy such as that which has been enunciated this afternoon. The Commonwealth Government should be the last authority to add to the disabilities of the young men and women of Australia. I greatly fear that the young manhood of to-day will never overcome the serious injustices which, for one reason or another, are being inflicted upon them. It should be remembered that we are considering not merely the positions of the young men who are about to attain the age of 21 years. The principles which the Government is now seeking to enforce may react disastrously upon persons of 22, 23 or even 24 years of age. It is deplorable that the Government should give a lead to private employers to resist the determinations of Commonwealth and State industrial tribunals. The Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) suggested this afternoon, when he was discussing the possibilities of what he called "tapering

off," that young men should not receive the full benefit of the attainment of their majority until they had reached 25 or 26 years of age.

**Mr. LATHAM.**—I did not make such a statement. I said nothing about young men of 25 years of age. I merely said that we are faced with a problem which no one is willing even to try to solve.

**Mr. MAKIN.**—The honorable gentleman suggested that there should be a tapering off for a period of five years.

**Mr. LATHAM.**—I said that the possibility of such a tapering off should be examined, but no one would look at it.

**Mr. MAKIN.**—The honorable gentleman left no doubt in the mind of honorable members on this side of the committee, or of his own supporters, as to his real desire. The Government is evidently prepared to adopt a vicious principle in order to avoid meeting its just obligations to the young men who are reaching adult age. The speech of the Attorney-General cannot be interpreted in any other way. The Public Service Arbitrator has determined the conditions that should apply to the 800 young men now under consideration, and its determination should be observed. There is no excuse for the Government departing from a cardinal principle. The fact that this concerns the Public Service does not alter the case. In the circumstances, I feel impelled to protest strenuously against what I regard as an unfortunate precedent, which will be prejudicial to arbitration. We know how sensitive wage-fixing bodies are, and the regard that they have for the determination of higher tribunals. This action, affecting, as it does, the basic wage paid to adult persons, is a very dangerous and unjust precedent. It will destroy confidence in the principle of arbitration.

The Government has failed to advance one sound argument in defence of its violation of a principle. If it has any notion of British fair play, and desires to serve the interests of the youth in the Public Service, it will recede from its position, and maintain the established custom of giving to every man who has attained the age of 21, and is in employment, the right to receive the basic wage that has been determined by the tribunals of the land as the minimum

amount necessary to provide a reasonable standard of living.

**Mr. GABB (Angas) [4.18].**—I do not wish to give a silent vote on this occasion. I do not question the statement of the Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) that Parliament is quite within its rights in expressing an opinion on the subject, but I am not prepared to use my vote to override the decision of a responsible officer appointed by the Commonwealth Government to investigate wages and conditions. We may be sure that the Public Service Arbitrator, in arriving at his determination, would lean, if at all, towards the Government and against the men.

Unfortunately, there is an all too-marked tendency to leave the "tall poppies" undisturbed and impose undue strain on those composing the lower stratum. It is unlikely that the reasons advanced by the Attorney-General and others, will reach the man in the street, and the general impression will be that this is a deliberate flouting of the decision of an accredited arbitrator. For many years I was a union secretary, and repeatedly, I appealed to those whom I represented always to adhere to the decisions of the Arbitration Court. I should never be able to face those men again if I supported the Government's action now. If there is one thing more than another that will bring about the return of the Labour party to the treasury bench, with the concomitant dangers of inflation and similar evils, it is action such as that now being taken by the Government, and the proposals embodied in the budget, to which I shall have an opportunity to refer on another occasion. In the circumstances, I am not prepared to cast my vote in favour of the Government.

**Mr. MARTENS (Herbert) [4.20].**—Like the honorable member for Angas (Mr. Gabb) I do not desire to record a silent vote. For many years before I entered Parliament, I was engaged in the sometimes not very popular task of urging men to adhere to the decisions arrived at by arbitrators, whether conciliation commissioners or the Arbitration Court. If there is one thing more than another that is likely to prevent the acceptance of such advice, and to make

the workers unreasonable, it is the deliberate flouting by a government of the decision of an arbitrator, particularly of one it has nominated; a decision reached after a searching investigation of the relevant circumstances. We may be assured that the Public Service Board produced every scrap of evidence that it thought would sway the Arbitrator in its favour.

This Government claims to believe in arbitration, yet immediately there is promulgated an award which it considers objectionable it moves to disallow the decision of the Arbitrator. I cannot imagine anything more reprehensible, more cowardly, or more contemptible. I agree with other honorable members, that if Mr. Westhoven's services, as Arbitrator, are not required, it is a waste of public money to pay him a salary in that capacity, and the position should be abolished. I also agree with the honorable member for West Sydney (Mr. Beasley) concerning those honorable members sitting on the Government benches who for years worked earnestly to improve the conditions of the workers, but now passively follow the Government in this matter. I cannot imagine the feelings of the Postmaster-General (Mr. Fenton), the head of the department whose conditions have been investigated by the Arbitrator. With what inward scorn he must regard himself, the wet nurse of the Government, and one of the prime movers in this violation of the principle of arbitration and this disobedience of the award of an accredited arbitrator, the appointee of the Government itself.

Sir LITTLETON GROOM (Darling Downs) [4.25].—I, also, am not desirous of recording a silent vote on this matter. Honorable members know my attitude regarding the principle of arbitration, both as applied to general industry and the Public Service. But this particular case introduces grave difficulties. The position of the Government has been made abundantly clear. Here are a number of young lads gradually nearing the age of 21 years, who would, if conditions were normal, continue to advance in the Public Service after they had attained manhood. Because of recent happenings, the position is altered, and places

are not available as they attain the age of 21 years. It now appears that if the full rate of wages had to be paid, many of these young men would have to be dismissed from the Service when they became 21. After spending their young manhood, in fitting themselves for special duties, they would have to jettison the experience they had gained, and begin life anew in other avenues of employment: Being dismissed they would forfeit the whole of their future career in the Public Service. In the country districts of Australia young girls are taken into telephone offices, but, when they reach the age of 21, their service with the department automatically terminates. Their telephone experience counts for nothing when they seek other employment. That would be the position of these young men if the Government had not, in its wisdom, taken the action of which some honorable members disapprove. In the special circumstances, I support the Government's action, merely as a temporary measure, to enable it to retain the services of these employees. As positions become vacant they will be eligible for appointment.

The action of the Government is not political interference, according to the accepted use of that term. The Government is responsible for departmental administration. Under the terms and conditions of employment of the Arbitrator, his duty is to arbitrate, but section 22 of the act, which Parliament passed, clearly states that when the Arbitrator makes an award which is in conflict with any act or regulation the matter can come before Parliament.

Mr. HOLLOWAY.—This award does not conflict with any act.

Sir LITTLETON GROOM.—The Attorney-General has given his certificate that it does conflict with the Public Service Act, and the duty is placed upon Parliament, after the Attorney-General has given such a certificate, of disallowing any award if it thinks fit. That right is possessed by either House. Such action is not political interference in the ordinary sense of the term; it is only carrying out the law. The Arbitrator himself admitted that in his award. He said—

It was suggested during the hearing that approval of the application made by the organizations would force the Public Service

Board to seriously consider the dismissal from the Public Service of the young men concerned in this application. Such action may be necessary, in some measure, to adjust the staff to a sound basis. That is, however, a responsibility of administration in which I do not interfere.

**Mr. FORDE.**—He said also that he did not think that there was any justification for the dismissal of the men concerned.

**Sir LITTLETON GROOM.**—The Arbitrator said that the retention or dismissal of men within the Public Service was a matter for the administration. Under the Arbitration law generally, when the court gives an award, it is for the employers themselves to decide whether they will retain their employees. The point for us to decide is whether the dismissal of the men concerned would be an act of administration for which the Government is responsible. The Government, of course, is answerable to this Parliament for any action that it takes in the course of its administration. The Arbitrator continued—

The analysis made of the staffing position in the Postmaster-General's Department, however, indicates that the Department as a whole is not over-manned.

That declaration of that opinion was something quite outside the jurisdiction of the Arbitrator. He was not asked to decide a question of administration. He was asked by the organizations concerned to express his opinion on the question of the basic wage, and the Arbitrator was quite within his rights in coming to his decision. He said further—

In all the circumstances the surmise is ventured that dismissal from the service is not the inevitable alternative to the retention of the principle of payment of the basic wage to male adults.

**Mr. RIORDAN.**—According to the honorable member's argument, an outside employer could close his works and re-employ his men at boys' wages.

**Sir LITTLETON GROOM.**—We are not faced with that position. There is no work for the men concerned, and the alternative to dismissal is to employ them at junior rates of pay. The Government prefers to keep these men who are single men only, giving them continuity of employment, and at the same time preserving their rights as public servants.

**Mr. RIORDAN.**—If an outside employer did that, he would be prosecuted for a breach of the award.

**Sir LITTLETON GROOM.**—An outside employer must obey the award according to its terms. This Parliament must carry out its laws and exercise its powers of administration in accordance with the act. I do not regard the action of the Government as a deliberate flouting of the principle of arbitration. On the contrary, the Government is endeavouring to preserve to these men their rights as public servants.

**Mr. RIORDAN.**—What guarantee have these men that they will be continued in the Public Service?

**Sir LITTLETON GROOM.**—They have the guarantee that the regulations provide for their employment, and that they are still remaining in the Service.

**Mr. RIORDAN.**—They had that guarantee previously.

**Sir LITTLETON GROOM.**—No man has a guarantee of employment for all time. He has it only while employment is offering. Under the regulation these men are still retained in employment, and have their rights under the Public Service Act preserved. In these times that is better for them than dismissal. For the reasons that I have given, I feel that I must stand by the Government's action.

**Mr. BERNARD CORSER (Wide Bay)** [4.37].—Parliament has agreed to the principle of arbitration as it affects the conditions of employment and wages paid in the Public Service. Whether that principle is right or wrong is another matter. It exists at present, and Parliament has made no previous attempt to interfere with it. The Government is now endeavouring to break down conditions constituted under that established principle. As I have said previously, I shall abide by the system of arbitration so long as it is part of the settled policy of this country. Few members are aware of the hardships suffered by the lower-paid public servants. Their conditions do no credit to this country. Many of these men have had their wages reduced by 40 per cent., and at the same time they are denied annual emoluments which are their due. There is no evidence to show that the Arbitrator is an

incapable officer, and while we accept the principle of arbitration we should not interfere with his awards. There is, therefore, no other course for me to take than to support the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Scullin). The youths in the Public Service should, on reaching 21 years of age, receive the emoluments to which they are entitled under the conditions laid down by arbitration. Surely we should not make the financial position of the Commonwealth an excuse for an action of this kind. The postal returns for last month show an encouraging increase in revenue. Therefore, this is not the time to indicate that we have no confidence in our financial position for the next twelve months. If we withhold from these young men the annual increments to which they are entitled, how can we justify the granting of £1,830,000 to several of the States? A suggestion has been made in regard to young girls employed on country telephones. It is evident that, in some instances, hardship is suffered because of the conditions of employment, and it might be advisable for the union concerned to take action with a view to improving the lot of young girls in the Service, particularly when their dismissal would give employment, not to young men in the Service, but to other girls. I shall vote for the amendment of the Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. FORDE** (Capricornia) [4.43].—I am pleased that at least two members outside the Labour party are prepared to stand for the vital principle of arbitration. We do not want one law for governments and another for private employers. The honorable member for Darling Downs (Sir Littleton Groom) vainly endeavoured to justify the attitude of the Government. It is evident that he is anxious to rejoin the party to which he formerly belonged, because he is now preaching the doctrine of the Government and supporting its action in reducing the basic wage for adults in the Public Service. The honorable member said that we had to take into consideration the dismissal of youths from the Service altogether, and that if they were dismissed their past service would count for nothing. Never in the past have young permanent officials been dismissed from

the Public Service on reaching the age of 21 years. I am assured by the representatives of the Public Service organization concerned, that when youths join the Service as telegraph messengers, they rightly expect to have a life career in it. Invariably they attend night schools to qualify for examinations in order to fit them for higher positions in the Service. The honorable member's continual references to dismissals was nothing but a red herring drawn across the trail. At all costs he is prepared to justify the action of the Government. When the Public Service Arbitrator, to whom the matter was referred, made some comment as to the possibility of absorbing these men in the Service, honorable members opposite stated that it was not within his province to do so. I am certain, however, that had his comments favoured the attitude taken up by the Government, he would not have been censured for making them.

The honorable member for Darling Downs (Sir Littleton Groom) quoted certain passages from the Arbitrator's award, but failed to quote others. The Arbitrator rightly believed that there are indications of an improvement in the earning power of the department, which will provide openings for these men in adult positions. He states—

The analysis made of the staffing position in the Postmaster-General's Department, however, indicates that that department, as a whole, is not over-manned. . . . As to the future, the financial outlook for Australia is not so black as to preclude an expectation of a reasonable improvement in business. . . . An increase in the demand for telephone services, for example (many thousands were cancelled in the depression) will result in mechanics and lines staff being recalled from the positions in which they are temporarily acting, and so permit of the placing of adult males now employed on minor duties. In all the circumstances the surmise is ventured that dismissal from the Service is not the inevitable alternative to the retention of the principle of payment of the basic wage to male adults.

We know that any improvement in business will mean an increase in the number of telephone subscribers. This will provide work for mechanics, linemen, &c., who are now, for lack of other occupation, employed as mailmen, messengers, and cleaners. Thus new vacancies will be created which can be filled by juniors as they reach 21 years of age. The honorable member

said that we should take into consideration the general financial position. The amount which it is proposed to save by paying these young men junior rates of pay is negligible as compared with the Government's remission of taxation, though it is important to the men themselves. The Treasurer, in his budget, referred to the remission of certain forms of taxation, and the reduction of certain duties, which would deprive the Treasury, under one heading alone, of £800,000. That is a great deal more than could be saved by refraining from paying these men the adult wage.

To hear some honorable members speak, one would imagine that federal public servants had not been subjected to any cut in wages. As a matter of fact, their salaries have already been severely cut, and now a further £8 a year is to be taken off. The honorable member for Darling Downs said that Parliament had the right to say whether or not an award of the Public Service Arbitrator should be observed. Apparently, because it has that right, he thinks that it ought to exercise it, and disallow the award. Does he think that Parliament should fix the basic wage, or determine the wages payable in industry throughout the country. I am sure that he would be one of the first to say that such matters ought not to be dealt with by Parliament, but should be left to an industrial tribunal. Well, in this case an industrial tribunal has given its finding, and that finding should be honoured.

The Attorney-General endeavoured to make a comparison between these young men in the Service, and apprentices who become journeymen. As a matter of fact, no comparison between them is possible, because journeymen receive a much higher wage than the basic wage asked for in this case. The Postal Workers Union, and other unions concerned, are not asking for anything more than the minimum adult wage. While many of these men are classed as messengers, they are really doing more important work, much of it adults' work. The Attorney-General said that we on this side of the House are asking that these employees should receive the same wage as has been fixed for

*Mr. Forde.*

a man, his wife and three children. That is not so. The basic wage works out at £3 6s. 11d. a week; but these young men, if given what they are asking for, will receive £12 a year less than that paid to a married man with three children. If the Arbitrator's determination is disallowed, they will receive up to 12s. a week less than the basic wage. Some of these men are already 25 years of age, and it is necessary for them to make provision against the time when they will marry. We should not pauperize our young men, and prevent them from assuming the responsibilities of married life. These are permanent officers of the Public Service, and they have a right to expect that higher positions will be found for them. This talk of their having to be dismissed unless they accept the lower wage is so much nonsense. The Arbitrator was associated with the Public Service Board for a number of years, and has since occupied the position of Deputy Director of Posts and Telegraphs at Melbourne. He has stated that he is not satisfied that the alternative is dismissal. At the present time, contracts are being let in Rockhampton and Bundaberg, and, no doubt, in numerous other places throughout Australia, for the delivery of mails. In some cases, the contracts are being let to boys and girls. I know of one instance in which a contract has been let to a girl to do work formerly done by a man supporting a wife and family. This system is reducing the opportunities for finding permanent positions for youths attaining the age of 21 years. Some of the most capable officers in the Public Service have graduated from the ranks of telegraph messengers. They entered the Service at 15 or 16 years of age, studied hard, and eventually qualified for higher positions.

The Government has failed to justify its action, which is really a continuation of efforts to break down the arbitration system. This Government has been quick to censure unions which, in some cases, have flouted arbitration awards, but it is itself setting a very bad example in this respect. The Government stands condemned, and I am sure that its action is not supported by the people as a whole.

**Mr. RIORDAN** (Kennedy) [4.55].—For the information of the honorable

member for Darling Downs (Sir Littleton Groom), I may state that, in September last, the Postmaster-General's Department obtained a suspension of an award, to allow overtime to be worked, and time off given in lieu of payment. Many public servants now have five or six weeks accumulated holidays due to them as a result of overtime worked. Notwithstanding this, 900 men are now threatened with dismissal unless they accept juniors' wages. The Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) said that Parliament should control finance. That is provided for in the Constitution, but Parliament, nevertheless, saw fit to appoint a Public Service Commissioner to fix wages, hours, and other conditions of employment in the Service. It was thought that Parliament could not go into such matters. On one occasion, the Queensland Parliament fixed the basic wage for that State, and the Nationalist press and Nationalist politicians throughout Australia condemned the Queensland Labour Government for attempting to fix wages by act of Parliament. They said that politicians were not qualified to do this work, because they had no accurate knowledge of the factors which should govern wages.

Recently, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Forde) asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Lyons) the following question:—

What is the total amount of accumulated leave due to officers of the Commonwealth Public Service as "time off" in lieu of award (a) for the whole of Australia, and (b) for each of the States?

The Prime Minister gave the following reply:—

I am advised by the Public Service Board that it is in a position to make figures available in respect of the Postmaster-General's Department only, and that they are as follow: (a) 222,239 hours; (b) New South Wales, 79,037 hours; Victoria, 50,492 hours; Queensland, 51,750 hours; South Australia, 19,610 hours; Western Australia, 13,794 hours; Tasmania, 7,556 hours.

The honorable member for Darling Downs said that the threat of dismissal hanging over these men made him desert a principle for which he had always stood, on one occasion even to the extent of bringing about the defeat of a government. As the result of that action, the honorable

member found himself in the political wilderness for eighteen months. Apparently, he found the experience a bitter one, because now, when it comes to a matter of choosing between self-preservation and the preservation of a principle, he is prepared to abandon the principle.

**THE CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bell).**—The honorable member must not reflect upon another honorable member.

**MR. RIORDAN.**—He endeavours to justify his desertion of principle by stating that he is concerned for the welfare of some hundreds of men threatened with dismissal. The action of the Government in disallowing this award was determined, not by its desire to retain the services of these men, but by its wish to attack the basic wage prescribed by the court. Its action is a lead to outside employers to do the same thing. If I were to reflect on a member of the judiciary I should be called to order, but the Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) to-day cast reflections upon the Commonwealth Public Service Arbitrator. He said that the Arbitrator was without experience, having been in office only two years.

**MR. LATHAM.**—The honorable member ought not to say that. I have not reflected on the Arbitrator in any way.

**MR. RIORDAN.**—The Arbitrator has had at least as much experience as Drake-Brockman or Lukin, or those others who have lowered the wages and conditions of the workers.

**THE CHAIRMAN.**—Order! The honorable member must not reflect on the judiciary.

**MR. RIORDAN.**—The wages of the workers have been cut and their conditions have been lowered. An organization which rebels against an award is liable to deregistration. Yet the Government may flout the determination of an arbitrator and be supported in that action by honorable members on both sides of the chamber who were returned to this Parliament to support the arbitration system. I am glad that the amendment is to be taken to a division. Yesterday some honorable members endeavoured to avoid revealing their attitude by preventing a division from being taken, but to-day they will have to

declare whether they stand for arbitration as a means of fixing wages and working conditions, or for direct action. When we have reached a decision on that issue the workers will know on what road they are travelling. Working class representatives who declare that arbitration is merely a tool of the capitalist, and who advise the workers to pin their faith to direct action, are liable to deportation; but the Government, by disallowing the Public Service Arbitrator's determination, and thereby rejecting the principle of arbitration, will leave to public servants no alternative but to adopt direct action for the rectification of their grievances. For many years the Postmaster-General was an advocate of industrial arbitration; but to-day he is assisting the Government to "put the boot into" the class which returned him to Parliament. The honorable member for Ballarat (Mr. McGrath) and the honorable member for Boothby (Mr. Price) also were sent here to represent the poorer classes of the community, and in the past have opposed governments which sought to undermine the arbitration system. Is it possible that within 24 hours they can throw over principles to which they have given life-long allegiance? I believe that when the division is taken they will be found voting in defence of the wages and conditions of those who make it possible for them to enter this Parliament.

**Mr. LATHAM** (Kooyong—Attorney-General) [5.5].—I rise merely to inform the committee that every effort is being made to use the hours due to postal employees in respect of overtime to give employment for those men who will be affected by the disallowance of the Public Service Arbitrator's determination. The granting of "time off" for this purpose was authorized until the 2nd September, 1932, and the Government is now applying to the Arbitrator to extend the period so that the maximum employment may be afforded. That application is being opposed by the Public Service organizations. If their opposition succeeds, the Government will not be able to do what the honorable member for Kennedy (Mr. Riordan) rightly contends should be done, and, in fact, has been done to the maximum extent possible up to the present time.

Question—That the amendment (Mr. SCULLIN's) be agreed to—put. The committee divided.

(CHAIRMAN—MR. BELL.)

Ayes .. .. ..	19
Noes .. .. ..	43
Majority .. .. ..	24

AYES.

Baker, F. M. J.	Makin, N. J. O.
Beasley, J. A.	Maloney, Dr.
Blakeley, A.	Martens, G. W.
Corser, Bernard	Riordan, D.
Forde, F. M.	Rosevear, J. S.
Gabb, J. M.	Ward, E. J.
Green, A.	Watkins, D.
Holloway, E. J.	Tellers:
James, R.	Gander, J. H.
Lawson, George	Riley, E. C.

NOES.

Abbott, C. L. A.	Lane, A.
Blacklow, A. C.	Latham, J. G.
Cameron, M.	Lawson, J. N.
Casey, R. G.	Marr, C. W. C.
Collins, T. J.	Maxwell, G. A.
Dein, A. K.	McBride, P. A. M.
Dennis, S.	McGrath, D. C.
Fenton, J. E.	McNicoll, W. R.
Francis, J.	Nairn, W. M.
Gibson, W. G.	Nock, H. K.
Green, R.	Parkhill, Archdale
Gregory, H.	Paterson, T.
Groom, Sir Littleton	Perkins, J. A.
Guy, J. A.	Price, J. L.
Harrison, E. F.	Prowse, J. H.
Harrison, E. J.	Stacey, F. H.
Hawker, C. A. S.	Stewart, F. H.
Hill, W. C.	Thompson, V. C.
Holman, W. A.	Watson, W.
Hutchin, A. W.	Tellers:
Hutchinson, W. J.	Gardner, S. L.
Jennings, J. T.	Hunter, J. A. J.

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

Original question resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution reported.

Standing Orders suspended and resolution adopted.

Resolution of Ways and Means founded on resolution of Supply reported and adopted.

Ordered—

That Mr. Latham and Mr. Archdale Parkhill do prepare and bring in a bill to carry out the foregoing resolution.

Bill brought up, and (on motion by Mr. LATHAM) read a first and second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to.

**Schedule—**

*Proposed vote*—The Parliament, £8,280  
—agreed to.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER.**

*Proposed vote*, £36,730.

**Mr. WARD** (East Sydney) [5.20].—Under the Prime Minister's Department an item of £300 appears as "travelling expenses of Commonwealth Ministers". Why is that expenditure to be incurred.

**Mr. LATHAM** (Kooyong—Attorney-General) [5.21].—The practice has varied under different governments; but no Minister in this Government gets expenses for travelling between the city where his home is located and Canberra, or while at Canberra. A Minister receives travelling expenses only while away from the city where his available home is, and away from Canberra, and, of course, only when travelling on public business.

**Mr. MAKIN** (Hindmarsh) [5.22].—I desire to know what action is being taken with a view to transferring the Department of the Auditor-General from Melbourne to Canberra. This officer, and possibly those associated with him, is none too anxious to leave Melbourne; but as other departments have been transferred to the Seat of Government at Canberra, there is no good reason for not transferring the Auditor-General's Department to the Federal Capital. No discrimination should be shown in the matter of transference of departments to Canberra. It has been decided to move the Patents Department from Melbourne to this city, and there should be no variation of the general rule. Can the Leader of the House give an assurance that the Government will act consistently in this matter, and treat all Commonwealth departments alike.

**Mr. LATHAM** (Kooyong—Attorney-General) [5.24].—The transfer of departments to Canberra will be determined in accordance with the views of the Government regarding each case, and in this, as in other matters, the Government is responsible to this Parliament for the action taken. It has not been the practice in the past, nor is it proposed in future, to consider the personal desires of officers in the matter as determining factor. Recognition of the fact that Canberra has been definitely and deliberately selected as the national capital,

and the efficient administration of the Public Service, will be the considerations determining the decision of this and other similar matters.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR** (Dalley) [5.25].—In the vote for the Governor-General's office, there appears to be a tremendous disparity between the amount provided for salaries and the sum set down for contingencies. While there is £50 for salaries, the vote for contingencies amounts to £280. Again, in the office of the High Commissioner, salaries account for £1,970, and contingencies are £4,700. Will the Minister state exactly what expenditure is incurred under the heading of contingencies?

**Mr. BEASLEY** (West Sydney) [5.26].—I should like to be given information regarding the commercial agency in Paris. Some members of this committee are probably hardly aware that we have a commercial agency there. It would be interesting to know exactly of what value it has proved. I do not approach this subject without some personal knowledge of it, for I visited the agency in Paris in 1926, and then had an opportunity of meeting our representative. He has occupied this position for many years, and although I was not many days in Paris, I was there sufficiently long to arrive at the conclusion that the agency serves chiefly to provide a position for the officer who happens to fill it. In my opinion, he is not altogether a suitable kind of man to be the representative of Australia in France. His ability to supply the information which I should imagine might well be expected from the representative of Australia in Paris did not seem to me quite satisfactory. From time to time we should be supplied with reports as to what has actually been done by this agency, so that we might be able to determine whether we need a representative in Paris, and if so, whether the agency should not be put on a better footing. The present as well as past administrations have acquiesced in the present arrangement, but it is not too late to check up expenditure of this kind. I am availing myself of my first opportunity during the life of the present Government to refer to the matter.

What activities is the Paris agent responsible for, and what is the value of the agency as now conducted? Does it merely

provide means whereby visitors who happen to go through Paris on their way to London may find entertainment, or admission to social functions? If so, here is an opportunity to effect economy, and thus make a little more money available for the relief of wage-earners and old-age pensioners whose incomes have been seriously reduced.

Contingency votes are provided for all departments, but honorable members should know exactly what contingencies embrace. As pointed out by the honorable member for Dalley (Mr. Rosevear), the contingencies allowed for the office of the High Commissioner are out of proportion to the amount set down for salaries. I know that Supply is being sought for only two months, but some of the amounts set down in the bill are considerable.

The next item to which I direct attention is "Shipping and mail services to Pacific Island, £10,400." I drew attention in the House recently to the calling of the Burns Philp vessels at Auckland, and the loading there of produce for Norfolk Island and other Pacific island ports. It seems to me that it is unfair to our producers that a company which draws a large subsidy from the Commonwealth should ship at New Zealand ports for the islands cargoes of commodities which could be provided by the Australian producers. We should not agree to vessels operating under a substantial Commonwealth subsidy using our money for the purpose of helping New Zealand producers to supply the needs of the island people. A good deal of New Zealand produce which is shipped to the islands is of a kind that Australian primary producers could very easily provide. I hope that the members of the Country party will look into this subject, and see whether there is not a means here of assisting the Australian farmers. We should not allow New Zealand producers to reap advantages for which we are paying.

**Mr. LATHAM** (Kooyong—Attorney-General) [5.33].—The amounts provided in this Supply Bill are roughly one-sixth of the totals set out in the General Estimates for the year ending the 30th June, 1932. A reference to the General Estimates will show, for instance, that the proposed vote for contingencies for the

Governor-General's office for the year is £1,885. The amount provided in this bill is a little more than one-sixth of that total. The same remark may be applied to most of the other items referred to in the bill. The honorable member for West Sydney (Mr. Beasley) has asked for some information regarding the proposed vote for "Contingencies." If he refers to page 31 of the General Estimates he will see that "Contingencies" cover—

Official printing and stationery, including account record and other books.

Official telegrams and postage.

Travelling expenses and incidental and petty cash expenditure.

Services rendered by railway departments.

Seeing that the proposed votes in this bill cover the same items as appear in the General Estimates, I suggest that we should not embark at this stage on a discussion of all the details. I shall, however, reply to one or two points raised by the honorable member for West Sydney, in respect of which he has asked for definite information.

I am familiar with the commercial agency in Paris. Mr. C. H. Voss is our representative in Paris, and his services have been extremely valuable. I shall give one illustration. Prior to my arrival in Paris, the French Government had taken steps to prevent the entry into France of Australian apples, it being alleged that they were infected with San José scale. The French market for Australian apples, although not particularly large, is valuable to the Australian apple exporters, because it provides an outlet for apples of a size and quality not readily saleable on the English market. When steps were taken to prevent the marketing of these apples in France, our representative was able to do invaluable work, knowing the French Ministers and public servants concerned. He brought under their personal notice the regulations of the Department of Commerce relating to the examination of Australian apples for export, and, although there was no specific reference in the certificates to San José scale, he was able to show that the examination to which the apples were subjected here prior to export was of such a nature that the apples in respect of which certificates had been issued were *prima facie* free of that disease.

Subsequently the French Government agreed to allow the apples entry into France. Unfortunately, it happened that a portion of certain later shipments was really affected by the scale. The Minister for Commerce (Mr. Hawker) has this matter in hand, and Mr. Voss is trying to arrange with the French Government for a simpler method of entry of Australian products into France. The method proposed by the French Government involved the adoption of such a technical procedure as to practically prohibit the entry of the apples. I worked out with Mr. Voss an alternative procedure, which was much simpler, and he took it up with the French authorities. I do not know what the position is at the moment. This illustration will serve to indicate the value of the presence of a commercial agent in Paris.

**Mr. BEASLEY.**—Representatives of Australia are frequently passing through France to and from Geneva. Could they not do all the work of this kind that is necessary?

**Mr. LATHAM.**—I doubt whether they could handle the affairs of this agency satisfactorily. Mr. Voss is a skilled French linguist, and has an extensive acquaintance with French commercial firms. The office costs only £1,200 a year, and is the cheapest of its kind anywhere. Arrangements have been made for the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Bruce) to give consideration to the whole subject after he has entered upon his duties in London. I arrived at a certain conclusion on the subject which I conveyed to the Prime Minister, but the matter is still under the consideration of Cabinet. Mr. Voss has a useful connexion with other countries such as Holland and Italy, and on different occasions has rendered very valuable service to the Commonwealth.

The statements made by the honorable member for West Sydney previously on the subject of the shipping and mail services to the Pacific Islands, particularly in regard to the route of the vessels engaged in this service, are being inquired into, but the Government is not yet in a position to make a statement on the subject.

Proposed vote agreed to.

#### DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY.

*Proposed vote, £108,590.*

**Mr. WARD** (East Sydney) [5.40].—I direct the attention of the Treasurer (Mr. Lyons) to the methods that are being adopted in the examination of applicants for invalid and old-age pensions. Numerous complaints have been made to me recently respecting the nature of the questions the applicants for pensions are obliged to answer. The examination of the old people in particular is so distressing as to amount practically to the adoption of third degree methods. Some of the applicants are absolutely hounded down by the officers of the department, and because of some little mistake they may have made in submitting their case originally, they are frequently denied the pension. Some of the applicants have been really panic stricken. The questions asked them are often of such a nature that they cannot clearly express themselves in their replies. Provision should be made for representation to be given to the applicants at these inquiries. If such assistance were available, the applicants would be able to answer the questions much more satisfactorily to all concerned. I shall discuss this subject at greater length, probably, a little later on, but I ask the Treasurer in the meantime to consider some revision of the methods of inquiring into applications for the pension.

**Mr. GIBSON** (Corangamite) [5.42].—The proposed vote for the Taxation Office is—

	£
Salaries .. ..	40,000
Contingencies .. ..	<u>40,400</u>
Total .. ..	<u>80,400</u>

The total amount proposed to be voted to this department in the general Estimates is £464,987. It seems to me that the Government could effect economies in this department, particularly in relation to the valuation of land for taxation purposes. I can see no reason why the Commonwealth should not accept the valuations of State officers.

The acceptance of federal valuations by the State Governments is not practicable, because the State authorities value all properties while the federal valuers are concerned only with properties valued

at £3,000 or over. The expenditure in the Taxation Department must necessarily consist principally of salaries. It appears to me, therefore, that the proposed vote of £40,400 for contingencies is high and I should like to know the reason for it.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR** (Dalley) [5.44].—I support the protest of the honorable member for East Sydney (Mr. Ward) regarding the nature of the examination to which applicants for invalid and old-age pensions are subjected. Provision should be made on the Estimates for some kind of representation of applicants for pensions at the inquiry into their circumstances. Reports have been made to me, from time to time, that some of the applicants for pensions are thoroughly terrorized by the quasi-magisterial inquiry conducted by the officers of the Pensions Department. In view of the adjustments that have been made in some pensions, I do not hesitate to say that, had it not been for intervention by others on behalf of applicants, a large number of persons justly entitled to pensions would have been deprived of them for the rest of their lives. The Pensions Office is establishing the practice of requiring pensioners first to hand in their books, and later to attend at the office to reply to charges made against them by persons whose names are not disclosed to them. Indeed, the charges themselves are not disclosed. The department then makes a decision.

**Mr. LATHAM**.—After it has heard both sides.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR**.—A week or two ago, I mentioned the case of an invalid pensioner who was told to hand in his book. The facts of that case bear out my contention. The pensioner was a young fellow somewhat deficient mentally, and for that reason his mother drew his pension. When she was away from home on one occasion certain individuals who were desirous of getting hold of the young fellow's pension induced him to stay with them for a week. When they discovered that he would not draw his pension they sent him home again, and complained to the department that the lad was knocking about with bad companions and drinking. Failing to get hold of his pension, they demanded payment for his board, and when he refused to pay, they com-

plained to the department. My complaint is that the department, without making any inquiries whatever into the character of the informant—I am certain of what I am saying—stopped the lad's pension.

**Mr. GABB**.—Was not a police report obtained?

**Mr. ROSEVEAR**.—No. Had a report from the police been called for, there is little doubt that it would have been unfavorable to the informants.

In other directions, a more liberal interpretation of the act by the departmental officers is desirable. A case recently came under my notice in which the pension was fixed at 7s. 7d. a week, the reason being that the pensioner had a life interest in an estate. When I investigated the case, I found that the pensioner's interest in the estate depended on the death of a relative who was fifteen years her junior; she could gain no benefit from the estate until that relative died. Apparently, the department has some method of assessing the value of a pensioner's interest in an estate, for in the case I have mentioned, it fixed that interest at £134 per annum. When I asked the officers of the department about the matter they said that money lenders would lend money to the pensioner on her life interest in the estate. In reply to my inquiry as to what amount a pensioner might expect from a money lender in such circumstances, they said that he would probably receive £50 for a property worth £500. I emphasize that in this instance the pensioner has no other income than her pension of 7s. 7d. a week, which honorable members will admit is insufficient for her to live on. She is therefore practically compelled to sacrifice her life interest in an estate to a money lender in order to find the means of subsistence. I can hardly imagine that the act is so worded as to authorize the department to act in this way. The average pensioner does not know the provisions of the act, and is therefore unable to defend his claim. Until such time as pensioners are entitled to be represented at magisterial inquiries, they cannot hope for justice. On the flimsiest of excuses, pensions are sometimes withheld. Now that we are asked to provide money to pay the salaries of the officers of the department, we should

also legislate to provide that pensioners may be represented on the tribunals which deal with their cases. Only in that way will justice be done.

**Mr. WHITE** (Balaclava) [5.52].—The sum of £80,400 is provided for salaries and contingencies in the Taxation Department for two months. That represents approximately £480,000 per annum for the collection of taxes. I suggest that an inquiry be instituted to ascertain whether it is not possible to obtain greater simplicity in taxation as a means of effecting economies.

Some time ago, in reply to a question as to the cost of collecting the sales tax, I was informed that the information could not be given, because since the expenses of the department were not sectionalized there was no special record in respect of the sales tax. In a properly conducted enterprise the overhead cost of the individual sections should be known. The many anomalies in the sales tax are a source of irritation to the commercial community, and keep up the cost of living in spite of the downward trend of wages. Surely a simpler method of taxation can be evolved. This harassing system was an experiment of the Scullin Government when faced with financial chaos. Since the sales tax was first imposed the rate of the tax has been increased to 6 per cent., and exemptions have been made in respect of a number of items. Altogether 600 rulings have been given by the Commissioner.

**Mr. LATHAM**.—That shows industry, at least.

**Mr. WHITE**.—That industry has not gone so far as to result in a compilation of those rulings. On a number of occasions when I asked both the present Treasurer and his predecessor to publish in one booklet the various rulings of the Commissioner so that the trading community could know where it stands, I was informed that the department had not sufficient time to undertake that work. If the Taxation Department, which costs £480,000 a year, cannot produce its rulings in a convenient form, one can readily understand the difficulty with which the trading community is faced. I understand that this booklet will shortly appear.

The many anomalies which exist in connexion with the sales tax are particularly

harassing to retail traders. At a meeting, said to be representative of 40,000 retail traders, which was recently held in Melbourne, some of the anomalies associated with the sales tax were mentioned. For instance, it was stated that a person may buy from a pastrycook a dozen cakes, five of them containing sponge and seven being pastry and sponge, without the sale being subject to sales tax; but if the figures were reversed sales tax would be payable. Where the sponge predominates the tax must be paid. Moreover, if the cakes are taxable, the paper bag in which they are enclosed is also taxable. I regret taking up so much time with these trivialities, but they serve to show the harassing nature of this taxation.

**The CHAIRMAN** (**Mr. Bell**).—The honorable member may not now discuss the sales tax.

**Mr. WHITE**.—We are asked to vote money for the payment of the officers who collect the sales tax, and I submit that I am in order. I say deliberately that no business man knows where he stands with regard to the sales tax. Many firms are now asking to be supplied with lists of exemptions made during the last two years. I suggest that the Treasurer should examine the administration of the Taxation Department with a view to its simplification. Canada has had several years' experience of the sales tax, and recently the Prime Minister of that dominion said that it was one of the most irritating taxes imposed on the people of Canada. He favoured a tax on turnover.

**The CHAIRMAN**.—The honorable member is now going beyond the scope of the subject before the Chair.

**Mr. WHITE**.—I urge the Minister to see what can be done to simplify the collection of taxes, including the sales tax, as a measure of economy.

**Mr. LATHAM** (Kooyong—Attorney-General) [5.57].—Honorable members will agree that the administration of the Invalid and Old-age Pensions Act has, on the whole, been sympathetic. If individual cases appear to contradict that statement I ask that details of them be presented to the Treasurer, who will investigate them. While the Government believes in administering this legislation

sympathetically, particularly in view of the condition of the claimants, it has also a duty to the general public. It is prepared to overhaul the administration of pensions in the ultimate interest of the pensioners themselves. However sympathetic the Government may be, it should administer the act as it appears on the statute-book. In justice to the community as a whole certain inquiries must be made of applicants for pensions. Reference has been made to the property of applicants for pensions. Since the honorable member for Dalley (Mr. Rosevear) appeared to be in doubt as to the justification for making inquiries, I direct his attention to sections 24 and 25 of the act, which will give him the information he seeks.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR.**—I am opposed not to inquiries being made, but to the way in which the department interprets the act, and forces persons entitled to a life interest in property to give it to money lenders.

**Mr. LATHAM.**—I realize that there are difficulties in the administration of legislation of this kind. The value of any property in which a pensioner has an interest must be taken into account in assessing his pension.

**Mr. BEASLEY.**—In cases similar to that mentioned by the honorable member for Dalley the pensioners do not possess any property until some one else has died.

**Mr. LATHAM.**—The department must ascertain the present value of a pensioner's future right in any property. All the facts must be taken into consideration in determining the amount of any pension. If that principle were not maintained there would be all sorts of evasions of the act. Admittedly, it might operate harshly where the market for the property is bad, so that a forced sale might mean a loss, but it is necessary to take into account all the property and valuable rights owned by an applicant for a pension. Otherwise it would be impossible to administer the act.

I doubt very much whether it would be desirable to have a representative of the applicant at the inquiry into his eligibility. It would make the matter more formal and litigious than at present. I promise honorable members that a full inquiry will be made if the Treasury is

informed of specific instances where it is said that the administration is not in accordance with the true and generous spirit of the act. The fact that last year nearly 12,000 new pensions were granted, approximately 1,000 per month, does not suggest that the administration is particularly unsympathetic.

The honorable member for Corangamite (Mr. Gibson) referred to salaries and contingencies in the taxation office. I am not able to speak on the subject of salaries with intimate knowledge, but I know that that office suffers rather from under than over-staffing. I am inclined to think that if there were more officers there would be less delay in taxation matters; that, for example, sales tax rulings would have been revised and consolidated in a more convenient form than they are at present. I am aware that in some cases there is a great deal of delay owing to the pressure upon taxation officers in these days of onerous taxation. The item "contingencies" is designed to avoid the overlapping to which the honorable member for Corangamite refers. The item of £183,000 covers an arrangement made with certain States for the administration of taxation measures by State officers, and is an endeavour, largely successful, to overcome duplication.

**Mr. PATERSON.**—Is it not rather misleading to describe that as contingencies?

**Mr. LATHAM.**—Not when it appears so prominently as the first item in contingencies, "Payment to States for taxation services". The amount varies from year to year. It is not an item of salaries, and the distinction which is drawn in the Estimates is one between salaries on the one hand and all other items; the latter, in the specialized sense, being contingencies.

The honorable member for Corangamite appealed for greater uniformity and simplicity in our systems of taxation, and particularly mentioned land tax and the existence of separate sets of State and Federal land valuations. I add municipal land values, and values for probate and death duties. That matter is actually being attended to, as Mr. Justice Ferguson, assisted probably by a skilled accountant, is being appointed a royal

commissioner to investigate and advise the Government how uniformity may be attained. It is not a simple problem. The definition of improved and unimproved land values, in the definition sections of State and Federal legislation, varies to a considerable extent. Unfortunately, "unimproved land value" is not a self-explanatory term. What it means in State legislation is not always what it means in the federal act, in certain particulars. There appears to me to be no justification for that variation, and that is one reason why Mr. Justice Ferguson is making these investigations.

I am sure that everybody sympathizes with the honorable member for Balaclava in his irritation at and detestation of the sales tax. Its imposition has been rendered necessary by hard times, not because those who introduced and supported the measure were at all pleased with it. The whole subject is most difficult and complicated. The Government recognizes that the imposition of sales tax adds far more than the actual tax itself; that, in some cases, the work involved in preparing returns is a serious disturbance of business and results in increased overhead costs. I can only reply to the honorable member with a formula too often heard on such occasions: the Government would like to change it, but cannot. If revenues permitted, the Government would be delighted to remove sales tax and other taxes as well. I made inquiries among the commercial community concerning a turnover tax, and found that there is a definite division of opinion on the subject. For that reason, I abstain from saying anything further upon it.

**Mr. JAMES** (Hunter) [6.7].—Replying to the Attorney-General's (Mr. Latham) statement, I admit that while, until eighteen months or two years ago the Pensions Act was sympathetically administered, that cannot be said of its administration to-day. I am not quarrelling with the heads of the department, but I do object to the confusing and objectionable cross-examination to which acting magistrates subject pension applicants. I believe that applicants should have the advantage of advice. I do not advocate legal representation, but they should be accompanied, if they so desire, by a friend or

relative—particularly applicants for invalid pensions. I brought a case before the Deputy Commissioner of Pensions, and he certainly did not approve of the methods adopted. An old lady applied for an invalid pension, and was asked by the examining magistrate if she were able to do housework. She replied in the negative. The magistrate asked, "Could you not wash up a cup and saucer?" She said, "Yes." Her daughter, who accompanied her, interposed, "But you would drop and break them," and was immediately told to mind her own business, in the peremptory tone that is used when Mr. Speaker, or you, sir, call me to order. That is not sympathetic administration. We should not tolerate such third degree methods. During the régime of the Scullin Government and the present Administration, instructions have been issued to tighten up pension administration. That is obvious from the number of claims that have been rejected. Applicants who have been drawing pensions for as many as ten years, have been informed that they are no longer totally and permanently incapacitated. I know that a person must be practically dying before he can establish a claim for an invalid pension. I recall a case at Swansea. The applicant had had the small of his back crushed while working in a mine, and, for a considerable period, he was in receipt of a pension.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member is not in order, during this debate, in discussing the cases of applicants for invalid or old-age pensions. I have allowed considerable latitude, but the honorable member is going beyond a reasonable limit.

**Mr. JAMES**.—The Attorney-General declared that the act is being administered sympathetically, and I was endeavouring to cite specific cases to prove that that is not so. The mining company had paid this unfortunate person a sum of money as compensation, because he was permanently and totally incapacitated. For a number of years he drew an invalid pension. That was discontinued, and one government medical officer certified that the man was not permanently and totally incapacitated. Yet I have seen the testimony of three other

officers that he is. Surely that does not indicate sympathetic administration.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 8 p.m.*

[*Quorum formed.*]

Mr. JAMES.—Another case illustrating the need for more sympathetic administration is that of claimants under the age of sixteen years living in their parents' homes. From information which has come to me, it would appear that invalid children living with their parents are not eligible for a pension, even when they reach adult age, if the income of the father is in excess of the basic wage. This operates harshly upon parents and claimants alike, and I think the regulation governing the matter should be amended to provide for the payment of the pension in all such cases.

Another point which I should like to see cleared up is that relating to the property qualification. Although a property may not be revenue producing, its value is assessed, and in some cases its possession is a bar to the payment of a pension. The applicant may be the owner of a dwelling which is occupied by some person who is unable to earn income and, therefore, is not in a position to pay his rent. In such circumstances the property is an encumbrance to its owner. Actually, the regulation amounts to a tax upon thrift, because if its assessed value for municipal rating purposes is £400, the owner of a property is ineligible for the invalid or old-age pension. Many cases in this class have been brought under my notice. A few years ago a person in Kurri Kurri purchased land upon which he spent £1,025 in road construction and cutting it up for subdivisional sale in accordance with the regulations of the local shire council. It was ready for sale just prior to the depression, and he was able to sell only two blocks out of 29 for £20 each. Later, he became an applicant for the old-age pension, but because of the valuation placed upon his land which, I may add, was non-revenue producing, his pension was reduced to 9s. 9d. per week—not sufficient to meet the charges for water rates, electric services, and insurance on his own home. The rates on the property amount to £29 a year, and the pension works out at about £26. The regulations should be amended to give

relief to applicants owning non-revenue producing properties. I know of one man who, because he owned a property of that nature was unable to obtain a dole ration under the Bavin Administration in New South Wales. The occupant of his property was getting the dole, but the owner could get neither the pension nor the dole. I protested against this injustice to the State authorities, but without success.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! The honorable member is now discussing State administration.

Mr. JAMES.—I am citing definite cases in answer to the statement of the Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) that sympathetic consideration is being given to all applications for the invalid or old-age pension. In January of this year, I introduced a deputation to the right honorable the Prime Minister (Mr. Lyons) at the Commonwealth Bank, in Sydney, and put before him those aspects of the administration which I have mentioned to-night. It is unfair to take the municipal valuation of property, because every one knows that municipal values for rating purposes do not represent true market value.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member's time has expired.

Mr. MAKIN (Hindmarsh) [8.6].—I agree with the honorable member for Hunter (Mr. James) that, because of the manner in which the regulations have been framed, many anomalies in the administration of the invalid and old-age pensions department are, from time to time, brought under the notice of honorable members. The cases cited by the honorable member to-night are certainly worthy of consideration. It is unfair that simply because applicants for the invalid pension may be living with their parents, they should not be eligible, because no one can suggest that when they reach adult age they cease to be a charge upon the home. It is distinctly anomalous that, to become eligible for pension, invalids should be required to leave the parental roof where, naturally, they would receive the best of care and attention. The regulation governing this phase of administration really penalizes parents, and should be amended. I have directed attention to this position on other occa-

sions, and I was hoping that the act would have been amended before now to give relief in such cases. I also agree with the honorable member for Hunter that there should be some amendment of the regulation dealing with the property qualification of applicants. Many thrifty citizens have attempted to provide for their old age by the acquisition of property, but unfortunately, in these days, many properties are non-revenue producing, and actually are a bar to the payment of the pension. This is a distinct hardship, and certainly it is no encouragement to citizens to make provision for their old age. The honorable member for Hunter also voiced his strong objection to other phases of administration. On that point let me say that whatever criticism may be levelled at governmental policy, I feel that I must pay the highest possible tribute to the officials associated with the central office of the department, and also with the administration in the city of Adelaide.

Mr. JAMES.—My complaint was directed chiefly against the attitude of magistrates in the various country centres.

Mr. MAKIN.—I have no desire to misrepresent the honorable gentleman, but I understood him to say that he did not find the administration as sympathetic as he would like it to be; and while I acknowledge that he may have many grievances, and may be quite properly opposed to certain lines of policy, I feel that it is only due to the officials of the department that we should recognize their efficiency and, generally, their sympathetic attention to all requests. I feel sure that they are as considerate as it is possible for them to be under the regulations.

Mr. JAMES.—That is perfectly true.

Mr. MAKIN.—While I have not always been in agreement with the decisions given on cases brought before them, I am convinced that the officials of the department are conscientiously doing all that is possible in the circumstances to see that the right thing is done. Recently, I had occasion to complain about what I considered the unfair practice on the part of certain medical officers in seeking to deprive pensioners, especially invalid pensioners, of the amount due to them by deferring their claims for three or

six months for further review. That really meant the withholding of the pension for the period mentioned. Two such cases came under my notice not so long ago, and when I wrote to central administration pointing out what I regarded as a paltry practice, it was immediately rectified. I therefore repeat that I am glad to have this opportunity to acknowledge the conscientious manner in which the central office is administering the act under existing regulations.

Mr. GANDER.—Many pensioners fail to get into touch with their parliamentary representatives.

Mr. MAKIN.—I am convinced that many old-age and invalid pensioners would receive considerable assistance in straightening out the technical difficulties of their cases if they approached their parliamentary representative on the matter. In many cases these anomalies are not the fault of the administration. Of course the intervention of a parliamentary representative would not sway the department in any way in its decision whether an applicant was eligible for a pension, but there are many anomalies which we have been able to remove in respect of pensions generally.

Mr. ROSEVEAR.—Does not the honorable member think that pensioners should have the right to have an advocate at any inquiries respecting their claims?

Mr. MAKIN.—Certainly. Everything should be done to enable a pensioner to obtain justice. I strongly object to the harassing and unfair comments contained in the Auditor-General's report respecting certain aspects of the administration of old-age and invalid pensions. Those comments are unworthy of an officer holding such an important public position. He has far exceeded his duty in seeking to lay down the pensions policy, because that is the prerogative not of the Auditor-General, but of the department itself. I admit that some applicants for pensions may have made false declarations, and should be suitably dealt with, but that is no reason why the report of the Auditor-General should convey the impression abroad that applicants for a pension should be held suspect.

The CHAIRMAN.—I ask the honorable member not to discuss further the Auditor-General's report.

**Mr. MAKIN.**—I am dealing only with that part of it which refers to the administration of the Pensions Department. The Auditor-General has cast an unfair reflection upon old-age and invalid pensioners. The department should be allowed to carry out its administrative work without being subject to the gross insults associated with certain recommendations and the extravagant comments contained in the Auditor-General's report.

**Mr. BEASLEY** (West Sydney) [8.20].—I do not subscribe altogether to the remarks of the honorable member for Hindmarsh (Mr. Makin) concerning the sympathetic administration of the Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act, but I have no complaint to make with respect to the work of the Deputy Commissioner and his staff at the central office, Sydney. As a matter of fact they have extended me much courtesy and given me every assistance in respect of cases that I have brought under their notice. I rose principally to refer to the medical men who are called upon to examine applicants for invalid pensions, and to make a serious complaint regarding their methods. These medical men can, if they wish, declare that any and every applicant for an invalid pension is not totally or permanently incapacitated. I have seen a pile of medical certificates that have been forwarded to the departmental doctor, who without examining them has ruled that the applicants concerned are not totally and permanently incapacitated.

**Dr. MALONEY.**—Some invalids whose claims have been rejected are quite unfit for work.

**Mr. BEASLEY.**—I agree with the honorable member. I have frequently discussed this matter with the Deputy Commissioner, but after all he, being a layman like myself, is not in a position to dispute the decision of the departmental doctor. Because of the interpretation placed by the departmental doctor upon the words "totally and permanently incapacitated," many applicants have come to the conclusion that they must be almost lying on the broad of their backs before they will be considered eligible for a pension. The departmental doctor is in no way restricted under the act. He can argue along certain lines, and there is

no appeal against his decision. I have previously suggested that the decision should not be left entirely to one medical officer. I think that the honorable member for Balaclava (Mr. White) supported that suggestion. If it were carried out, additional expense might be incurred, although it is quite likely that some members of the medical profession would be prepared to act in an honorary capacity. The profession is noble to that extent and particularly in this time of stress and trouble. In my own district medical men attend to the people without any expectation of fee or reward, and it may be possible to obtain the services of men who are big enough in heart to undertake this work and thus give the applicant who is incapacitated some opportunity of appealing from an adverse decision of the departmental medical officer. Those of us who have handled these cases over a period of years can usually tell whether an application for an invalid pension is genuine, and frequently I have informed applicants that I did not think they were entitled to a pension. In other instances there has been no doubt as to the justice of the claim. Of course the department may say that the applicant can follow a certain class of employment. It may say that the applicant can sell newspapers or carry out other light work. But it is difficult for everybody in those circumstances to sell newspapers. The department may say that it is not its job to find suitable employment for applicants, and perhaps that is so. Still, the applicant cannot obtain work. I urge the Minister to give my suggestion serious consideration.

**Mr. LANE** (Barton) [8.26].—Like other honorable members I have spent a good deal of my time in trying to understand why applications for invalid pensions have been refused. In connexion with one case the other day the doctor concerned wrote on the papers "This invalid can earn 10s. per week." When asked how it could be earned, the doctor said that he did not know. I then asked him whether he had seen the certificates which the applicant had received from specialists in Macquarie-street, and I was informed that the departmental doctor had not seen them, and that he relied entirely upon his own ex-

amination. It will be recognized that there is a family history closely bearing on most complaints, and that the specialists in Macquarie-street go to the trouble of examining family history so as to get to the root of the complaint. The present system of paying the departmental doctors so much per case is entirely wrong. We should appoint a qualified medical practitioner as a permanent officer. I understand from the department that at present two or three doctors in Sydney are employed in examining cases, and that there are sufficient cases to warrant the appointment of a full-time doctor at an adequate salary. The departmental doctor should not only examine certificates produced by applicants, but also consult with the specialists who supplied them. In that way many injustices to applicants for invalid pensions would be prevented. Only the other day a pension was refused on the evidence of an outside witness. The officer concerned informed me that he had visited the house of the applicant, and had examined the landlady. I asked him whether he had interviewed the applicant, and he relied "No." His excuse was that the patient was deaf, and that it would have taken some hours to obtain from the patient evidence which he secured in a few minutes from the landlady. It is altogether wrong for an officer to refuse to take the evidence of the person who is most interested, and to depend largely upon incorrect or prejudiced statements by an outsider. If it is a question of giving assistance to an invalid who cannot help himself by reason of his disabilities, no hesitation should be displayed by the officer in making the fullest possible inquiry into the case. I trust that the Minister will give this matter his earnest consideration. I believe that, if he inquires of the departmental officers, he will learn that they are unanimously of the opinion that it would be better to have a permanently-employed doctor than to distribute the work among a number of medical men on the basis of a certain fee for each patient examined. Those men have private practices, and it is impossible for them to diagnose cases fairly.

Mr. MARTENS.—There is a big danger in the suggestion of the honorable member.

Mr. LANE.—There may be a danger in it. There is danger in every step that we take in life. But the question is to find the way that will give the best results.

I disagree with the decision of the Commissioner that blind persons who sell merchandise, such as tobacco and matches, on the streets, are not entitled to a pension, while those who sell newspapers are. I have been informed that the view held is that a person might give a blind man 3d. for a box of matches, and that, therefore, he is placed in the position of a mendicant. I assume that there are some persons who would give a blind man 6d. for a newspaper. Consequently, wherein lies the difference? The matter should be placed outside the discretion of the departmental officers. The blind people of New South Wales are to-day being done a very serious injustice, not by the law, but by the determination of the Commissioner.

Pensioners are probably the poorest and the most needy section of the community, and frequently, because they cannot enlist the aid of a member of Parliament, they are made to suffer. It is not right that we should have to make these representations. Both as a State and as a Federal member, I have succeeded in having a pension granted after an application for it had been turned down four or five times. The law should be explicit, and the officers highly efficient. An invalid, or one who has reached old age, ought to be able to obtain his rights without interference.

Dr. MALONEY (Melbourne) [8.35].—I desire to supplement the remarks of the honorable member for West Sydney (Mr. Beasley). For a period of 43 years, pensions matters have been attended to by my office; first, old-age pensions under the State law, then old-age and invalid pensions under the law initiated in the Commonwealth by Mr. Andrew Fisher, and lastly war pensions. When I tell honorable members that my books show that over 3,000 cases have been dealt with in a year, I think that they will agree that I know something about the matter. It has always been difficult for invalids to obtain a pension, but never in the history of pensions has it been so difficult as since the advent to

office of the Treasurer in the last Government. I am perfectly convinced that, under his administration, instructions were given to make it as difficult as possible to obtain an invalid pension. Many cases have come under my notice in which a pension has been refused, despite the fact that the applicant held the certificate of a medical man of the highest standing on the staff of one of our hospitals. I would back the opinion of the men on those staffs against that of any doctor in the Department of Health. I understand that a little while ago two medical officers of that department assisted in pension work, the reason being, I suppose, that there was not sufficient work in the Health Department to keep them fully employed. They have not had the experience of a general practitioner, because they have never practised. They have never come into contact with patients in the ordinary walks of life, and lack the sympathy which that experience engenders. They have been most severe on applicants for a pension. I have nothing but the highest regard, reverence and respect for those who performed this work prior to their advent. They were men in every sense of the term, just to their country, observant of the law, and yet generous when necessary. I have rarely had occasion to make complaint in regard to the certificate of an outside medical man. Whenever a mistake has been made, those men have always been willing to inquire further into the matter, and to help the pensioner as far as possible.

Whenever a bill to amend the law relating to old-age, invalid, or war pensions, is brought down in this chamber, I hope that some allowance will be made for a man who has lost a limb or an eye. A labourer whose hand has been injured cannot possibly continue his ordinary occupation, and thus is handicapped in earning his living. In the consideration of claims for pensions, regulations exercise a much greater influence than the act itself, and they invariably rule against the invalid. I should like to see adopted some method such as that suggested by the honorable member for West Sydney (Mr. Beasley). Where there is a genuine certificate by an outside medical man, contradicting the evidence of the depart-

mental officer, evidence in the case should be heard by some qualified person, such as a magistrate. If that evidence disclosed the fact that the status and knowledge of the outside man were higher than those of the officer against whom he had given his opinion, his view should be adopted. Until the procedure followed is somewhat along these lines, those who, by accident or otherwise, are rendered unable to earn their living, will not receive justice, sympathy or fair play.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR** (Dalley) [8.41].—I am pleased that I initiated this discussion, and that, with the exception of the Minister, the debate has been entirely in favour of the view that I put forward. It has been shown that the experience in other States has been similar to that of the State of New South Wales. Nothing that I have said can be construed into an attack upon the Commissioner or the Deputy Commissioner of Pensions. The point that I have stressed is, that pensioners should be allowed some representation when their case is being heard by a medical man or a magistrate. I am not defending in any way those who would cheat the department. The fact that the number of pensioners has increased this year is not a criterion of the manner in which the act has been administered. That increase has been brought about, not by sympathetic administration but by economic circumstances over which neither the pensioner nor probably the Government has any control. It cannot be denied that too much reliance is placed upon the departmental medical man. The number of complaints that have been made by reputable persons in regard to the brow-beating tactics adopted by the magistrate and the understrappers in the department, justifies the demand that the pensioner shall be allowed some sort of representation when he is called upon to show cause why his pension should not be stopped. The remarkable thing about the information on which the department acts is, that the pensioner does not know who the informant is; and, what is more, the informant is not required to give a statement on oath. An anonymous letter is sufficient to induce the department immediately to withdraw a pension, and thus put the pensioner to considerable trouble. I have

dealt with cases in which persons over 82 years of age have been brought before a brow-beating magistrate. A man may be perfectly innocent of the charge laid against him, and have the best possible case, yet not be able to withstand cross-examination by a magistrate. Frequently innocent persons are brow-beaten and bluffed into making statements that are derogatory to their claims for a pension. We ask that the pensioner be given the right to nominate a person to represent him, if the Government is not prepared to delegate an official to appear on his behalf, and look after his interests when his claim for a pension is challenged. If that were done, I am confident that those organizations of pensioners which are in existence to-day would see to it, even if they had to defray the cost out of their own pockets, that the pensioner was represented when his claim for a pension was challenged. There would, then, be no need for pensioners to chase round after members of Parliament to do the job. Many pensioners who do not get into touch with their local member are suffering injustice to-day, because of information supplied to the department by persons of probably doubtful character. In order to do what I suggest, it would be necessary only to draft a new regulation giving to the pensioners the right to nominate a person to represent them at departmental inquiries.

**Mr. NELSON** (Northern Territory) [8.46].—The proposal of the Government to reduce old-age pensions appears to me to be unjust. It is impossible to set a standard of payment which will be just in all parts of this extensive continent. In the far north of Australia are men who, for years past, have been engaged in pioneering work. Recently in Central Australia gold was discovered, but tragedy has stalked in the wake of that discovery. Already three men have lost their lives over the venture. Yet men persist in seeking wealth in these latitudes, and after they have lived for years in the tropics they do not want to come south. To make them do so would be equivalent to condemning them to death. Therefore, when old-age or invalid pensions are paid to residents of the North, consideration should be given to the cost

of living in that area. To-day I obtained from the Commonwealth Statistician the index figures relating to the cost of living in various parts of Australia. For food and groceries the index figure for Sydney is 920; for Brisbane, 808; for Townsville, 1000 and for Darwin, 1298. This means that a pension of 15s. a week would buy in Sydney as much as one of £1 1s. 2d. in Darwin.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member is getting away from the Supply Bill.

Mr. NELSON.—I am entitled, I think, to discuss the cost of administering the Pensions Act. A pension of 15s. a week in Sydney is worth only 8s. 10d. a week in Darwin. I ask the Government to exempt the Northern Territory from the operation of the proposed pensions cut.

Mr. RIORDAN (Kennedy) [8.50].—I support the request of the honorable member for the Northern Territory (Mr. Nelson). Much has been said about equality of sacrifice, but the Government is demanding heavier sacrifices from some sections of the community than from others. Many people believe that it is an easy matter for a person, upon attaining the age of 65 years, to obtain an old-age pension. They think that it is only necessary to make out a claim in order to obtain a pension of 17s. 6d. a week, or of 15s. a week as it will be after this budget, designed to get us round the corner, has been put into operation.

Many anomalies have occurred in the administration of the invalid pension provisions of the act. Before a person is entitled to a pension, he must prove that he is permanently incapacitated for work. Perhaps a child is born suffering from paralysis. On reaching the age of 14 years his parents take him to a doctor who, after examining him, says that there is a chance that he may come right when he is 21 years. Officially, therefore, the child is not permanently incapacitated, and must wait another seven years to prove his incapacity. Sometimes members of the medical fraternity are strangely inconsistent. Some time ago a constituent of mine at Charters Towers was told by a doctor to leave his job because he was not fit to work. After his bank balance, which was a small one, was exhausted, he

applied for an invalid pension. He submitted himself for examination to the Government Medical Officer, who was the same doctor who had told him that he was unfit for work. The Government Medical Officer refused to give him a certificate of permanent incapacity, saying that it was possible that he might be able to work again some time. In order to meet cases of that kind, the act should be amended to provide that a person who is not permanently incapacitated shall be entitled to draw a pension until he is fit to go back to work. It is of no use saying that the Pensions Department should be more lenient in its attitude towards applicants. The department must administer the act as it finds it.

There is another difficulty which frequently crops up in the Far North. A man may be living on one of the old, deserted gold-fields where there is no resident doctor. Perhaps he is an inmate of the bush nursing home, and he applies for an invalid pension. It is necessary for him to furnish a doctor's certificate, but the nearest doctor may be 400 or 500 miles away. It would be death for him to make the journey to the doctor, so the good people of the district have to support him. If the man applies for an old-age pension, the local policeman must furnish a satisfactory report before his application will be granted. If the policeman is a "nark" and dislikes the old man, his report will be unfavorable. Then, there is the matter of a birth certificate, which is sometimes difficult to obtain. Besides the birth certificate the applicant must obtain an additional certificate to the effect that some one has seen him continuously for twenty years. I had a letter the other day from a constituent, now over 80 years of age, who has been applying for the old-age pension for the last fifteen years. He has not been able to get it, because he has never been in one place long enough to entitle him to receive the required certificate. In order to obtain a living, he has to forage about like a horse. When the plain is eaten out, he has to go on the creeks. Yet, we hear politicians thundering from the benches of this House their admiration of our wonder-

*Mr. Riordan.*

fully humane legislation which provides a pension of £1 a week for the old, forgetting to mention that whenever we find ourselves in trouble we "pinch" 2s. 6d. a week from the pensioners. As a matter of fact, it is not an old-age pension at all; it is subject to too many limitations. If an old lady owns a house valued at £400, and she does not live continuously in it, the house is treated as an income-producing asset, so that if the estimated income is more than £76 a year, she is not entitled to draw a pension. I am not blaming the Pensions Department for the injustices and anomalies to which I have referred. The department merely administers the act as it finds it. If we would remove the injustices, we must do so by means of legislation passed through this Parliament.

**Mr. JAMES** (Hunter) [9.0].—I have received several complaints that, in assessing the income of the family of a claimant for the maternity allowance, the officers administering the act will not take into consideration union dues and the cost of explosives. I think it is grossly unfair, particularly when these costs are allowed as deductions in assessing income taxation. The maternity allowance is paid to ensure that an expectant mother will have proper medical attention during a critical period of her life. Such was the intention of the Fisher Government when it brought in the maternity grant in 1912, but the allowance has now been placed on a charitable basis.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member may not discuss the provisions of the Maternity Allowance Act itself.

**Mr. JAMES**.—It was never intended that new citizens should be ushered into this world under charity. Yet we are attempting to put the allowance on that basis by legislation recently passed.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member must not continue to discuss the act when directed not to do so.

**Mr. JAMES**.—At any rate the matter is worthy of consideration by responsible Ministers. The Minister concerned in this instance is not in the chamber. As this is the only opportunity honorable members have to ventilate grievances, Ministers should be courteous enough to remain in the chamber and furnish replies. The honorable member for Hind-

marsh (Mr. Makin) was apparently not in the chamber before the dinner adjournment when I explained that I was not critical of the administration in the Pensions Office in Sydney. As a matter of fact I have been shown every courtesy in regard to claims I have sponsored. My only complaint is that which has been voiced by other honorable members tonight—the right of the medical fraternity to decide who shall or shall not be given an invalid pension. I have, on occasions, produced two or three medical certificates, which have been ignored by the Government medical officer, whose decisions must, under the act, be accepted as final. I think that provision should be made in the act for an independent medical referee where there is conflict of opinion among medical men. One can tell at a glance when people are incapacitated and unable to earn a living. At the present time, when unemployment is so prevalent, it is difficult enough for a man with all his physical capacities to secure employment. How, then, can one do so with a physical defect such as being minus an arm or a leg? The woman who is so incapacitated is told that she cannot get a pension, but must wait, possibly until some one marries her. What chance of being married has a woman minus a leg or an arm? In my opinion a woman partially incapacitated should be given every consideration.

The CHAIRMAN.—During the course of the debate I have called the attention of honorable members to the fact that, on the schedule of a supply bill, they must not criticize an act of Parliament. That can be done only when there is a proposal before the chamber for the repeal or amendment of the legislation in question.

Mr. JAMES.—As I am not allowed to say what I think should be done to amend the act, it is useless for me to proceed further.

Mr. RIORDAN (Kennedy) [9.10].—According to the statement of the Minister in charge of the bill this afternoon the cost of administering the maternity allowance office this year will be £15,000. When the Government's legislation is put through there will be very few persons eligible to collect the allowance. We were also told that the cost of administering

invalid and old-age pensions would be £67,080, but if we keep on cutting down the pensions as we have lately been doing, the cost of administration will exceed the amount of the pensions paid. Similarly, the maternity allowance paid will be less than the cost of making the payments. For the Taxation Department this bill provides £40,000 for salaries and £40,000 for contingencies for two months. The Minister has explained that these amounts cover grants to the States where there is only one taxing authority. In some States the taxation work is duplicated. This, surely, is a direction in which a saving could be made. When I was travelling out west on one occasion I met a federal land valuer who had called upon a selector who had lost practically all his sheep as the result of drought. The selector invited him to stay over night. Whilst he was there a State valuer, a hut inspector, an income tax inspector, and a policeman representing the stock inspector also came along. I thought there was to be a dance. They all represented different departments. Yet we wonder why we are going bankrupt. This bill provides £700 for a land values board and £600 for an income tax board of review.

Mr. BEASLEY.—Has any one ever got anything back from the Board of Review?

Mr. RIORDAN.—Has any one ever got back anything from the Government once it lays its hands on it? I know a man whose income tax was assessed at £2,400 for the year. His family of ten had worked night and day for the twelve months. He told the Commissioner he could not pay his tax. The Commissioner replied, "You have just sold £26,000 worth of cattle". He said that he had done so by direction of his bank, which had taken all the proceeds of the sale. As a matter of fact, the bank graciously advanced him the £2,400 with which to pay his income tax, and charged him 7 per cent. for the money, thus adding to his indebtedness. Whither are we drifting with all these boards? For the Superannuation Board, £930 is provided. If the policy of the present Government is continued, we shall soon have to institute superannuation for every person in the community. The vote for the Government Printer for the printing of papers and speeches in Parliament is at

the rate of over £20,000 a year. The output of official papers is so great that members are continually forced to overhaul the contents of their correspondence boxes in order to make room for the new matter that is daily arriving. Not half of what is printed is read. This vote of £108,590 for the Department of the Treasury for two months provides ample scope for economies which would obviate any interference with invalid and old-age pensions and the maternity allowance.

Proposed vote agreed to.

**ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.**

*Proposed vote, £18,960.*

**Mr. ROSEVEAR** (Dalley) [9.19.]—For salaries and contingencies in connexion with the High Court, and the bankruptcy administration, provision is made at the rate of £8,000 and £23,940 a year respectively. On what will this money be expended? If it is to provide perquisites for High Court judges or the president of the Bankruptcy Court, I shall oppose the expenditure, because of the attitude of some of these gentlemen towards the proposed reduction of their salaries.

**Mr. LATHAM.**—On a point of order. The item includes no provision for the salaries of judges, and, therefore, the honorable member's remarks are out of order.

**Mr. BEASLEY.**—I submit that if any portion of the vote for contingencies has even a remote relation to the payment of High Court judges, if it is only to pay for the stationery which they used in intimating their refusal to agree to a reduction of salaries, the committee will be in order in discussing their attitude.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR.**—No point of order is involved. I have not said that the items cover the salaries of the judges, but if they relate only remotely to the offices of the High Court judges and the president of the Bankruptcy Court, we are entitled to discuss their salaries.

The CHAIRMAN.—The salaries of judges are provided for by special appropriation. I can find in the Estimates for the Attorney-General's Department no reference to those salaries, but there is a reference to the salaries of judges' associates. I rule, therefore, that the attitude of the judges towards a pro-

posed reduction of their salaries cannot be discussed on this schedule.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR.**—The items in this schedule cover the incidental expenses of the judges of the High Court and Bankruptcy Court, and if those gentlemen are not prepared to make some sacrifice of their salaries—

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member is disregarding my ruling that the attitude of the judges towards a reduction of their salaries may not be discussed.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR.**—I am seeking to discover how the proposed votes are to be expended. If £17,000 is to be paid on salaries in connexion with bankruptcy administration during the twelve months, the committee should be given a full explanation of the destination of that sum. If the expenditure is to supplement the salaries of judges, we are entitled to comment on such salaries, and on the refusal of the judges to accept a reduction.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member is deliberately disregarding my ruling.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR.**—Apparently, it is very difficult to get at the "tall poppies" although it is remarkably easy to sacrifice the lower-paid public servants, even to the extent of forcing adults to work for the wages of juniors. The greatest difficulty is to attack those highly-placed persons who are not prepared to share in the general sacrifice.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member's remarks traverse the ruling of the Chair.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR.**—I cannot understand that ruling. If I cannot criticize the salaries of judges, or the other payments in connexion with their employment, I might as well resume my seat.

**Mr. RIORDAN** (Kennedy) [9.26].—At an annual cost of £23,940, bankruptcy which appears to be one of our thriving industries at the present time, becomes rather expensive to the Commonwealth. An amount of £600 is provided for the Public Service Arbitrator's office, presumably to enable him to make determinations for Parliament to disallow. Why is £7,500 provided for the Commonwealth Investigation Branch when

every State has a Criminal Investigation Branch? What are the duties of this Commonwealth service?

Mr. BEASLEY.—It engages in political propaganda at election time.

Mr. RIORDAN.—Probably. If this expenditure were discontinued no great hardship would be done. I understand that very few men are employed, and I have not heard of many burglaries or other crimes in Canberra. A saving of £600 might be effected in respect of the Public Service Arbitrator's office, because the disallowance of his last determination indicates that the Government is abandoning the principle of arbitration. The Public Service Arbitrator makes a determination and this Government then destroys his work. Reductions can be effected where old-age and invalid pensioners and expectant mothers are concerned, but other forms of expenditure are not curtailed. Provision is also made made to meet the expenditure incurred by the Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, the operations of which are conducted in every State in the Commonwealth, probably with the object of continually reducing wages. When an award was made in 1929, providing for a reduction of 10 per cent. in the workers' wages, it was said that such a reduction would result in increased employment. The percentage of unemployed at that time was about 18; but, notwithstanding a reduction of 10 per cent. in wages; the percentage increased within twelve months to 30. If a reduction of 10 per cent. increased unemployment by 12 per cent. within a year it is time we dispensed with either Federal or State arbitration courts. The existence of Commonwealth and State arbitration tribunals in every State means a duplication of activities and an unnecessary tax upon the people of this country. The people should be told why the present arbitration system is duplicated. We should have one award by an arbitral tribunal to cover the whole Commonwealth, and thus dispense with this unnecessary duplication. The poor taxpayer is the unfortunate lamb from whom the last drop of blood is being taken; he cannot avoid the Government's demand for money. Provision is also made for the expenditure of between £12,000 and

£13,000 to meet the cost of the Commonwealth Crown Solicitor's office for the period covered by the bill. There is a Commonwealth Crown Solicitor's office in every State, as well as State departments doing similar work. In Brisbane, the firm of Chambers, McNab and McNab represent the Federal Government. Big fees are paid to that firm, although the work which they undertake for the Commonwealth could be efficiently performed by the State Crown Law authorities. If efficient work can be performed by the State Crown Law Department for a State, that department should be able to undertake satisfactorily the work of the Commonwealth. If an honorable member retained a solicitor in Brisbane, and he became involved in litigation, he would not appoint another member of the legal fraternity to represent him. This Parliament is supposed to control the expenditure of revenue collected from taxpayers, and some consideration should be given to the methods at present employed in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. An amount is also provided to meet the cost of a reporting branch. What does that branch do?

Mr. LATHAM.—Naturally, it reports proceedings.

Mr. RIORDAN.—The taxpayer has to meet the cost of this expenditure. It is easy for the Attorney-General (Mr. Latham), who has recently returned from a visit to Great Britain, to joke over these matters, but the taxpayer has to meet the bill. When an honorable member seeks information on matters of public importance, his inquiries should not be treated jocularly. The taxpayer who is paying interest through the nose to the banks on money borrowed to pay his taxes is anxious to know how the money which the Government collects from him is being spent. There is ample room for economy. The whole system is farcical, and, to use the words of the Minister for the Interior (Mr. Parkhill), when sitting on this side of the chamber, is the greatest ramp ever put over the public. This is a ramp from beginning to end. The Government's financial proposals are framed with the object of protecting those who are fortunate enough to occupy box seats. Apparently, the Government believes that it should have a

Crown Law department in every State. In going through this bill, it is easy to see where economies can be effected without touching invalid and old-age pensions. Although the Government does not propose to make any reduction in unnecessary expenditure, it is asking the poor old people to live on 15s. a week. It is enough to make one go outside and weep. It shows how helpless a national parliament is in matters of finance.

**Mr. BEASLEY** (West Sydney) [9.36].—I take this opportunity to bring under the notice of the Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) the consolidation of the Commonwealth statutes. About two months ago a legal friend of mine in Tasmania forwarded to me a circular, signed, I think, by the present Crown Solicitor, informing him that it was the intention of the department to consolidate the statutes, so that they could be more readily followed, not only by members of the legal fraternity, but by members of this Parliament. As the circular is roneoed, some authority must have been given for its production and distribution. An important aspect of the matter is that its distribution was authorized after two enterprising young barristers in Sydney had undertaken the work of consolidating the Commonwealth Statutes and had been engaged on it for from six to twelve months. I understand that they made an excellent job of it.

**Mr. SCULLIN**.—It is a wonderful work.

**Mr. BEASLEY**.—They have consolidated the Commonwealth statutes up to, I think, the end of 1931, in three volumes. These gentlemen had made the necessary arrangements with the publishers, and, no doubt, had incurred considerable expenditure.

**Mr. RILEY**.—They are both returned soldiers.

**Mr. BEASLEY**.—I did not know that. It appears that they made representations to the department for some consideration, which they were entitled to do, seeing that the department has not undertaken what is a necessary work. I thought that this Government professed to encourage private enterprise, particularly in connexion with work of this character. In the circumstances, these gentlemen were, I submit, justified in making some repre-

sentation to the Government with a view to having their work endorsed by it. They had reached the stage I have mentioned when a circular from the department was distributed in which it was stated that it was proposed to consolidate the statutes, although the work had already been done by these gentlemen.

**Mr. SCULLIN**.—Does the circular say that the department proposes to consolidate the statutes?

**Mr. BEASLEY**.—I believe it states that the department is going on with the work.

**Mr. SCULLIN**.—It is a costly job.

**Mr. BEASLEY**.—The unfairness of the proposal is that these men have already placed their work on the market.

**Mr. ARCHDALE PARKHILL**.—Who are they?

**Mr. BEASLEY**.—The Attorney-General knows their names. They are Messrs. McGrath and O'Sullivan. The issue of this circular has seriously affected their prospects of selling their work because legal men would naturally prefer to purchase such a work from the Commonwealth department than from persons outside. These men are not in the Commonwealth service, and it might be thought that their production was not as reliable as would be similar work done within the department. It seems strange that the department should send out such a circular which will have the effect of preventing these men receiving the reward to which they are entitled.

**Mr. SCULLIN**.—Was the circular sent out by the Attorney-General's Department?

**Mr. BEASLEY**.—I think so.

**Mr. LATHAM**.—It was; it was signed by the secretary of the department.

**Mr. BEASLEY**.—As the Attorney-General was not in Australia at the time, I am not placing the blame, if blame is attachable to any one, upon him. I should like the Minister to tell honorable members whether he considers that the right thing has been done. If the matter is cleared up, these men will then be in a better position to know what course to adopt.

**Mr. LATHAM** (Kooyong—Attorney-General) [9.44].—The honorable member for Kennedy (Mr. Riordan) objects to the expenditure incurred in the Attorney-

General's Department; but I suggest that a discussion on this subject might well be postponed until the general estimates are under consideration. I am afraid that that department and lawyers generally—

Mr. SCULLIN.—Are a necessary evil.

Mr. LATHAM.—Quite so. The matter raised by the honorable member for West Sydney (Mr. Beasley) is at present under consideration. No decision has yet been reached with respect to the work of Messrs. McGrath and O'Sullivan. Last year these gentlemen submitted a proposal to the Attorney-General's Department, to bring out, in conjunction with the Government Printer, an edition of Commonwealth Statutes. That proposal was not followed up and nothing more was heard of it until a complete edition was produced and published by the Law Book Company of Australia. I have seen the two editors, and a representative of the Law Book Company, and I have discussed the position with them; but the only proposal on which the department was approached was for an edition in combination with the Government printer. That idea was abandoned, and no more was heard about it.

Before I left Australia, at the beginning of March last and before anything was known to the department of this new edition, I had considered the subject of improving the form of Commonwealth statute law. It is rather a reflection upon us, I think, that our statutes have not been consolidated in any form, either as a collection or as a consolidation, since 1911. In that year we brought out an edition of acts up to date, annotated in a useful fashion, but without any consolidation. It appears to me that the legal department of the Commonwealth owes a duty to the public of Australia, to members of the Parliament, and to the legal profession, to present the statutes of the Commonwealth in the most readily available and intelligible form. There probably would have been some form of consolidation or collection of statutes ten years ago, had it not been that there was still on the statute-book then a great deal of emergency legislation associated particularly with the war. It was felt undesirable, more

particularly in view of the tremendous pressure of work experienced in the Attorney-General's Department to attempt a consolidation when much of the material would soon be of little utility.

Honorable members will see, by reference to the notice-paper, that there is a proposal for the appointment of a joint select committee for the revision of Commonwealth Acts. I take the view, as a Minister, a parliamentarian and a lawyer, that it is quite time we had a revision of Commonwealth legislation. It has become most difficult, in many cases, for anybody who is not specially skilled, to find out what the statute law is, and it should not be necessary to hunt through a large number of volumes in order to discover it. We ought to bring about not merely a collection of Acts of Parliament—which is what the edition of Messrs. McGrath and O'Sullivan amounts to—but a real consolidation. We ought to re-write some of our statutes, and start again with some of them. For example, if honorable members will read some of the legislation that is brought forward, they will see that a bill is passed to amend, say, the Customs Act 1901-1930. That means that in order to discover the act as it stands to-day, one may have to refer to any one of the volumes from 1901 to 1930. It would be far better if we started off again, and had a proper consolidation, after consideration of all our statutes by, as I suggest, a joint committee representing both branches of the legislature. It is proposed, in a message from another place, that a select committee be appointed representing both Houses, to consider and report upon any revision which should be made of the acts of the Commonwealth. My view is that we need something more than a collection; we should have a new edition of the statutes themselves. That could only be done by authority of the Parliament after proper inquiry, and I am now investigating the possibility of doing that. A work of that kind would be of real service, not only to the Parliament, but also to the community as a whole, and I think that it could be accomplished. Similar work was most successfully done in Victoria in 1915, and again in 1928. Complete new editions of the statutes of that State were issued.

Mr. BEASLEY.—What did the work cost in 1928?

Mr. LATHAM.—A good deal; but I think that we could handle the matter on a much less expensive basis. The State laws deal with matters which require considerably more investigation and research than most subjects of Commonwealth legislation. Commonwealth statutes, speaking generally, can be considered by themselves and without reference to possible effects upon the common law. If one considers the consolidation of the statutes relating to trusts, real property and the like, one at once gets into highly technical branches of the law where one must undertake extensive research before it is safe to touch the acts. The task of consolidating Commonwealth statutes is much simpler to a lawyer than that of consolidating State acts. This matter, however, is now under consideration.

If honorable members were prepared to assist on a committee of the kind that I have indicated, in co-operation with officers of my department, it would mean, possibly, the appointment of two further officers. That might not meet with general approval, but I assure all honorable members that the officers in my department have to work very hard indeed. Some honorable members opposite are aware of the strain imposed upon them when Parliament is sitting. In my opinion they are overworked, and there would be ample justification for the appointment of two additional officers to collaborate with members of this Parliament who may be prepared to devote themselves to a work that would not be spectacular, but which would be most useful. In that way real service could be rendered to the community. The work would occupy a considerable time; I should say that it could not be accomplished in less than two years. My intention at the present time is to see whether it is possible, having regard to the cost and other considerations, to consolidate the statutes, and simply present the existing provisions of the law in an up-to-date and convenient form, without altering the substance of the law. If that were done, it would not involve a long parliamentary debate. If we had a report from a committee of qualified members that the

statutes as consolidated contained amendments in form, and not in the substantial provisions of the legislation, I should hope that honorable members would accept the consolidation as a whole, as has been done elsewhere. There should be no debate on the substance of the statutes. If, however, the work were not done on that basis, and if honorable members in either branch of the legislature were to seek, when a consolidation was being made, to alter the substance of the law, it would of course be an interminable task. If it is found that this is a practicable scheme, I hope to appeal to honorable members for their support in an effort to obtain a really new edition of the Commonwealth statute law. The matrices of the principal acts have been preserved by the Government Printer, and it would be a relatively inexpensive matter, because many of the acts would require hardly any amendment. Then, instead of having to deal with 29 volumes of acts, three volumes only might embrace the whole of the statute law. If that proposal is ultimately adopted by the Government, and meets with general support in Parliament, honorable members being willing to accept the consolidation *en bloc*, as was done in Victoria twice recently, without discussion on the substance as distinct from the form of the legislation, the position would be this: The edition that has been brought out by Messrs. McGrath and O'Sullivan would have an uninterrupted sale for a reasonable period, and, later, there would be an official edition which would not merely comprise a collection of the statutes, but would also effect a real improvement in their presentation. The subject of the cost will be examined, but I approach the matter from the stand-point that it is the duty of the law department to do its best to present the statute law of the Commonwealth in the most convenient and intelligible form.

Mr. BLAKELEY (Darling) [9.56].—During to-day's sitting, the Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) waxed almost eloquent, and imported a good deal of feeling into an otherwise chilly speech, when he informed the members of this committee that he intended to administer the Crimes Act to the letter with regard to the deportation of certain citizens.

Mr. LATHAM.—I did not mention that subject.

Mr. BLAKELEY.—The Attorney-General was asked a question concerning the Crimes Act in its application to deportation.

Mr. LATHAM.—No, as to the prosecution of landlords.

Mr. BLAKELEY.—That matter is bound up, as the Attorney-General knows, with the provisions for the deportation of persons who are refused the right to hold certain meetings, and who, because of holding such meetings, possibly find themselves liable to deportation. The Minister for the Interior (Mr. Parkhill), however, did not display the cold demeanour of the Attorney-General. He rolled towards the table in the centre of this chamber, and gleefully said: "We have deported 53 up to date, and they are going daily." The Minister added that he hoped to "nail" a further batch.

Mr. AROHDALE PARKHILL.—I said nothing of the kind.

Mr. BLAKELEY.—I appreciate the Minister waxing eloquent—

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bell).—The honorable member has discussed the demeanour of two Ministers at some length, and I now ask him to address himself to the subject before the Chair.

Mr. BLAKELEY.—Honorable members opposite have lived on deportation, and the threat of it, for a long time, and now they are carrying out the policy which they espoused and voted for during the passage of the Crimes Act.

The CHAIRMAN.—Order! I ask the honorable member to confine his remarks to the department now under consideration.

Mr. BLAKELEY.—The Crimes Act and the Immigration Act are administered by different departments.

Mr. LATHAM.—The Crimes Act is administered by me, and the Immigration Act by the Minister for the Interior.

Mr. BLAKELEY.—There we have cause and effect. It might also be stated that the services of certain officers of the Customs Department are also used in con-

nexion with the administration of this legislation. I am discussing this subject now because the Department of the Attorney-General administers the provisions of the Crimes Act, which may ultimately lead to deportation. I am apprehensive of the result of the secret manner in which this Government is giving effect to our deportation laws. I realize that the Crimes Act is the law, though that does not necessarily mean that it is a moral law.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member may not criticize an act of Parliament in this way except on a proposal for its amendment or repeal.

Mr. BLAKELEY.—Then I shall not continue to associate morality with the Government. I have had some experience of the administration of our deportation laws, but during the régime of the Scullin Government no citizens of this country were deported for political reasons. Political deportation has always been a weapon used exclusively by anti-Labour governments. Honorable members opposite are accustomed to fight elections on such parrot-crys as "Down with communism", "Deport the reds", and so on, and I fear that the younger and more unsophisticated members of the parties opposite are pressing their older and more experienced political colleagues to give the fullest possible effect to our deportation legislation. I have made it clear on many occasions that, while the Scullin Government was in office, persons who were found guilty of dealing in dope, and of trafficking in opium or cocaine, together with those engaged in white slave traffic, or other criminal practices which made them a menace to society, were deported only after they had been convicted of offences in the courts. It is strange that men have preached sedition and have advocated the overthrow of the Constitution by violence in Hyde Park, London, for twenty years and have still been protected by the London police from attacks by more patriotic citizens. It is only in ultra-patriotic dominions such as Australia during the régime of governments such as that now in office, that the madness of those who desire the deportation of political opponents is satisfied.

**The CHAIRMAN.**—The honorable member is again stretching to the limits the latitude which the Chair can allow.

**Mr. BLAKELEY.**—I wish to express my entire disapproval of the administration of the Crimes Act by this Government. It is wrong that persons who had been encouraged to come to Australia by anti-Labour governments should, after a few years, be gleefully hunted by such governments back to the country of their birth. The procedure adopted in such cases is as follows:—A complaint made secretly against a particular person is investigated by officers of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch, and maybe by detectives of the Customs Department and members of the State police forces. Subsequently the individual marked out for slaughter is the subject of a departmental inquiry. Reports are then made to the Minister, who determines whether the individual concerned shall or shall not be deported, and there is no appeal from the Minister's decision.

**Mr. HUTCHIN.**—Did not the Government with which the honorable member was associated administer the law in that way?

**Mr. BLAKELEY.**—Not in respect to political offences. The only persons deported by the previous administration were those found guilty of trafficking in dopes or of indulging in other criminal practices. The deportation of political opponents is carried out only by governments which desire to get rid of their political opponents. As honorable members know very well, I hold no brief for Communists. I have no time for them. I do say, however, that all the British dominions should accept the principle that so long as men do not break laws of the kind that I have mentioned they should enjoy freedom of speech. There is less freedom of speech in Australia, when governed by other than Labour Governments, than in England itself. In the heart of the Empire, at Hyde Park, London, almost in the shadow of the King's residence, sedition, revolution, and the overthrow of constitutional government by violence are advocated every Sunday without interference by the police, whereas in Australia men who offend an anti-Labour Government are taken secretly

and deported from this country, and there is no appeal against their punishment.

**Mr. LATHAM.**—That is not so, as the honorable member should know.

**Mr. BLAKELEY.**—The Labour movement is opposed to the laws of this country being used for political purposes, and to give vent to the political spleen of the party in power.

Proposed vote agreed to.

#### DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

Proposed vote, £45,000.

**Mr. BLAKELEY** (Darling) [10.13].—I desire now to deal with the subject of unemployment relief in the Federal Capital Territory. On assuming office as Minister for Home Affairs in the last Government, I found that little consideration had been shown to the unemployed in this Territory by the Bruce-Page Government. I immediately instituted a system whereby men would be given sufficient unemployed relief to maintain themselves and their families in reasonable comfort. Eventually the Scullin Government arranged that all married men would be given full-time employment for the last nine months of the financial year and single men full time for from four to six months from January to June this year. Until I vacated office on the 6th January last that policy was in operation, and the unemployed were able to find work for their maintenance. That arrangement ceased, however, almost immediately on a Nationalist Government coming into power with the avowed object of saving money. If it has achieved its object, it has done so at the cost of the unemployed workers of this Territory. The statement of the Minister for Health (Mr. Marr) the other day that there were no unemployed in Canberra, shows that he knows nothing about the matter, for there are at least 500 men unemployed here, about half of whom are married men, some of whom have as many as six or seven children. The Minister for the Interior (Mr. Parkhill) said that there is no dole in Canberra. That is technically correct, because a man who does not earn sufficient to give him the living which the

dole provides is given a ticket authorizing him to work for a period long enough to enable him to earn what he would receive if paid the dole. A married man is given one week's work in three weeks; but after about 19s. has been taken for rent and, perhaps, electric light, and 5s. a week for transportation, his net earnings amount to about £3 4s. 4d. for the three weeks. That is to say, a married man receives about £1 1s. a week to keep himself and his wife and children. Honorable members know that it is impossible for people to be decently clothed and properly fed under such conditions. The position of single men is even worse; they are entitled to receive up to 8s. 6d. a week. Since many of them do not get more than one week's work in five or six weeks, their aggregate earnings fall short of 8s. 6d. a week, in which case they are given a ticket to work for about three and a half hours, in order to enable them to earn that amount. To earn that 8s. 6d. they invariably have to incur an expense of 1s. for transport. While I was Minister for Home Affairs complaints were made that the amount of 9s. 1d. per week then provided was inadequate. Incidentally, it was higher than the rate paid in New South Wales, under a Labour government. The matter was referred to the Commonwealth Health Department, and the report on the subject is on the files of the Department of the Interior. It is apparent that even then the rate provided did not allow an unemployed person to throw away many crusts or ends of meat. Now those unfortunates are expected to maintain themselves on a ration that has been reduced by one-eighth.

The Government should realise its responsibilities and make further work available in Canberra. There is plenty of developmental work of a reproductive nature which requires doing. I mention re-afforestation and top-dressing roads, so making them of a permanent nature and minimizing maintenance. That would provide profitable employment for single and married men.

When the Government of which I was a member was in office, a gentleman was deputed to visit the schools in the Territory to inquire whether scholars were adequately clad and shod. When it

was discovered that some children were lacking in this respect, a lady would visit the homes of the parents concerned and ascertain whether it was impossible for them to purchase what was required. Many hundreds of yards of flannel and cloth, and many hundred pairs of boots, were provided for children so situated. All that has been done away with in order that the budget for the Federal Capital city might be balanced.

It would appear that something like £40,000 is to be withheld from the unemployed in Canberra this year compared with the amount that was made available during the last financial year. The amount of sustenance now granted is scarcely sufficient to keep body and soul together. The 500 unemployed in Canberra, including approximately 250 married men who have perhaps 1,000 dependants, can afford only bread and meat and the roughest and barest other necessities of life. Single men are in a similarly deplorable position. The Government should recognize its responsibilities towards those who live in Canberra. State Governments assume responsibility for their citizens. Surely, with its comparatively small responsibility in the Federal Capital, the Commonwealth Government can also do something to help its unfortunate unemployed.

**Mr. ARCHDALE PARKHILL** (Warringah—Minister for the Interior) [10.25].—If the facts were as stated by the honorable member for Darling (Mr. Blakeley) there would be some ground for his utterances. But the facts are entirely contrary to the statement made by the honorable gentleman. An examination of the Estimates discloses that £37,000 was spent on sustenance in Canberra during the financial year when the honorable gentleman was in office, and that an equal sum will be expended for that purpose this year. There is also a further sum of £15,000 on the Estimates for the current year, to be provided out of the £600,000 that is being made available by this Government for unemployment relief. It must be borne in mind that there are now fewer unemployed in the Territory than when my predecessor was in office. The honorable gentleman was spending on peripatetics from New South Wales,

a great deal of money which should have gone to our local unemployed. He had not the courage to have the itinerants removed from the Territory.

**Mr. FORDE.**—Did the honorable gentleman have them turned out?

**Mr. ARCHDALE PARKHILL.**—Yes, I had no compunction about it. Those people have no right to sustenance that should have gone to our local unemployed. That disposes of the story which the honorable gentleman was so long in telling. I have given facts, not fiction.

The honorable gentleman declared that the unemployed of this city are denied adequate clothing, and are not being supported so well as when his Government was in office. I give the honorable member credit for not making misstatements deliberately in an endeavour to deceive, but I advise him to ascertain the facts before speaking on these matters. Had he made investigations he would have discovered that £500 has been paid to the Canberra Relief Fund, of which Colonel Goodwin is president, for the purpose of clothing those who were unable to buy the garments necessary to protect a person during winter in the Territory. Those facts clearly dispose of the suggestion that the unemployed of Canberra have not been adequately provided with necessary clothing.

A considerable sum of money is provided in the Works Estimates for the current year and, when the Patents Office is removed to Canberra, a great deal more work will be available. The files of my department reveal that the honorable member's Government agreed to transfer the Patents Office to Canberra, but later countermanded the instructions that were issued. The taking of the census will provide still further work, and other proposals that will be disclosed later will provide an accession of business activity in the building and associated trades, and give employment to skilled artisans as well as manual labourers. I have no hesitation in saying that during the current financial year infinitely more work will be available for the workers in Canberra than was the case last year, or for many years past.

**Mr. MAKIN** (Hindmarsh) [10.31].—I desire to direct attention to one aspect of administration—I refer to the method of computing cost-of-living figures—which I think should receive consideration. Recently I asked the Minister if a new basis for computing cost-of-living figures was to be instituted by the Statistician's office, and I was informed that certain amendments had been suggested and were being effected. What those suggestions are I have not been able to ascertain clearly. I was advised that if I referred to the publication entitled *Wages and Prices*, I might be able to obtain the information desired. Unfortunately, the latest available copy of the document mentioned is for November, 1931.

**Mr. ARCHDALE PARKHILL.**—Should not this matter have been discussed on the estimates for the Treasury? It belongs to that department.

**The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bell).**—I have been looking through the Estimates for this department and I can find no reference to the matter mentioned by the honorable member for Hindmarsh; but figures relating to it are to be found in the department of the Treasury. Accordingly the honorable member should have discussed it when the Treasury estimates were before the committee.

**Mr. BEASLEY** (West Sydney) [10.34].—I should like the Minister to inform the committee of the reason for the change in the name of the department. For many years it was known as the Department of Home Affairs. Was the change made because the old name was not quite "toney" enough for the Minister (Mr. Parkhill) or did he feel that he would like to make a fresh start in Commonwealth activities with a new name? What is the real story behind the Government's action in making the change? I ask this question because I understand that these changes are not made without some expense due to alteration of records, files, &c., and the preparation of new stationery. I think the money which this change must have involved could have been spent in some more profitable way, but I shall be much obliged if the

Minister will give us the reasons for the alteration.

**Mr. GEORGE LAWSON** (Brisbane) [10.35].—I direct attention to item £620, under the heading "Miscellaneous" for the maintenance of federal members' rooms in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart, and I should like to know what proportion of this sum is set aside for the maintenance of the federal members' rooms in Brisbane. The accommodation there is totally inadequate for the number of members who have occasion to use the rooms. In addition to the eight Queensland members of the House of Representatives and the six senators, other federal members visit Brisbane frequently and make use of the accommodation. As only three small rooms are available, at times much inconvenience is caused to members.

**Mr. BEASLEY**.—Why not suggest getting accommodation in the new Commonwealth Bank building in Brisbane?

**Mr. GEORGE LAWSON**.—I understand that when the Commonwealth Bank was being built in Brisbane it was the intention of the Government of the day to allot a certain space in it for the accommodation of federal members. Some improvement is urgently needed. There are times when constituents wish to interview Queensland members at the federal rooms, and not infrequently they are obliged to sit in one of the rooms and allow other members and perhaps visitors to hear private business being discussed. I hope that the Minister will take steps to provide more spacious and better rooms for the federal members in Brisbane. I am speaking for practically the whole of the Queensland members, because we have discussed this matter on more than one occasion and have decided to make overtures to the Minister in the hope that more accommodation would be provided in Brisbane.

**Mr. ARCHDALE PARKHILL** (Warringah—Minister for the Interior) [10.38].—The matter mentioned by the honorable member for Brisbane (Mr. George Lawson) will be taken into consideration. At present the federal members rooms are in the Bris-

bane Post Office building and no rental is charged for them. With reference to the change in the name of the department, about which the honorable member for West Sydney (Mr. Beasley) appears to be so much concerned, there is really no mystery about it at all. The present department includes home affairs, works, transport and railways, and while the former designation was quite suitable when the other departments were under separate Ministers it was considered desirable, when the amalgamation of departments took place, to change the name to the Department for the Interior, which is the designation of similar departments in all the dominions.

Proposed vote agreed to.

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE.

*Proposed vote, £479,230.*

**Mr. BEASLEY** (West Sydney) [10.39].—I should like some information from the Government with regard to Garden Island. I understand that some time ago a committee was appointed to inquire into and report upon the amalgamation of Garden Island and Cockatoo Island. At one stage of the work of this committee, it became known to the employees at Garden Island that there was a possibility of the activities there ceasing, and the whole of the works transferred to Cockatoo Island. That caused the employees much concern, and I, in common with other honorable members, was approached by them with a view to putting to the Government their case for the retention of the works at Garden Island. I do not know what is the intention of the Government as the result of the report of the committee, but statements have appeared in the press and replies to questions have been given in this House which make it appear that it is proposed to lease Cockatoo Island Dockyard to any one who cares to tender for it. If that is the policy of the Government, then, naturally, one would think that the works at Garden Island would be retained. I ask the Minister to let the employees at Garden Island know exactly where they stand, and give them, at least, some security in regard to their employment.

I come now to the Department of Defence, the expenditure in which is more reckless than it is in the case of any other government activity. The department seems to think that it has licence to spend whatever it likes.

**Mr. E. F. HARRISON.**—Is the honorable member referring to the department as a whole, or to one branch of it?

**Mr. BEASLEY.**—I am speaking of my knowledge of the departmental files, and to the disposal of large stocks of copper, brass, electrical fittings, and other things which were of no further use to the department.

**Mr. E. F. HARRISON.**—That would be in connexion with the naval branch.

**Mr. BEASLEY.**—A good deal of the expenditure is incurred by the Defence Department. I should like the Minister to explain the item of contingencies, £2,020, under the heading of the Royal Australian Naval College; contingencies, £6,000, under the heading of Royal Australian Naval Reserve; and contingencies, £10,400, under the heading of Naval Establishment. All these items of expenditure are for two months. The department seems to be able to bunch under these headings many items of expenditure which probably, if known to honorable members and the public generally, would not be tolerated for a moment. Under the sub-heading of "Volunteers" there is also an item of £15,000 for general contingencies and services. I should like the Minister to supply the information that I have asked for.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR** (Dalley) [10.46].—I wish to deal with the item relating to volunteers, and the amount that has been expended, and to some extent, wasted, in connexion with the drill halls in and around the city of Sydney. I have had brought under my notice the fact that the drill hall at Rozelle has become a public nuisance, because of the din that takes place there night and day at the instance of the recruiting officer or officer in charge. It seems to be his task to gather a motley army around him. He is apparently encouraging lads to take part in rifle practice with a view to inducing them later to join up as volunteers. It

seems remarkable that money should be wasted in this way, when all other Estimates are being pruned and every attempt is being made to save money at the expense, very often, of the lower paid public servants. It is quite unnecessary to undertake lavish expenditure in connexion with the miniature rifle ranges at these particular drill halls. I understand that, on one occasion, the firing practice that took place at the drill hall at Rozelle became such a nuisance that adjacent property owners complained, and as a result of a consultation with the defence officials in Sydney, an arrangement was made to limit the hours of firing to one or two nights a week. Because of the excessive din caused by indoor firing, the target was placed outside the hall. Evidently with a view to encouraging prospective recruits, the recruiting officer is now allowing the lads to indulge in rifle practice at all hours of the day and night. The target which was moved outside at considerable expense has now been shifted indoors. Despite the arrangement that was made between the department and the local residents to limit the extent of the rifle firing, when the officer in charge was approached on the matter, he stated that the more firing that took place the better for his purpose. That is not a very effective means of building up the defence forces! If that is considered to be necessary, and if the country is to be put to the expense of establishing these rifle ranges with a view to inducing boys to join the volunteer army, at least some check should be placed on the expenditure. The Government should seriously consider whether it ought to continue the present practice of turning drill halls into miniature rifle ranges for the purpose of inducing youths to join up as volunteers, not only because of the waste that results at a time when economy is being preached, but also on account of the nuisance that is caused to people who own property in the vicinity of the drill halls concerned.

**Mr. BEASLEY** (West Sydney) [10.51].—I have received from representatives of our movement in Lithgow, advice to the effect that the employees of the small arms factory there are being dismissed at the rate of nine a week, because the work in which the factory is principally

engaged, that of manufacturing shearing combs and cutters, is being seriously interfered with by reason of the dumping of those articles in Australia by overseas manufacturers. I may mention that before this factory engaged in this class of manufacture, the price of these articles was much higher than that charged for those locally produced. Therefore, this factory has valuably assisted those who are engaged in the shearing industry, by providing them with necessary tools of trade at a lower price. Having pioneered this class of work, and thus made possible the use of plant and machinery that otherwise would have rusted in idleness, the continuance of the factory's operations ought not to be jeopardized and its employees forced into unemployment by permission being given to other manufacturers from whom the market was withdrawn to dump their goods in Australia. In these days, when employment is the factor uppermost in the minds of public men, every opportunity should be afforded to this factory to provide the maximum amount of it. I put it to the Minister, that representations should be made by his department to the Customs Department, urging the necessity for maintaining that measure of protection which the industry formerly enjoyed, so that these men will be kept in employment. Our representatives are naturally much concerned at the dismissals that have taken and are taking place. They have requested me to raise the question here at the earliest available opportunity, with a view to seeing whether action cannot be taken to overcome the difficulty. These men have rendered valuable service to this country by turning out articles that are needed in primary production, and I hope that the Minister will use every means at his disposal to see that they are enabled to follow this occupation.

**Mr. FRANCIS** (Moreton—Assistant Minister) [10.55].—The honorable member for West Sydney (Mr. Beasley) has expressed the fear that the establishment at Garden Island may be transferred to Cockatoo Island. On that matter I have met a deputation representative of all the organizations on Garden Island. The representations made by that deputation have been carefully considered by the Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce)

and myself. A decision has not yet been arrived at; the matter is still under consideration. There is no cause at this moment for the anxiety that is felt by the honorable member.

I emphatically refute the charge made by the honorable member of a lack of economy in the department. Its expenditure has been cut to bedrock, and there is no room for any lack of economy even if the officers were so inclined.

**Mr. BEASLEY.**—I speak only from my own experience.

**Mr. FRANCIS.**—I am pleased to say that that has not been my experience during the limited period that I have been privileged to be associated with the department. The department has shown the most rigorous economy in administration. The vote in 1929-30 was £4,104,223.

**Mr. RIORDAN.**—Too much.

**Mr. FRANCIS.**—Apparently that was the opinion held by the Government which the honorable member supported, because in the following year it reduced the vote to £3,667,836, and next year it was further reduced to £3,095,919. The estimate for this year is practically the same amount. This has been rendered necessary by the unfortunate financial position in which the nation finds itself. I hope that the vote has now reached bedrock.

The honorable member referred to the vote for general contingencies in connexion with the Royal Naval College. If he will refer to the general estimates for this year, at page 134, he will find that the figure which he mentioned is included in the £7,600 which is there provided for contingencies. Those contingencies comprise general expenses and upkeep, including outfit and maintenance of cadet midshipmen, travelling expenses, fares, freight and transport, rations, uniforms, equipment and apparatus, stores, fuel and light, grant to cadets' fund, stationery and books, and sundry other items. The contingencies for the Royal Naval Reserve will be found on page 140. They embrace general expenses, including rations, clothing, fares, freight, travelling expenses, and all other expenditure incidental to the Royal Naval Reserve

(Sea-going). The contingencies for naval establishments will be found on page 146; they embrace similar items.

I shall bring to the notice of the Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce) the complaint voiced by the honorable member for Dalley (Mr. Rosevear) in regard to the use of drill halls for rifle practice.

The honorable member for West Sydney also drew attention to the allegation that products similar to those that are being made at the small arms factory at Lithgow, are being dumped in Australia. If the honorable member will furnish me with particulars I shall place them before the Minister for Trade and Customs. I have visited Lithgow, where I was impressed by the excellence of the articles manufactured there and by the industry and efficiency displayed by the management and employees. The Government this year increased last year's vote by £5,800 for the purpose of carrying on the activities of the small arms factory. The honorable member for Macquarie (Mr. John Lawson) has been very energetic in his endeavours to ensure that everything possible will be done to keep the staff of the Small Arms Factory continued in employment.

**Mr. JENNINGS** (South Sydney) [11.1].—I should like to have a statement from the Minister as to what is being done to encourage rifle clubs. Since the discontinuance of compulsory military training these clubs have become even more important than formerly. Their membership includes many returned soldiers, and they are conducted on an entirely voluntary basis. Does the Minister consider that the amount shown in the Estimates is adequate in the interests of society?

**Mr. FRANCIS** (Moreton—Assistant Minister) [11.2].—Like the honorable member, I am very anxious to see that the vote for the assistance of rifle clubs is adequate, having regard to the useful part they play in the defence of the country. Although financial conditions are difficult, the vote for this purpose is exactly the same this year as it was last year. I appreciate the usefulness of the rifle club movement. The part which they would probably play in the defence of Australia

were we attacked would, I am confident, be even more important than the part played by them during the last war. I am pleased that the vote has not been reduced.

Proposed vote agreed to.

#### DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND CUSTOMS.

*Proposed vote, £62,540.*

**Mr. RILEY** (Cook) [11.5].—This item makes provision for salaries and other expenses of the members of the Tariff Board. I feel that we should hesitate to approve of the expenditure of this amount, particularly in view of the reports being received from day to day from the Tariff Board. Those reports have for some time consistently advocated reductions in tariff duties. In its annual report issued in June, 1932, the board states—

During the year under review the board, after due consideration, recommended in the majority of cases against the retention of the increased duties that have been imposed by tariff resolutions since November, 1929.

The Government has practically stated its intention of following the Tariff Board's recommendations in their entirety. Parliament should, therefore, consider whether it is justified in maintaining the Tariff Board when its activities have become prejudicial to the interests of Australian industry. In its report, the board refers to the high cost of essential plant and materials in Australia, and states—

The board considers it necessary again to comment upon the disturbingly high cost in Australia of essential plant and raw materials. This is not done with any idea of disparaging local industry, but the board feels it incumbent upon it to continually lay emphasis on the prevailing high prices of essential products for the simple reason that, until such prices are materially reduced to meet the seriously reduced purchasing power of the community, neither the demand for the products nor employment can be effectively reconstituted.

Instead of the board framing its recommendations so as to bring about a reduction in the price of material, and in the volume of unemployment, it seems to be doing the exact opposite. I refer particularly to that portion of the board's report dealing with iron and steel pipes and tubing.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Bell).—The honorable member will not be in order in anticipating a discussion on a tariff item.

Mr. RILEY.—It is not my intention to anticipate anything, but I am within my rights, I think, in referring to this report of the Tariff Board.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member may refer to the usefulness or otherwise of the board, but he may not discuss an item included in the tariff schedule.

Mr. RILEY.—I submit that I am in order in touching upon the board's report on iron and steel pipes and tubing, seeing that the board has recently submitted recommendations dealing with those articles. The item in the Supply Bill covering contingencies may have to do with the cost of printing that report. If I am not permitted to discuss the matter now, when shall I have an opportunity of doing so? This appears to me to be an appropriate time when we are dealing with salaries and contingencies in connexion with the board.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member is not in order in discussing any recommendation of the board in respect to a specific industry.

Mr. RILEY.—The Tariff Board, in its annual report, referred to a number of matters, including iron and steel pipes and tubing. Surely honorable members are entitled to discuss matters referred to by the board.

The CHAIRMAN.—I am not prepared to argue with the honorable member; but I remind him that, if a discussion of the sort he desires were permitted in respect of one item, it would have to be permitted on the whole range of matters covered by the board's reports. Such a discussion would not be permissible on the Supply Bill.

Mr. RILEY.—I must disagree with your ruling, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member may disagree with my ruling only by submitting a formal motion of dissent in writing.

Mr. RILEY.—I move—

That the ruling of the Chairman be dis-  
sented from.

The CHAIRMAN.—The honorable member for Cook (Mr. Riley) has moved dissent from my ruling—"That it is not possible to discuss the contents of the annual report of the Tariff Board on an item of the Estimates." My ruling was that the honorable member must not discuss an item on the tariff schedule, thus anticipating the debate. The item of iron and steel pipes and tubing which he was proceeding to discuss, is included in the tariff schedule.

Mr. MAKIN.—I think that the Chairman's ruling unduly restricts the privileges of honorable members. In the schedule to this bill is an item providing for payments to be made to the Tariff Board, and portion of the money is probably appropriated for the printing of the annual report of the board which the honorable member for Cook (Mr. Riley) wishes to discuss. Surely he is in order in doing so. If he were discussing portion of the tariff schedule or individual reports of the board on certain items in the tariff schedule, I should say that the Chairman's ruling was perfectly sound, but I think that a ruling that an honorable member must not discuss the general report of the board upon its activities unduly restricts the committee in dealing with matters quite apart from the tariff schedule and concerning only the administration of the board.

The CHAIRMAN.—I have already said that I did not rule that the honorable member was not permitted to discuss the contents of the annual report of the Tariff Board. My ruling was that the honorable member must not discuss the item "pipes and tubes" contained in the tariff schedule. It is based on Standing Order 274 which reads—

No honorable member shall digress from the subject-matter of any question under discussion, nor anticipate the discussion of any other subject which appears on the notice-paper.

The tariff schedule being before honorable members, I rule that it is not possible on this Supply Bill to discuss any item contained in that schedule. A general discussion on the Tariff Board's report,

on its cost or on anything appertaining to that report is perfectly in order.

**Mr. RILEY.**—I submit that I am in order in discussing any matter raised in the annual report of the Tariff Board. If the ruling be sustained, honorable members will be permitted to discuss only that portion of the Tariff Board's report which is not in association with any item in the tariff schedule. The fullest opportunity should be given to discuss the contents of the board's report. I have already quoted a few paragraphs from the report, and desire to make some comment upon them, referring more to the industries affected than to any item in the schedule.

**Mr. BEASLEY.**—I have no desire to cut across the Chairman's ruling because the Chairman's method of handling questions before the committee gives honorable members generally a fairly free opportunity for discussion, but I am always fearful of restrictions of debate. I understand that the Chairman has ruled that it is competent to discuss anything contained in the annual report of the Tariff Board, but that it is not permissible to discuss anything that appears in a tariff schedule listed for later discussion in this chamber. Apparently, we can discuss the Tariff Board, and yet cannot do so.

**Mr. LATHAM.**—I have an acute recollection of an occasion when from the benches opposite, I supported the honorable member for Angas (Mr. Gabb) in an attempt to discuss the timber duties on the Estimates. I then submitted that the item on the Estimates providing for salaries for the Customs officers was there to enable those officers to administer the tariff, and that therefore, on the Estimates for the Customs Department, honorable members were entitled to discuss the whole of the tariff schedule. It was held on that occasion that as there was a tariff schedule on the business-paper, it was not open for honorable members on any other motion to discuss any item included in that schedule. The ruling of the Chairman on this occasion appears to be in accordance with the precedent then created.

Motion negatived.

**Mr. RILEY.**—One paragraph of the Tariff Board's report, under the heading "Tariff Reductions and Employment", reads—

The board has constantly had in mind that the prevailing very serious unemployment is bad for the financial, physical and moral condition of the community, and in all its deliberations has regarded it of vital importance that remunerative work should be found for the people.

Unfortunately, although the board professes a desire to see remunerative employment provided for our people, many of its recommendations have had the opposite effect. The manufacture of iron and steel tubes and pipes has been in progress for three or four months, during which over 1,000,000 feet of tubing has been produced. The local industry has been responsible for lowering the price of the overseas article by from 30 to 50 per cent., and its production has been encouraged by the fact that for over twelve years a deferred duty was included in the tariff schedule.

**The CHAIRMAN.**—I cannot allow the honorable gentleman to evade my ruling.

**Mr. RILEY.**—I must accept the decision of the Chair, but I ask the Government to afford the committee an early opportunity to discuss this item.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR** (Dalley) [11.22].—I recognize the need for a censorship board in order that film entertainment may be kept wholesome, but I draw attention to the recent prohibition by the Film Censorship Board of the exhibition of a Russian film depicting the developments under the five-year plan. We have to live in the world with the Russians, and we have to recognize that international antagonisms are promoted by the failure of different peoples to understand each other. I suppose no medium of international education surpasses the film. I understand that the film dealing with the five-year plan has been exhibited in Great Britain, and other parts of the British Empire, and was favorably commented upon by British newspapers. The Censorship Board, however, has refused to allow the film to be exhibited in Australia. If we are not to be entirely governed by press propaganda, we should at least have an opportunity to view this production, and,

obviously, a film which has been tolerated and even approved in other parts of the British Empire, is not likely to do any damage in this country. Whether or not we agree with the existing political régime in Russia, we should at least have an opportunity to learn first hand what is occurring there. We are interested in the development of the five-year plan, if not from a political point of view, at any rate from a trade point of view, because, as a primary-producing country, Russia will be one of our greatest competitors in the international market. If we allow ourselves to be fooled by press propaganda into a belief that the present form of government in Russia is collapsing and that its industrial development is chaotic, and are thus lulled into a false sense of security, we may find that we are under-rating the competition we shall have to meet in the markets of the world. We should have an opportunity to judge for ourselves whether the five-year plan is proving an economic success. If we deny to our people first-hand information on this subject, we are, instead of educating them, enveloping them with a cloak of ignorance. When the Censorship Board refuses to allow the people to become conversant with the progress of one of the greatest political and economic experiments in the history of mankind, it is becoming mischievous, and is not worth the expenditure provided for in these Estimates.

Proposed vote agreed to.

#### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

Proposed vote, £11,450, agreed to.

#### DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE.

Proposed vote, £44,400.

**Mr. BEASLEY** (West Sydney) [11.29].—The Department of Commerce administers the Navigation Act, and I desire to know whether anything can be done to prevent Australian steamship-owners from registering their vessels in other parts of the world in order to evade Australian wages and labour conditions. I refer particularly to a vessel known as the *Tarcoola*, recently purchased by Australian Tramp Steamers Limited, and its registration transferred to Hong Kong. The object of this transfer

is to enable the owners to evade paying the wages and providing the conditions laid down by the Arbitration Courts, and also to avoid compliance with our navigation laws. This vessel is manned by Australian seamen, whose wives and families live in Australia, and have to submit to Australian conditions in the matter of the cost of living and other matters such as taxation. This vessel, which, I am informed, is engaged partly on the Australian coast, also visits China and then Nauru to load phosphates, and returns to Australia. The Australian Seamen's Union has brought the matter under my notice, and I now bring it before honorable members to see if something cannot be done to prevent the owners of such vessels registering them outside the Commonwealth in order to avoid the provisions of the Navigation Act.

**Mr. HUTCHIN.**—Cannot the Australian seamen walk off the ship if they do not like it?

**Mr. BEASLEY.**—If they did that the honorable member and those with whom he is associated would be the first to condemn them for so doing. These seamen have asked me, as a representative of the port of Sydney, to bring the matter before Parliament and to obtain an expression of opinion from the Government on the subject. I am not foolish enough to advocate the course suggested by the honorable member for Denison (Mr. Hutchin), particularly when men in all branches of industry throughout Australia are living in fear of being thrown upon the unemployment market. This National Parliament, which should be concerned with the interests of those whose homes are here, should endeavour to prevent Australian steamship owners registering ships in Hong Kong and thereby evading their responsibilities to this country. Surely it is our duty to protect these people. I could discuss at some length the conditions forced upon certain Australian seamen by those controlling the Matson line. No men have suffered more during the depression than those engaged in the maritime industry, and I feel that those whose homes are in Australia should be treated on a more just and reasonable basis. I, therefore, ask the

Minister representing the Minister for Commerce (Mr. Hawker) to bring the matter under the notice of his colleagues. I trust that an effort will be made to see that these men receive the consideration to which they are entitled.

**Mr. ARCHDALE PARKHILL** (Warringah—Minister for the Interior) [11.36].—The Minister for Commerce (Mr. Hawker) is unavoidably absent this evening, but I shall see that the remarks of the honorable member for West Sydney (Mr. Beasley) are brought under his notice. I can assure him that they will receive the fullest consideration.

Proposed vote agreed to.

*Proposed vote*, Miscellaneous Services, £210, agreed to.

#### WAR SERVICES.

*Proposed vote*, £67,450.

**Mr. ROSEVEAR** (Dalley) [11.37].—I should like some information from the Minister with respect to the proposed expenditure of £900 for the compilation of history of Australia's share in the war. What amount has been expended, and how long will this expenditure continue?

**Mr. LATHAM**.—There will be a full opportunity to discuss that matter on the general Estimates.

Proposed vote agreed to.

*Proposed votes*—Commonwealth Railways, £70,940; Postmaster-General's Department, £1,220,810; Northern Territory, £17,010; Federal Capital Territory, £36,450; Papua, £7,000; Norfolk Island, £300; Refunds of Revenue, £300,000; Advance to Treasurer, £750,000; agreed to.

Preamble and title agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

#### DEFENCE BILL.

Bill received from the Senate, and (on motion by Mr. FRANCIS) read a first time.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

##### ORDER OF BUSINESS—THE TARIFF AND UNEMPLOYMENT.

**Mr. LATHAM** (Kooyong—Attorney-General) [11.42].—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

It is proposed to-morrow to deal with the Estimates of Additions, New Works, and Buildings, and I hope that honorable members will pass the bill speedily, as the sooner these estimates are approved, the earlier it will be possible to provide employment in accordance with the proposals made. To-morrow, I may also take an opportunity to introduce the High Commissioner Bill, and to make the second-reading speech on the measure. After that, we may proceed with the bills providing for special grants to certain States.

**Mr. RILEY** (Cooke) [11.44].—The Attorney-General has referred to the necessity for passing the Estimates of Additions, New Works, and Buildings as quickly as possible, with a view to providing employment; but simultaneously with this measure, the Government has taken action with respect to the tariff, the effect of which will be to throw many hundreds of men out of work. In my own electorate, a large number of important industries are seriously affected by the new tariff schedule, and I should be glad if the leader of the House would give some idea as to when an opportunity will be afforded for the discussion of matters which vitally affect not only important industries, but many hundreds of workers who will be thrown out of employment if the tariff proposals are ratified.

**Mr. LATHAM** (Kooyong—Attorney-General) [11.45].—It has already been pointed out that, speaking generally, reductions of duty do not become operative until the tariff is ratified by both branches of the legislature. That is a practical answer to some of the complaints that have been made. The Minister for Trade and Customs (Mr. Gullett) will arrive in Australia within little more than a fortnight, and provided important budget measures have been passed, the debate on the tariff will be taken up as soon as possible upon his return. Then the House will have the benefit of the whole of the proposals of the Ottawa Conference, and tariff matters can be considered in relation to the agreement proposed to be made between Great Britain and the other dominions.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 11.46 p.m.