



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 25, 1926
Thursday, 24 June 1926

TENTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

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

BRUCE-PAGE GOVERNMENT.

(From 9th February, 1923.)

Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs...	The Right Honorable Stanley Melbourne Bruce, P.C., M.C.
Treasurer Minister for Home and Territories	The Honorable Earle Christmas Grafton Page. Senator the Right Honorable George Foster Pearce, P.C. <i>succeeded by</i> Senator the Honorable Sir Thomas William Glasgow, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. (18th June, 1926).
Attorney-General	The Honorable Sir Littleton Ernest Groom, K.C.M.G., K.C. <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable John Greig Latham, C.M.G., K.C. (18th December, 1925).
Postmaster-General	The Honorable William Gerrard Gibson.
Minister for Trade and Customs	The Honorable Sir Austin Chapman, K.C.M.G., <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Herbert Edward Pratten (13th June, 1924).
Minister for Works and Railways	The Honorable Percy Gerald Stewart, <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable William Caldwell Hill (26th September 1924).
Minister for Defence	The Honorable Eric Kendall Bowden, <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Sir Neville Reginald Howse, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G. (16th January, 1925).
Minister for Health	The Honorable Sir Austin Chapman, K.C.M.G. <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Herbert Edward Pratten (13th June 1924), <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Sir Neville Reginald Howse, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G. (16th January, 1925).
Minister for Markets and Migration	Senator the Honorable Sir Victor Wilson, K.B.E. (16th January, 1925). <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Thomas Paterson (18th June, 1926).
Vice-President of the Executive Council...	The Honorable Llewelyn Atkinson. <i>succeeded by</i> Senator the Right Honorable George Foster Pearce, P.C.
Honorary Minister	Senator the Honorable Sir Victor Wilson, K.B.E., <i>succeeded by</i> The Honorable Charles William Clanan Marr, D.S.O., M.C., V.D. (16th January, 1925).
Honorary Minister	Senator the Honorable Thomas William Crawford.

THE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE.

TENTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION.

(To 30th June, 1926.)

President—Senator the Honorable Thomas Givens.

Chairman of Committees—Senator John Newlands, C.B.E.

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

1. Temporary Chairman of Committees. 2. Chosen by State Parliament, 18th December, 1925; 3. Death reported 13th January, 1926. 4. Resignation reported, 27th January, 1926. 5. Chosen by State Parliament, 24th February, 1926.

(From 1st July, 1926.)

President—Senator the Honorable John Newlands, C.B.E.

Chairman of Committees—Senator William Plain.

Abbott, Percy Phipps, C.M.G., V.D.	New South Wales
Andrew, David	Victoria
Barnes, John	Victoria
*Barwell, Hon. Sir Henry Newman, K.C.M.G.	South Australia
Carroll, William	Western Australia
Chapman, John Hedley	South Australia
Cox, Charles Frederick, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D.	New South Wales

THE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE—*continued.*

TENTH PARLIAMENT—*continued.*

Crawford, Hon. Thomas William	Queensland
¹ Duncan, Walter Leslie	New South Wales
Elliot, Harold Edward, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., D.C.M.	Victoria
¹ Findley, Hon. Edward	Victoria
Foll, Hattil Spencer	Queensland
Givens, Thomas	Queensland
Glasgow, Hon. Sir Thomas William, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D.	Queensland
Graham, Charles Montague	Western Australia
Grant, John	New South Wales
Greene, Hon. Walter Massy	New South Wales
Guthrie, James Francis	Victoria
Hayes, John Blyth C.M.G.	Tasmania
Hays, Hon. Herbert	Tasmania
Hoare, Albert Alfred	South Australia
¹ Kingsmill, Walter	Western Australia
Lynch, Hon. Patrick Joseph	Western Australia
McHugh, Charles Stephen	South Australia
McLachlan, Alexander John	South Australia
Millen, John Dunlop	Tasmania
Needham, Edward	Western Australia
Newlands, Hon. John, C.B.E.	South Australia
¹ Ogden, James Ernest	Tasmania
Payne, Herbert James Mockford	Tasmania
Pearce, Right Hon. George Foster, P.C.	Western Australia
Plain, William	Victoria
Reid, Matthew	Queensland
Sampson, Burford, D.S.O.	Tasmania
Thomas, Hon. Josiah	New South Wales
Thompson, William George	Queensland

1. Temporary Chairman of Committees.

THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

TENTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION.

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

Chairman of Committees—James Garfield Bayley.

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

THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—*continued.*

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TENTH PARLIAMENT—*continued.*

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

1. Death reported 13th January, 1926.

2. Temporary Chairman of Committees.

3. Elected 6th March, 1926.

THE COMMITTEES OF THE SESSION.

(FIRST PERIOD.)

(As at 30th June, 1926.)

ELECTORAL ACT—SELECT COMMITTEE.—Senator Graham, Senator Hoare, Senator Payne, Senator Plain, Mr. Bowden, Mr. Manning, Mr. E. Riley, and Mr. Thompson.

HOUSE.—The President, the Chairman of Committees, Senator Cox, Senator Drake-Brockman, Senator Graham, Senator Guthrie, Senator Hoare, the Speaker, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Foster, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Manning, Mr. Marr, and Mr. West.

LIBRARY.—The President, Senator Gardiner, Senator Sir Thomas Glasgow, Senator Graham, Senator Kingsmill, Senator Millen, Senator Ogden, the Speaker, Mr. Anstey, Mr. Bowden, Mr. Brennan, Mr. Duncan-Hughes, Mr. Hughes, Sir Elliot Johnson, Mr. Maxwell, and Mr. Watt.

PRINTING.—Senator Elliott, Senator Findley, Senator J. B. Hayes, Senator Grant, Senator McHugh, Senator Payne, Senator Thompson, Mr. Abbott, Mr. D. Cameron, Mr. Corser, Mr. R. Green, Mr. E. Riley, Mr. Scullin, and Mr. Watson.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.—Senator Foll, Senator Kingsmill, Senator Needham, Mr. Abbott, Mr. Gardner, Mr. Lister, Mr. Parker Moloney, Mr. Prowse, Mr. E. C. Riley, and Sir Granville Ryrie.

PUBLIC WORKS.—Senator Barnes, Senator Lynch, Senator Reid, Mr. Cook, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Lacey, Mr. Mackay, Mr. McGrath, and Mr. Seabrook.

SENATE.

DISPUTED RETURNS AND QUALIFICATIONS.—Senator Duncan, Senator Sir Thomas Glasgow, Senator J. Grant, Senator Guthrie, Senator Hoare, Senator Needham, and Senator Payne.

STANDING ORDERS.—The President, the Chairman of Committees, Senator Duncan, Senator Findley, Senator Foll, Senator Gardiner, Senator H. Hays, Senator Hoare, and Senator Kingsmill.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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

(As at 13th August, 1926.)

ELECTORAL ACT—SELECT COMMITTEE.—Senator Graham, Senator Hoare, Senator Sampson, Senator Thompson, Mr. Bowden, Mr. D. Cameron, Mr. E. Riley, and Mr. Thompson.

HOUSE.—The President, the Chairman of Committees, Senator Cox, Senator Graham, Senator Guthrie, Senator Hoare, Senator McLachlan, the Speaker, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Foster, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Manning, Mr. Marr, and Mr. West.

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

PRINTING.—Senator Andrew, Senator Findley, Senator J. B. Hayes, Senator Grant, Senator McHugh, Senator Elliot, Senator Thompson, Mr. Abbott, Mr. D. Cameron, Mr. Corser, Mr. R. Green, Mr. E. Riley, Mr. Scullin, and Mr. Watson.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.—Senator J. B. Hayes, Senator Kingsmill, Senator McHugh, Mr. Abbott, Mr. Gardner, Mr. Lister, Mr. Parker Moloney, Mr. Prowse, Mr. E. C. Riley, and Sir Granville Ryrie.

PUBLIC WORKS.—Senator Barnes, Senator Payne, Senator Reid, Mr. Cook, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Lacey, Mr. Mackay, Mr. McGrath, and Mr. Seabrook.

SENATE.

DISPUTED RETURNS AND QUALIFICATIONS.—Senator Duncan, Senator J. Grant, Senator Guthrie, Senator Hoare, Senator Needham, and Senator Payne.

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

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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

THE ACTS OF THE SESSION.

(FIRST PERIOD).

ALIENS REGISTRATION ACT SUSPENSION ACT (No. 17 OF 1926)—

An Act to suspend the Operation of the *Aliens Registration Act* of 1920.

APPROPRIATION ACT 1925-26 (No. 1 OF 1926)—

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

APPROPRIATION ACT 1926-27 (No. 52 OF 1926)—

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

APPROPRIATION (WORKS AND BUILDINGS) ACT 1926-27 (No. 30 OF 1926)—

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

AUDIT ACT (No. 18 OF 1926)—

An Act to Amend the *Audit Act* 1901-1924.

CANNED FRUITS EXPORT CHARGES ACT (No. 41 OF 1926)—

An Act to impose charges upon the Export of Canned Fruits.

CANNED FRUITS EXPORTS CONTROL ACT (No. 40 OF 1926)—

An Act relating to the Export of Canned Fruits and for other purposes.

COTTON BOUNTY ACT (No. 51 OF 1926)—

An Act to provide for the Payment of a Bounty on the Production of Seed, Cotton and Cotton Yarn.

COMMERCE (TRADE DESCRIPTIONS) ACT (No. 37 OF 1926)—

An Act to amend section 15 of the *Commerce (Trade Descriptions) Act* 1905.

COMMONWEALTH CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT (No. 22 OF 1926)—

An Act to amend the *Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act* 1904-1921.

CRIMES ACT (No. 9 OF 1926)—

An Act to amend the *Crimes Act* 1914-1915.

CUSTOMS TARIFF ACT (No. 26 OF 1926)—

An Act relating to Duties of Customs.

CUSTOMS TARIFF ACT (No. 2) (No. 45 OF 1926)—

An Act relating to Duties of Customs.

CUSTOMS TARIFF (NEW ZEALAND PREFERENCE) ACT (No. 38 OF 1926)—

An Act to ratify an Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Dominion of New Zealand in relation to Preferential Duties of Customs.

CUSTOMS TARIFF (PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA PREFERENCE) ACT (No. 6 OF 1926)—

An Act relating to Customs Preference on Goods the Produce of Papua and on Goods the Produce of the Territory of New Guinea.

DEFENCE EQUIPMENT ACT (No. 25 OF 1926)—

An Act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund the sum of One million two hundred and fifty thousand pounds for Naval Construction and for a Reserve for Defence.

DEVELOPMENT AND MIGRATION ACT (No. 29 OF 1926)—

An Act relating to Development and Migration.

DRIED FRUITS ADVANCES ACT (No. 13 OF 1926)—

An Act to amend the *Dried Fruits Advances Act* 1924.

EXCISE TARIFF ACT (No. 28 OF 1926)—

An Act relating to duties of Excise.

THE ACTS OF THE SESSION—continued.

FEDERAL AID ROADS ACT (No. 46 OF 1926)—

An Act to authorize the execution by the Commonwealth of Agreements between the Commonwealth and the States in relation to the Construction of Federal Aid Roads, and to make provision for the carrying out thereof.

GRAFTON TO SOUTH BRISBANE RAILWAY ACT (No. 34 OF 1926)—

An Act to ratify the Agreement made between the Commonwealth of Australia, Norris Garrett Bell, James Fraser, James Walker Davidson, and the State of New South Wales, to ratify the Agreement made between the Commonwealth of Australia, Norris Garrett Bell, James Fraser, James Walker Davidson, and the State of Queensland, and to amend the *Grafton to South Brisbane Railway Act* 1924.

INCOME TAX ACT (No. 49 OF 1926)—

An Act to impose Taxes upon Incomes.

INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT (BONUS SHARES) ACT (No. 12 OF 1926)—

An Act to validate certain Refunds of Income Tax and for other purposes.

INVALID AND OLD-AGE PENSIONS ACT (No. 44 OF 1926)—

An Act to amend sections sixteen and twenty-one of the *Invalid and Old-age Pensions Act* 1908–1925.

INVALID AND OLD-AGE PENSIONS APPROPRIATION ACT (No. 42 OF 1926)—

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

JUDICIARY ACT (No. 39 OF 1926)—

An Act to amend the *Judiciary Act* 1903–1920.

LAND TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 50 OF 1926)—

An Act to amend section five of the *Land Tax Assessment Act* 1910–1924.

LOAN ACT (No. 1) (No. 33 OF 1926)—

An Act to authorize the Raising and Expenditure of certain sums of money.

MATERNITY ALLOWANCE ACT (No. 48 OF 1926)—

An Act to amend section six of the *Maternity Allowance Act* 1912.

NAVIGATION ACT (No. 8 OF 1926)—

An Act to amend the *Navigation Act* 1912–1925.

NEW GUINEA ACT (No. 15 OF 1926)—

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

NORTHERN AUSTRALIA ACT (No. 16 OF 1926)—

An Act to make further provision for the Development and Government of the Northern Territory of Australia and for other purposes.

NORTHERN TERRITORY (ADMINISTRATION) ACT (No. 19 OF 1926)—

An Act to amend the *Northern Territory (Administration) Act* 1910.

oil AGREEMENT ACT (No. 14 OF 1926)—

An Act to approve an Agreement made between His Majesty's Government of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company Limited and for other purposes.

ODNADATTA TO ALICE SPRINGS RAILWAY ACT (No. 3 OF 1926)—

An Act to provide for the Extension of the Port Augusta Railway by the Construction of a Railway to Alice Springs.

PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA BOUNTIES ACT (No. 7 OF 1926)—

An Act to provide for the Payment of Bounties on certain Goods the Produce of the Territory of Papua and on certain Goods the Produce of the Territory of New Guinea.

PETROLEUM PROSPECTING ACT (No. 1) (No. 5 OF 1926)—

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

PETROLEUM PROSPECTING ACT (No. 2) (No. 31 OF 1926)—

An Act to amend the *Petroleum Prospecting Act* 1926.

POWER ALCOHOL BOUNTY ACT (No. 11 OF 1926)—

An Act to provide for the Payment of Bounty on the Manufacture of Power Alcohol.

THE ACTS OF THE SESSION—*continued.*

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PRECIOUS METALS PROSPECTING ACT (No. 4 of 1926)—

An Act relating to the Encouragement of Prospecting for Precious Metals.

RAILWAYS (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) AGREEMENT ACT (No. 2 of 1926)—

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 South Australia.

REFERENDUM (CONSTITUTION ALTERATION) ACT (No. 23 of 1926)—

An Act to amend the *Referendum (Constitution Alteration) Act 1906–1919.*

SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY ENDOWMENT ACT (No. 21 of 1926)—

An Act to constitute a Fund to be utilized for the purposes of Scientific and Industrial Research.

SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY RESEARCH ACT (No. 20 of 1926)—

An Act to amend the *Institute of Science and Industry Act 1920.*

SEAT OF GOVERNMENT (ADMINISTRATION) ACT (No. 32 of 1926)—

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

SHALE OIL BOUNTY ACT (No. 36 of 1926)—

An Act to amend the *Shale Oil Bounty Act 1917–1923.*

STATES LOAN ACT (No. 35 of 1926)—

An Act to amend the *States Loan Act 1925.*

SUPPLY ACT (No. 1) 1926–27 (No. 24 of 1926)—

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

WAR PENSIONS APPROPRIATION ACT (No. 43 of 1926)—

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

WAR SERVICE HOMES ACT (No. 47 of 1926)—

An Act to amend section fifty of the *War Service Homes Act 1918–1925.*

WAR TIME PROFITS TAX ASSESSMENT ACT (No. 27 of 1926)—

An Act to amend the *War Times Profits Tax Assessment Act 1924* and for other purposes.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA GRANT ACT (No. 10 of 1926)—

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.

BILLS OF THE SESSION NOT PASSED INTO LAW. (FIRST PERIOD).

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS REPATRIATION BILL.

COMMONWEALTH WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION BILL.

*CONSTITUTION ALTERATION (ESSENTIAL SERVICES) BILL.

*CONSTITUTIONAL ALTERATION (INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE) BILL.

†INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT BILL.

PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS BILL.

STATES GRANTS BILL.

* Passed by both Houses and awaiting a referendum of the people.
† Leave to bring in granted, but bill not presented.

THE PARLIAMENT CONVENED

TENTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION.

(*Gazette No. 107, 1925.*)

The Parliament was convened by the following Proclamation:—

PROCLAMATION

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

WHEREAS by the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act it is amongst other things enacted that the Governor-General may appoint such times for holding the Sessions of the Parliament as he thinks fit:

Now therefore I, John Lawrence Baron Stonehaven, the Governor-General aforesaid, in exercise of the power conferred by the said Act, do by this my Proclamation appoint Wednesday, the thirteenth day of January, One thousand nine hundred and twenty-six as the day for the said Parliament to assemble and be holden for the dispatch of divers urgent and important affairs. And all Senators and Members of the House of Representatives are hereby required to give their attendance accordingly, in the building known as the Houses of Parliament, situate in Spring-street, in the City of Melbourne, at the hour of 10.30 o'clock a.m., on the said thirteenth day of January One thousand nine hundred and twenty-six.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the Commonwealth of Australia
(L.S.) aforesaid this eighteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord One thousand nine hundred and twenty-five, and in the sixteenth year of His Majesty's reign.

By His Excellency's Command,

S. M. BRUCE.

GOD SAVE THE KING!

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House of Representatives.

Thursday, 24 June, 1926.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. Sir Littleton Groom) took the chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

NAVAL TRAINEES.

Mr. LISTER.—Some time ago I asked the Minister for Defence a question concerning the training of boys for the Australian Navy, and received the reply that the matter was then under consideration by the Government. I should like to know whether the Minister has seen the statement on the subject appearing in yesterday's *Argus* and other Melbourne newspapers? Has the honorable gentleman arrived at any decision on the matter, and, if so, what?

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—I have read the article in the *Argus*, and the matter is still under the consideration of the Government.

PRINTING COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

Report (No. 2) brought up by Mr. E. RILEY, read by the Clerk, and adopted.

DUTY ON MAIZE.

Dr. NOTT.—I ask the Minister for Trade and Customs whether it is his intention to interfere in any way with the existing tariff as it applies to the maize industry?

Mr. PRATTEN.—This matter has had the consideration of the Government, and it is not thought desirable at the present time to interfere with the duties that have been accepted by both Houses of the Parliament.

MAIN ROADS GRANT.

Mr. FENTON.—Is the Government making available to the various States sums of money from the Federal main roads grant? If not, when will the money be available? Will the Prime Minister treat the matter as urgent, to enable the

State Governments to find employment for many who are out of work at the present time?

Mr. BRUCE.—Some two months ago, the Government communicated with the State Governments, intimating that, on the expiration of the present financial year, it would be prepared to make available to them monthly payments equivalent to one-twelfth of the amount provided in the present year, so that there might be no stoppage of operations. A number of the State Governments are taking advantage of this offer.

SUGAR REBATE.

SMALL FRUIT-CANNING COMPANIES.

Mr. MACKAY.—During the debate last night I made some remarks on the difficulty which some fruit canners who are in a small way of business have in obtaining a rebate on sugar supplied to them. I should like to know from the Minister for Trade and Customs what is the responsibility of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and the Sugar Board in this connexion. Has the Government any power to interfere in the matter?

Mr. PRATTEN.—Briefly, the responsibility of the Sugar Board is to see that the agreement between the Commonwealth Government and the Government of Queensland is carried out. Beyond this, the Commonwealth does not interfere. I noted the honorable member's remarks in connexion with the supply of small quantities of sugar to certain manufacturers. I shall pursue the matter, and in due course will give the honorable member the information for which he has asked.

REPATRIATION OF SOLDIERS.

LOANS TO STATES.

Mr. GREGORY asked the Treasurer, upon notice—

1. What has been the amount borrowed by each State from the Commonwealth for repatriation of soldiers?
2. What is the average interest charge on these loans?
3. What is the amount of each State's estimated losses on soldier settlement?
4. What amount has been written off these loans by the Commonwealth?

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

1. The following amounts have been advanced by the Commonwealth to the different States for soldier land settlement:—

New South Wales	£9,826,203
Victoria	11,963,176
Queensland	2,717,897
South Australia	2,857,780
Western Australia	5,463,782
Tasmania	2,168,303
	£35,001,941

2. The average interest charge is £6 4s. 6d. per cent. per annum. This rate will apply up till 31st December, 1930. Agreements made with the different States, which will shortly be submitted to Parliament for ratification, provide that from 1st January, 1931, the interest charge shall be 5 per cent. per annum until the whole of the loans are repaid. As regards the rate of £6 4s. 6d. per cent., however, the States were granted a rebate for the first five years of each loan at the rate of 2½ per cent. per annum.

3. No information is available on this point.

4. Under the agreements with the States above referred to, it is proposed to write off the following amounts as from 1st October, 1925:—

New South Wales	£1,340,000
Victoria	1,560,000
Queensland	475,000
South Australia	567,000
Western Australia	796,000
Tasmania	262,000
	£5,000,000

NORTH-WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

TRANSFER TO THE COMMONWEALTH.

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

With reference to the proposed transfer of the north-western portion of Australia to the Commonwealth—

1. How is the sum of £150,000 arrived at as an estimate of the cost of this territory to the Western Australian Government?

2. Does this represent the difference between expenditure in and revenue from that area, or is it only the amount provided on the annual estimates for services therein?

3. If revenue from that area is taken into account, how is it arrived at?

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

1. On behalf of the Western Australian Government, a statement was tendered to the Royal Commission on the Finances of Western Australia as affected by Federation, which indicated that the annual loss on the North-west was £318,036. It was subsequently stated in

evidence by the Assistant Under-Treasurer of Western Australia that the loss was not so great as was originally thought; also that ordinary expenditure would only be slightly in excess of revenue other than land rents. Land rents were stated to be £91,697. All available statements and figures were examined and the annual loss was estimated at £150,000. This estimate includes interest and sinking fund on loan expenditure of £2,681,935 at 30th June, 1924, and the difference between estimated expenditures and revenues on all services in connexion with the North-west.

2. See answer to No. 1.

3. See answer to No. 1.

WAR SERVICE HOMES.

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

1. What has been the total expenditure on soldiers' homes, including administrative costs, purchases of timber areas, and all expenditure relating thereto?

2. What is the total revenue received to date in repayment from all sources?

3. What is the estimated amount, less unaccrued interest, that can be regarded as tangible assets derivable from repayments for homes, &c.?

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—The information is being obtained, and will be furnished later.

PACIFIC ISLANDS STEAMSHIP SERVICES.

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

1. Is it a fact that tenders for the supply of Pacific Island steamship services closed on 15th January, 1925, and that Burns, Philp, and Company were the only tenderers?

2. Is it a fact that full information in regard to this tender was published in the press, although the Government did not see fit to accept it?

3. Is it a fact that further tenders were invited, closing on 30th November, 1925, and that no finality has yet been reached in the matter?

4. Is it a fact that Burns, Philp, and Company have had their contract extended from month to month, whilst the Government is endeavouring to encourage ships manned by black labour and foreign labour to enter this trade?

5. Will the Government definitely state what is proposed in this matter?

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

1. Yes.

2. Certain information in regard to the tender appeared in the Sydney press, but the Government is unaware of the circumstances under which it was published.

3. Yes.

4. The contract expired on 31st July, 1925, but was extended for six months in the first place, and later for a further period of six months from 1st February, 1926, with the object of enabling the fullest investigation to be made by the Government into all aspects of the service in question before finalizing its plans for the future.

5. The Government expects to be in a position to make an announcement in regard to this matter at an early date.

LOSS OF S.S. DORRIGO.

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

1. Has his attention been drawn to an article appearing in the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* of the 5th instant, entitled "The *Dorrigo* Disaster and its Lessons"?

2. In view of the points raised in the article mentioned, will he obtain, from competent naval architects, data with respect to the lost vessel showing—

(a) the height of the centre of gravity above the ship's bottom; and

(b) the position of the metacentre relatively to the centre of gravity—

at the time of the *Dorrigo* leaving Brisbane on the voyage on which she was lost?

3. On the data supplied as in 2, will he obtain from a competent naval architect an opinion regarding the seaworthiness of the *Dorrigo* at the time of her departure as above?

4. Will he ascertain whether proper scientific data regarding the stability of the *Dorrigo* was given by her former owners to her new owners when she changed hands in June, 1925?

5. If the answer to 4 is in the negative, will he cause such steps to be taken as will ensure the supply of such information or data to new owners being part of the formal business of transferring ships from one owner to another?

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

1. I have seen the article referred to.

2 and 3. A properly constituted Court of Marine Inquiry, assisted by two experienced shipmasters as nautical assessors, exhaustively investigated the circumstances attending the loss of the *Dorrigo*. One of the principal matters investigated by the court was the disposition of the cargo in the vessel's holds, but as the officers who had charge of the stowage in Brisbane were both lost with the ship, the information obtained by the court on the distribution of weights in the vessel was presumably not sufficiently definite to enable any useful question as to the vessel's stability being put to a naval architect. The court, it may be mentioned, had full power to require the attendance of any naval architect as a witness.

4. The evidence given at the inquiry showed that the new owners did not receive from the vendors any precise particulars regarding the stability of the vessel.

5. The whole procedure in connexion with the sale and transfer of ships is governed entirely throughout the Empire by the Merchant Shipping Act of Great Britain. Under this act, there is no power to require the supply by vendors of data regarding the stability of a vessel.

CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION BILL.

Bill returned from the Senate without amendment.

DOMESDAY BOOK.

Notice of motion in the name of Dr. MALONEY postponed until 8th July.

ELECTIVE MINISTRIES.

Notice of motion in the name of Mr. STEWART postponed until 8th July.

NEW STATES.

Debate resumed from 27th May (*vide* page 2386), on motion by Mr. THOMPSON—

That, in the opinion of this House, a referendum throughout Australia should be taken during the life of the present Parliament on the question of amending the Federal Constitution so as to give the Commonwealth Parliament power to establish new States on such terms and conditions as it may think fit within the boundaries of existing States, with or without the consent of State Parliaments.

Mr. FORDE (Capricornia) [2.43].—When the debate on this motion was adjourned, the honorable member for Richmond (Mr. R. Green) was speaking, and obtained leave to continue his remarks at a later date. It is suggested to me now by the Treasurer that I should move the further adjournment of the debate in order to permit the honorable member who is absent today to resume his remarks three weeks hence. I would readily agree to that suggestion but for the fact that, on the last occasion, the honorable member spoke for about forty-five minutes, and until the time available for the discussion of private members' business had expired. It was known then to honorable members opposite that I was anxious to say a few words, really by way of interrogation to the Treasurer. I was anxious to ascertain from him why nothing had been done to put into effect the New States plank of the Country party's platform. But

despite my occasional interruptions to that effect, the honorable member for Richmond continued his speech, and despite my protest the debate was postponed for a month. I was most anxious to have a division on the motion. This is a matter which should be very near to the heart of the Treasurer, and he should support the motion with all the eloquence at his command. When the right honorable member for North Sydney (Mr. Hughes) was Prime Minister, the honorable member for Cowper (Dr. Earle Page) occupied a position on the cross benches and frequently delivered eloquent speeches, which were read with great pleasure by the New States people outside, urging the Government to take a referendum on the question of amending the Constitution on the lines now suggested by the honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson). My chief purpose in speaking to-day is to prompt the Treasurer to declare the policy of the Government on this matter. During the last Parliament, motions identical with that moved by the honorable member for New England were placed on the notice-paper by men who had secured their election by telling the people that they stood for the creation of new States, and that everything would be well when those new States were brought into existence. Those who have been returned to Parliament by making certain promises to the electors should "deliver the goods," instead of merely placing motions on the business-paper and allowing them to be talked out. I am anxious that a division should be taken on the motion of the honorable member for New England, and for that reason I cannot accept the suggestion that the debate should be postponed for another three weeks. During the last federal election campaign the Treasurer made use of the New States issue in order to assist the Country party's candidates. He visited Rockhampton, where I do not think he played the game fairly, because he received a deputation from the New States League, and used the occasion to criticize me instead of confessing candidly that he had done nothing for their movement.

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—The statement that I had done nothing is absolutely inaccurate.

Mr. Forde.

Mr. FORDE.—The Treasurer has done a great deal of talking about the making of new States, but what else? Although he has occupied the second position in the present Cabinet for four years, during which period he was Acting Prime Minister for twelve months, he has done nothing to further the New States movement in a practical way. He knows very well that new States cannot be created by the State Parliaments, and that nothing definite can be done to bring about their establishment, except by a general remodelling of the Federal Constitution, which necessitates action on the part of the Federal Parliament. He has attended New States conventions and made eloquent speeches, which placed some of the people in the north, who suffer great disabilities under the present arrangement of the State boundaries, on the tiptoe of expectation regarding the creation of new States, and they applauded him as the leader of the movement. In this way, he succeeded in winning the New England seat for the honorable member who now holds it. I do not think that honorable member will deny it. Mr. Massy Greene originally lost the Richmond seat largely because it was said that he was not a New States enthusiast. At that time the whole of northern New South Wales was organized to fight for the New States movement, and over 300 delegates attended a conference at Armidale. The Treasurer spoke to them of what he would do, and they applauded him. They expected great things from his advocacy of the movement, but, so far, he has done nothing practical. He has merely talked, and talk is cheap. During the Eden-Monaro by-election campaign the honorable gentleman made an eloquent speech on the New States movement, a report of which I read in the press, and he urged the electors to vote for the Nationalist candidate, because, as he put it, the Government believed in the establishment of new States. We have not yet heard one word of the Government's policy in that regard. The Treasurer took me to task because I was not a member of the New States Parliamentary Committee, but the honorable gentleman himself is not a member of it, and makes all sorts of excuses for that fact.

Mr. THOMPSON.—I rise to a point of order. The honorable member for Capricornia made a gross misstatement when he said that the Treasurer is not a member of the New States League.

Mr. SPEAKER.—That is not a point of order. Any misstatements can be corrected subsequently by a personal explanation.

Mr. FORDE.—I said that the Treasurer is not a member of the New States Parliamentary Committee.

Mr. THOMPSON.—He is.

Mr. FORDE.—I was told by the honorable member, and by others, that the Treasurer is not a member of that committee, and the honorable member excused his Leader on the ground that a member of the Cabinet could not be a member of such a committee.

Mr. THOMPSON.—That is not correct.

Mr. FORDE.—If the Treasurer is a member of the New States Parliamentary Committee, he must have joined it after I had called attention to the fact that he was not a member of it.

Mr. THOMPSON.—That is a deliberate lie.

Mr. BRENNAN.—I rise to order. The honorable member for New England has accused the honorable member for Capricornia of having told a deliberate lie.

Mr. SPEAKER.—I did not hear the honorable member for New England make that statement, but if he did, I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr. THOMPSON.—Out of deference to you, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw it; but it is true, nevertheless.

Mr. SPEAKER.—Order! The honorable member must withdraw the statement unconditionally.

Mr. THOMPSON.—I withdraw it.

Mr. FORDE.—I would not tell a lie about any honorable member. I am surprised and disappointed that the honorable member will not admit what he knows he told me. Several honorable members of this House excused the Treasurer for not joining the New States Parliamentary Committee, on the ground that, as a Minister, he could not join a committee that was urging upon the Government a certain policy. Apparently by calling attention to the Treasurer's default, I have done something to bring him up to the collar.

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—The honorable member has not done that.

Mr. FORDE.—What has the Treasurer done?

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—He has paid his subscription.

Mr. FORDE.—He has not gone to the meetings. During the general election campaign, the honorable member received a deputation from the New States League. A Country party candidate was opposing me, and the Treasurer tried to influence the electors to vote against me. He was reported in the *Evening News*, of the 6th October, 1925, to have said—

I pay a tribute to the consideration always given to New States matters by Senator Thompson while in Melbourne. They had weekly meetings there, and kept very much alive with matters concerning the movement. I regret, however, that we were never able to get a member of the Labour party along to those meetings, not even the member for Capricornia, who seems to always leave the little he intended doing for the movement until he got back to his electorate.

The honorable member went on to say that Labour members had fallen down on the job. Is it not the Treasurer who has fallen down on the job? In the last Parliament, of 75 members in this House, Labour had only 29.

Mr. BILL.—And still fewer now.

Mr. FORDE.—That emphasizes the fact that the Government is to blame and not the Labour party. The duty of the Government is to formulate its policy, and submit it to the House for the consideration of honorable members. The composite Government, with an overwhelming majority of supporters in this and the last Parliament, could at any time during the last four years have submitted proposals for the amendment of the Constitution to facilitate the formation of new States. But it has done nothing. I take exception to the Treasurer trying to cloak his indifference and apathy in regard to the subject by blaming the Labour party. Speaking as Acting Prime Minister at a New States conference, in Rockhampton, on the 26th October, 1923, the Treasurer said—

That some radical change is necessary in the present system of government in Australia is the most wide and universally held belief in all quarters of Australia at the present time. It is readily felt that federation has

failed to accomplish much of the aim for which it was consummated. It has not created that intense national feeling. All parochial considerations disregard the existence of imaginary State boundaries, and prevent the continuation of that system of pitting one capital city against another which has proved so detrimental to the balanced and proportionate development of Australia as a whole.

He repeated these platitudes in New England, Eden-Monaro, and elsewhere. If the Treasurer had any political honesty, he would be quiet on the hustings regarding the New States movement until he had absolutely done something. He has never, to my knowledge, made a speech of a practical nature in this House on the subject since he has been in the position to do something effective. He now reserves his talk for up country. When, as Leader of the Country party, he sat on the ministerial cross bench, he took the right honorable member for North Sydney (Mr. Hughes) to task for not having done anything to help the creation of new States; but since he has been in office, he seems to have forgotten this matter. He tries to place the responsibility on the Labour party and myself, and would have the people of Central Queensland believe that all would have been well if I had joined the New States Parliamentary Committee. The Labour party took the only logical action it could take, by declining to enter into a secret conclave with the National-Country party section, which already had the numbers in the House to do what it thought right. It was the Government's duty to bring down proposals and give honorable members an opportunity of considering them. Senator Thompson, who comes from Central Queensland, has taken an interest in the New States movement in his own district, and has attended league meetings and has been to Armidale and other places. The Treasurer's remark that whatever I have had to say has been said in my own electorate is incorrect, for I have spoken on this subject in Parliament every time I have had an opportunity. One does not help such a movement by attending the meetings of members of the New States Parliamentary Committee and passing the time of day with the Treasurer in his room at Parliament House. In that way honorable members are bottled up and are not free to criticize. Hon-

orable members who support the movement should express their views in the House when an opportunity like the present offers—an opportunity which, by the way, the Treasurer sought to postpone for three weeks. I am asking the Government to give an account of its actions in this matter, and I am hoping to induce the Treasurer to declare what it intends to do. The policy of the Government of waiting for some other day on which to announce its intentions does not commend itself to those persons in northern New South Wales who have spent hundreds of pounds, and put themselves to great inconvenience, to organize New States conventions. On consulting the *Hansard* reports, I find that Senator Thompson, to whom the Treasurer has given credit for his work in this movement, said nothing in the Senate on this subject during 1923 and 1924. On the 28th August, 1925, however, he made the following brief comment, which is reported on page 1833 of *Hansard* of that date:—

As the question of a new States referendum is to be brought under the notice of the Prime Minister (Mr. Bruce), I trust the matter will be given sympathetic consideration, and that the machinery necessary for creating new States will be simplified. An appeal would have to be made to the people by way of referendum, and that is all that is being asked for at present.

That is the only reference made by Senator Thompson to the subject during that year. What was wanted was straight talk, and not platitudes. The Country party went before the electors in 1922, in opposition to the right honorable member for North Sydney (Mr. Hughes) and the National party, on a platform which contained the following planks:—

FEDERAL CONVENTION AND FORMATION OF NEW STATES TO SECURE PRACTICAL DECENTRALIZATION.

(a) To advocate the early holding of a Federal Convention to consider the revising of the Constitution, such convention to be elected on the Federal rolls, and each State to be divided into five electorates returning three delegates for each electorate by the system of proportional representation. To aim at securing new and definite apportionments of the powers and duties of the Federal and State authorities.

(b) In order to bring about economical and efficient State government and administration, and to avoid costly duplication of State and Federal activities, it is necessary to subdivide the present unwieldy States into manageable

areas with community of interests under their own Constitution, thereby bringing about a simpler form of State government, leaving all national functions to the Federal Parliament.

On that platform the honorable the Treasurer became very eloquent when addressing the electors of Cowper, and he was largely instrumental in securing the election of the honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson), and the honorable member for Richmond (Mr. R. Green), the latter in opposition to the National candidate, Mr. Massy Greene. When the composite Ministry was formed after the election, the Treasurer was clothed with power to do something, but the next thing we heard of the New States movement was the following questions asked of the right honorable the Prime Minister by the honorable member for New England, on the 4th July, 1923 :—

1. Whether certain letters have been received from the Governments of New South Wales and Queensland inviting the Commonwealth Government to take action to bring about the amendment of the Constitution, in order to facilitate the creation of new States in New South Wales and Queensland?

2. If so, what action, if any, has the Commonwealth Government taken to comply with the suggestions or proposals made by the States referred to?

The Prime Minister's reply was :—

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

1. Yes.

2. In both cases the respective Governments were informed of the action it was necessary for them to take to comply with the requirements of the Constitution.

The Treasurer was placing the responsibility on the States, and the States were throwing it back on the Commonwealth. That game of battledore and shuttlecock continued for a long time. The Treasurer went to northern New South Wales and advised the advocates of New States to keep their powder dry and all would be well soon. The people are tired of that advice, and now want action, which I am trying to induce the Government to take. The letter received from the Queensland Government was the result of the following motion moved by me, and carried almost unanimously, in the Queensland Parliament on the 6th July, 1922 :—

That in the opinion of this Parliament the time has arrived for the remodelling of the Commonwealth Constitution providing for the

subdivision of Australia into a greater number of self-governing States, making for more economical and effective government, and also providing an easy method for the people living in any district, such as central Queensland or northern New South Wales, to obtain self-government; and that the Prime Minister of Australia be urged to take the necessary steps to bring about these reforms.

That resolution was subsequently presented to the right honorable the Prime Minister. The chief opponent of it was Mr. A. E. Moore, the leader of the Country party, and now the Leader of the Opposition in the Queensland Parliament, who said—

I am opposed to the proposal, because it is only going to lead to expense. . . . I am opposing both motion and amendment, because I do not think there has been any mandate from the people outside, or any agitation, to speak of, amongst them. . . . There may be a little private agitation in one or two small centres in central and northern Queensland, but there has been no agitation which has shaken Queensland as a whole. We know that conditions to-day are totally different from what they were many years ago, when Separation was a live question. We have the railway to Rockhampton, and it is almost completed right up to the north. . . . There is no doubt that the proposal would not lead to economy. The Lands Department has a branch in Rockhampton, the Railway Department is practically decentralized, and Rockhampton has its own Chief of Staff, who is only responsible to the Commissioner. He has the running of the railways generally in that area; and the same remark applies to the north. I do not think the reason exists to-day that existed twenty years ago, when this was a live question. . . . I claim the right to say that I object to Separation . . . it will not be for the benefit of the State, and I intend to oppose both the amendment and the motion.

I mention these facts because members of the Country party state that theirs is the only party that advocates the remodelling of the Constitution in order to provide facilities for the creation of new States. A certain amount of blame has been attached to the Labour party in my electorate for its alleged inactivity, but the Government has a majority in this Parliament, and its duty is to act. The greatest opposition to the New States movement has come from prominent Nationalists. Mr. W. H. Barnes, a leading Nationalist in Queensland, said, on the 30th July, 1922—

In my judgment, it would be a huge mistake to cut up Queensland into smaller States. I think it would be an unwise thing for this House to agree to a motion of this kind.

Notwithstanding the opposition, my motion was passed with the support of the Labour members, because it was in accordance with the platform of the Labour party.

Mr. THOMPSON.—Which nevertheless did nothing.

Mr. FORDE.—I give the honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson) credit for having taken a live interest in this question. I believe he has tried to push the Government into doing something. The blame for inaction should be placed upon the shoulders of the Government, not the Labour party. On the 24th July, 1924, the honorable member moved the following motion in this House:—

That, in the opinion of this House, the Government should, at the earliest opportunity, introduce a bill providing for a referendum of the electors of Australia at the next general elections upon a proposal to amend chapter VI. (New States) of the Commonwealth Constitution, so as to empower the Federal Parliament to create new States within the existing States, with or without the consent of the State Parliaments; such power only to be used on the petition of a fixed number of electors in any area, and only after the State Parliament has failed to take action.

Nothing came of it, for although the Government had 46 members in the House against 29 Labour members, it side-tracked the motion, as it does all private members' business. The motion was so much window-dressing designed to keep alive the enthusiasm of the New Staters, to make them believe that something would be done. It was also intended to permit the Treasurer still to pose as the leader of a great movement, which he had thrown over after climbing into power on it.

Mr. HUGHES.—It was what the Americans call eye-wash.

Mr. FORDE.—In July, 1923, the honorable member for New England introduced to the Prime Minister (Mr. Bruce) a deputation which pressed for some definite action in regard to the setting up of new States. In reply to the request the Prime Minister said—

I give you an assurance that the Government realizes that it has to investigate the matter very closely indeed with a view to coming to some determination as to whether action is to be taken. The time when we will have to come to the point of giving expression of our opinions will be next year.

That would have been in 1924. The Prime Minister went on—

It will almost certainly be next year when the question of constitutional alterations will be considered by the Federal Parliament if the present Government is still in office. When that time comes, your suggestions will receive the very fullest consideration.

That also was what the right honorable member for North Sydney (Mr. Hughes) has aptly termed eye-wash, for nothing has been done to give effect to it. Those interested in the Ney States movement kept up their propaganda in the expectation that the Government would honour its undertaking, and various members of the organization attended meetings night after night in support of the movement. I give the honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson) credit for his activities in that direction; but I object to him excusing the Treasurer for his inactivity. He should condemn both the Treasurer and the Government in strong terms, and tell us what has happened behind the scenes to prevent the fulfilment of their platform promises. In speaking in this chamber on the 24th July, 1924, the honorable member, in referring to the statement of the Prime Minister which I have just quoted, said—

The Government has not taken any steps to translate that fairly definite promise into action.

The honorable member then proceeded to excuse the Government on the ground that it had been very busy, and he asked the House to give it a lead. I contend that the Treasurer, who came here as the champion of the New Staters, should give the House a lead. It should not be necessary for us to prod him into action. I challenge him to give an account of his stewardship, and to state in plain terms his policy in this matter. The Labour party has a definite New States policy, which, when it is returned to power, it will put into effect. Its platform in regard to constitutional amendments reads:—

1. Complete Australian self-government as a British community. No Imperial federation. Administration on advice of Australian Ministers only, subject to the control of the Commonwealth Parliament. All legislation except such as appears inconsistent with Imperial treaty obligations to be assented to on the advice of Australian Ministers only. No further

Imperial, honours to be granted in any circumstances to Australian citizens. The Commonwealth Constitution to be amended to provide—

- (a) Unlimited legislative powers for the Commonwealth Parliament, and such delegated powers to the States or provinces as the Commonwealth Parliament may determine from time to time.
- (b) The Commonwealth Parliament to be vested with authority to create new States or provinces.

It has been said that the Labour party stands for unification, that is, one government for Australia. I disagree with that interpretation of our platform. What this party stands for is the clothing of this Parliament with unlimited powers, and the devolution of adequate governing powers to subordinate legislatures, in such provincial areas as Northern New South Wales, Central Queensland, Northern Queensland, and others where local developmental work could be advantageously undertaken.

Mr. THOMPSON.—Some members of the Labour party declare that its platform provides for unification.

Mr. FORDE.—No person is correct in saying such a thing. That is not the way I read it. It provides that this Parliament shall have sovereign power, and that provincial parliaments with adequate authority shall be set up in those parts of the Commonwealth where the population and resources are sufficient for local government to be effective. Those provincial authorities could be granted powers necessary from time to time by the National Parliament. No doubt, certain objections to this proposal will be taken by some supporters of the New States movement. The motion submitted by the honorable member for New England proposes that this Parliament shall have power to divide the Commonwealth into new States on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit. Our platform makes similar provision. What the Labour party proposes is that the Commonwealth Parliament shall be the sovereign authority, and that the State Parliaments shall be subordinate bodies. If given effect, this proposal would involve the abolition of the upper houses and the positions of State governors, and would tend to economy and efficiency. There would be only the Governor-General of Australia as the re-

presentative of His Majesty the King. Reconstruction in the way proposed would involve less centralization than unification.

Mr. GARDINER.—Would the provincial parliaments have sovereign powers?

Mr. FORDE.—No; sovereign powers would be vested only in the Federal Parliament. There would be a greater number of provincial governments than we now have of State governments: but the number of legislators would be reduced. The cost of government in Australia to-day is excessive. If the figures are looked up, it will be found that it amounts approximately to £1,100,000 a year, or 3s. 8d. per head of the population. We have 645 members of Parliament. The cost of running the electoral departments is, approximately, for the Commonwealth £100,000, and for the States £83,000, or a total of £183,000 per annum. There is to-day a duplication of electoral rolls, and in any year in which elections are held there is considerable additional expenditure on electoral affairs.

Mr. THOMPSON.—The Labour party has never put that scheme before the country.

Mr. FORDE.—Yes, it has; and I have referred to it on every occasion upon which I have had an opportunity to discuss the formation of new States.

Mr. HUGHES.—Has the proposal outlined by the honorable member ever been put before the Commonwealth?

Mr. FORDE.—Yes. It is included in the amended platform of the Labour party. It was included at the instigation of Mr. Theodore at the conference which was held in Brisbane in 1921. Previously the Labour party went somewhat into detail and set out the number of States into which the Commonwealth should be divided.

Mr. HUGHES.—The honorable member is referring to the Federal platform of the Labour party.

Mr. FORDE.—Yes. Mr. Theodore said, “Let us deal with principles. When we get into power we can give effect to our platform, and can then work out the details.”

Mr. THOMPSON.—Has the Labour party abandoned the idea of subdividing Australia into 31 provinces?

Mr. FORDE.—Yes. That was contained in a plank arbitrarily laid down by conference some years ago on the motion of a certain member of the Labour

party, who was very enthusiastic about the formation of new States. He proposed that Australia should be divided into 31 States. That proposal has been set aside and the new platform of the Labour party takes its place. It is proposed that the provinces may deal with purely local matters, such as land settlement, police, local authorities, education, health, and the administration of justice. The control of railways is a matter which should be left for future consideration. It is proposed that unlimited power should be vested in the Commonwealth Parliament, and that there should be a greater number of provincial or State Parliaments of a much simpler form and involving less expenditure. Their membership would be reduced, and there would be greater economy and efficiency of government, because the governing authority, under the system proposed, would be nearer to the people than it is under existing conditions. In the case of a big sheep run covering an area of 100 square miles that portion within reasonable distance of the head station is generally better looked after than the outlying portions. It should tend to greater efficiency and economy of government to establish provincial parliaments with the necessary powers for all local developmental purposes. The members of such parliaments would be more conversant with local conditions, and better informed of the requirements of the people. I hope that the Treasurer will announce the policy of the Government, and tell us what it intends to do in this matter. For four years I have anxiously waited to hear him utter a word as to what he has been doing in the councils of the Cabinet. I should like to know what he has done of a practical nature, apart from flamboyant speeches and the uttering of numerous platitudes on the hustings. I have waited in vain for information on the subject from the honorable gentleman, and I challenge him now to rise to his feet and tell the House his policy and the policy of the Government.

Mr. ABBOTT (Gwydir) [3.28].—I do not intend to take up very much of the time of the House in discussing this motion. In his previous speeches the honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson), has put the case for the New States movement very clearly,

and with a great deal of consistency. I should like to say that when a matter like this is being discussed it is a great pity that any honorable members should make it an opportunity for a very bitter personal attack, and for the pouring out of an accumulation of bile.

Mr. FORDE.—I made no personal attack. I wanted some announcement from the Treasurer.

Mr. ABBOTT.—I noticed that the honorable member also said that Senator Thompson is very weak indeed on this question of the formation of new States. The honorable member measured Senator Thompson's enthusiasm for the cause by the space he has used in *Hansard*. If the space used in *Hansard* is to be taken as a measure of enthusiasm and support for a cause, the honorable member for Capricornia must always put forward exceedingly good cases.

Mr. FORDE.—The Treasurer told the people of my district that I never said anything on the subject here, but reserved what I had to say for Rockhampton.

Mr. ABBOTT.—All that the Treasurer ever said about the honorable member for Capricornia was that he never did anything for new States beyond the speaking of wild and whirling words. There is no question of the Treasurer's belief in the New States movement, or of the sincerity of the honorable gentleman towards it. The people of northern New South Wales, and all who know the honorable gentleman, are aware that in him we have a most stalwart supporter of the movement. I do not propose to dwell on that aspect of the matter any further. It seemed to me that the time is ripe for the subdivision of Australia into a greater number of States. Every one must now agree that an enormous continent like this cannot continue to be governed as it has been governed in the past, by authorities in charge of great areas. It has been shown that a near perspective is necessary for good government. When we consider that what will practically be a new state is to be formed in the Northern Territory, and that it has been suggested that a new province should be formed in the north-west of Western Australia, it is clear that the trend of public opinion is

in the direction of the New States movement. I have always regarded Victoria as illustrating the efficiency with which the government of rural affairs can be conducted in a comparatively small area. Honorable members may recollect that when the other day I deplored the fact that a great many people are leaving the land I pointed out that the only State that showed an increase in the number of small farmers is Victoria. This fact supports the argument that smaller States than we now have are necessary to secure better and more successful government. I am right in saying that this is a matter which should have the close attention of the Federal Parliament. It is to secure that attention that the honorable member for New England has submitted his motion. I suggest to the honorable member that he should amend his motion to read—

That the question of the method of establishing new States should be considered in conjunction with other constitutional questions at the proposed constitutional session of this Parliament.

Such a session, we understand, is to take place at Canberra next year.

Mr. FORDE.—Is this the bridge the Government has built for the honorable member?

Mr. ABBOTT.—The constitution of new States is a very important matter. It is one which should be approached in an open manner, and should not be used for the purpose of personal attacks. If the honorable member for New England will accept my suggestion the whole matter of the formation of new States can be very fully dealt with at the forthcoming constitutional session of the Federal Parliament at Canberra. I move—

That all the words after the word "That be left out with a view to inserting in lieu thereof—" the question of the method of establishing new States should be considered in conjunction with other constitutional questions at the proposed constitutional session of this Parliament."

Sir ELLIOT JOHNSON (Lang) [3.32]. The honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson) tried, by interjection, to correct what he considered a misstatement of fact by the honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Forde) reflecting upon the sincerity of the Treas-

surer with regard to the New States movement. I learn from the honorable member for New England that the Treasurer was present at the first meeting of the Parliamentary New States Committee, that he joined the committee then, and has attended and addressed several meetings since. The honorable member for New England having spoken has not an opportunity to correct the honorable member for Capricornia, who probably quite unintentionally misrepresented the position.

Mr. FORDE.—I was referring to the fact that several members of the New States Committee told me that the Treasurer (Dr. Earle Page) excused his absence on the ground that he was a member of the Cabinet.

Sir ELLIOT JOHNSON.—The true position is as stated by the honorable member for New England. With regard to the motion under discussion I am afraid that any movement of the kind suggested would not meet with the approbation of the public generally. Certain members of the Federal Parliament would appear, if I may say so, to have developed a referendum mania during recent months. To submit this question with others to the people would only confuse the issues. I do not think that the majority of the electors would approve of the expense involved in another reference to them on a matter of this kind, which certainly has not received from the general public that attention which the importance attached to it by those responsible for this motion seems to warrant. I think that the trend of opinion with the general public is that Australia is already too much governed, that it has too many parliaments, and that instead of an extension of governmental powers through the medium of the establishment of new States involving the creation of new parliaments and all the paraphernalia of new Public Services leading to increased taxation of the people who have to bear the burden, there should be a simplification of our system of government. My own opinion is in favour of an extension of local governing powers under an arrangement by which the whole of Australia could be divided into provinces, but not with legislative powers under constitutions similar to those under which the States are now working. With our limited

population, and with the unavoidable increase in the cost of government entailed by the creation of new States, I think the present proposal would not be favorably received by the people, but if a scheme could be devised to reduce the numerical strength of the existing State Parliaments, and the cost of existing State Governments, it would meet with more general approbation than would a proposal which is likely to increase the burden on the people. I do not feel inclined to support either the motion or the amendment, and I think the Government would be extremely ill-advised to bring down a measure of the kind suggested at the present time.

Dr. EARLE PAGE (Cowper—Treasurer) [3.39].—I regret that the honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Forde) should have imported into this debate a great deal of personal bitterness, but I have no intention of following him along those lines. The honorable member is a most unfortunate exponent of the opinion he is supporting at the present time, that something should be done; because he happens to have been during his career in the Queensland Parliament a follower of a government which, after supporting a motion for the subdivision of Queensland into three parts, took no further action in the matter, although it was in absolute control of the affairs of the States. In the parliament in which the motion which the honorable member quotes with so much approval was brought forward, there was no upper house to restrict the actions of the Legislative Assembly, and the government itself had an ample majority, which would have enabled it to bring about the subdivision of Queensland so greatly desired by the honorable member. He was completely satisfied with the passing of a pious resolution, when there was no obstacle in the way of giving effect to it. It is unfortunate that the honorable member should take up in this Parliament the attitude he takes up now. When the right honorable member for North Sydney (Mr. Hughes) was Prime Minister in 1921, he introduced a bill for the summoning of a convention to consider the amendment of our Constitution, including, of course, the method of creating new States, which the honorable member says is of such urgent importance, and for which he says the Labour party has fought all the time; but the Leader of the

Opposition (Mr. Charlton) moved, "That the bill be read this day six months," which really meant shelving it. During the debate on that bill the Labour party had an opportunity to show its bona fides in regard to the matter. I took the opportunity to point out how the proposed convention could do its work in the most satisfactory way, and I submitted amendments in accordance with the Country party's policy, which has just been read out by the honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Forde). Unfortunately, an honorable member moved, "That the question be now put," and every member of the Labour party, with the exception of three, voted for that motion, in the belief that it was the quickest way of bringing about the desire of their Leader to shelve the matter altogether. That is what has occurred in this Parliament, and the honorable member for Capricornia can say nothing which will hide the facts. His further inconsistency is shown by his attitude to the motion of the honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson). If there is one thing more than anything else that is required to secure what he desires, and what every one knows I desire—a more satisfactory and economical system of government in Australia, and to give a bigger impetus to the development of what are now outlying areas by the creation of new States—it is united action in this chamber by those who hold similar views. Yet the honorable member, for a quarter of an hour, indulged in a tirade of merciless abuse that cannot help the matter at all, whereas we need all the help we can in the fight for the conditions we think should be brought about in Australia. The honorable member said that those who are interested in this movement have done nothing during the last three years. The people outside have had an opportunity of judging the record of myself and others who stand for the establishment of new States. Not merely was the honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson), who stood by this proposal, returned by an increased majority, and the honorable member for Richmond (Mr. R. Green) returned in the face of great opposition, but the honorable member for Gwydir (Mr. Abbott),

who, during the whole campaign, advocated the creation of new States, defeated his opponent. The whole of northern New South Wales was thus solidly arrayed behind the New States Movement. The proposal of the honorable member for New England is to have a referendum on this issue, but he has accepted the amendment of the honorable member for Gwydir, which the Government regards as the proper method of dealing with the question. Ministers think that the creation of new States should be dealt with in connexion with the general amendment of the Constitution. When the right honorable member for North Sydney (Mr. Hughes) brought down his proposal for a convention, that convention was to deal with the proposals for an alteration of the Constitution in a satisfactory and proper way. With other Ministers I have always contended that there is a much better chance of bringing about the creation of new States if, at the same time, some redistribution of the relative powers of the Commonwealth and the States can be secured, than by simply having a straight-out fight on the New States issue. The remarks of the honorable member for Capricornia, in regard to the proposals of the Labour party, show that that is also his opinion. I urge him, therefore, to set aside his personal feelings in the matter and join with others in the effort to see that this is done. As to why nothing was done in the matter during the last Parliament, despite the Prime Minister's assurance to a deputation that opportunity would be given for the discussion of changes of the Constitution by Parliament, every one knows that when the Leader of the Labour party challenged the Government to go to the country on another issue, the Government accepted the challenge and fought that issue before the electors. But the dissolution abridged by nearly a year the life of that Parliament, and thus no opportunity was afforded to it to discuss proposals for the amendment of the Constitution. The Government has already announced that as soon as the new Parliament meets at Canberra it will have an opportunity of discussing proposed alterations of the Constitution, and the New States issue will be one of the matters discussed. Every one is agreed

that it is time that wider means of securing the further subdivision of Australia than now exist should be devised. No subdivision can take place now except at the will of the Parliament which controls the territory where the people desire to subdivide. The time has come when I think there should be an alternative method of deciding the matter —when the people of a State, as well as the Parliament of the State, should have some say in it. A review of the history of the subdivision of Australia shows that there is very little chance of the subdivision of a State being brought about by an appeal to a State Parliament. At the time of the separation of Victoria from New South Wales, a Legislative Council, which sat in Sydney, controlled the whole eastern portion of Australia. The Port Phillip District, as it was then known, had the privilege of returning six representatives to that body, but because of the difficulties of communication, due to the great distance separating Sydney from Melbourne, it was found necessary to select Sydney residents as its representatives. The people of what is now Victoria, became absolutely sick of that system of government, and in despair elected Earl Grey, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, to represent them, because, although he was living in England, they said he could represent them just as well as any one living in Sydney. Finally, they secured self-government by an appeal to the British Parliament. They could never have got it from the New South Wales Parliament, because it is not natural for any parliament to give up any power it possesses or territory it controls. Queensland also was separated from New South Wales as the result of a direct appeal to the Imperial Parliament. We claim now that the time is ripe when the Commonwealth Parliament should be put practically in the position occupied by the Imperial Parliament prior to the establishment of federation. But that matter we say should be determined, not by a referendum of the people on this particular issue, but along with other proposals to alter the Constitution and secure a redistribution of powers between the Commonwealth and the States. During the last three or four years State Parliaments have come to the conclusion that that is the proper method to be adopted. For instance, in the year 1922 Sir George

Fuller, who was then Premier of New South Wales, wrote to the Prime Minister advising him that the following resolutions had been passed in the New South Wales Parliament:—

1. That, in the opinion of this House, the large area of the State of New South Wales makes it desirable that the creation of a separate State in Northern New South Wales should be taken into early consideration by a Federal convention summoned for the purpose of reconsidering both the present boundaries of the States and the distribution of the legislative powers between States and Commonwealth.

2. That this resolution be communicated to the Federal Government and the Governments of the States with a view to securing their concurrence.

On the 4th October, 1922, the Queensland Parliament passed this resolution:—

That, in the opinion of this Parliament, the time has arrived for the remodelling of the Commonwealth Constitution, providing for the subdivision of Australia into a greater number of self-governing States, making for more economical and effective government, and also providing an easy method for the people living in any district such as Central Queensland or Northern New South Wales, to obtain self-government, and that the Prime Minister of Australia be urged to take the necessary steps to bring about these reforms.

It is evident that, not merely in Federal circles, but also in the State Parliaments, and throughout Australia the opinion is held that the creation of new States can be dealt with only in the course of a general review of the Constitution. The amendment moved by the honorable member for Gwydir proposes to refer this matter to the special constitutional session to be held next year, and the Government is quite prepared to accept the amendment and act upon it.

Mr. HUGHES (North Sydney) [3.53]—We had hoped to hear this afternoon from the honorable member for Melbourne (Dr. Maloney) a speech on his proposal for the compilation of another Domesday Book, and, incidentally, an historical survey dating from the Norman invasion of England. On that sea we were to have voyaged until 9 o'clock tonight, when the discussion of grievances is the order of the day. In place of that, this debate on the New States motion has been resumed, somewhat abruptly, and we have to address ourselves to it without the advantage of that preparation which makes for effective and interesting discussion. The honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Forde) contrived,

on the spur of the moment, to introduce into his speech a personal element, which at one stage promised to be highly entertaining. Unfortunately, I suppose the terms of the motion prevented him from doing full justice to the matter, and so we are left with no alternative but to deal with the proposal moved by the honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson) and the amendment submitted by the honorable member for Gwydir. The gravamen of the complaint of the honorable member for Capricornia was that the Treasurer had said that the New States movement had not flourished as it should have done because the Labour party had fallen down on the job. To which the honorable member for Capricornia replied, "That is not true. How could 29 members do that which requires the approval of a majority of the House? It is you who have fallen down on the job." The honorable member, in the course of his speech, recalled to my mind the time when I had the honour of leading the Government, and the present Treasurer, sitting on the ministerial cross bench, delivered speeches on the New States movement, of which he was the chief banner-bearer. Many times we heard him wax eloquent upon this subject, and those who sat with him supported him with an enthusiasm that almost equalled his own. By the creation of new States we were to struggle out of the Slough of Despond and make our way to the celestial fields. But with the revolution of the political wheel the honorable member for Cowper was promoted to a position of authority. He may be imagined now as seated where he has merely to press an electric button, and lo! in turn come forth a budget, a sugar policy—about which we heard a good deal at one time—or a shining array of new States. But these are as yet without substance. As for this New States movement, the bride is arrayed in her wedding finery; but the bridegroom cometh not. As in the song, the anxious bride, her once rosy cheeks pale and her manner depressed, is "Waiting at the Church," but in the language of the streets, "There is nothing doing." To adopt another metaphor, the Treasurer being haled into court, and electing to make a

statement rather than enter the witness box where he could be cross-examined—most defendants consider the first alternative the wiser course—tells us the story, moving, but not tragic, of the delay in realizing his fond dream during the last three years. He explained why he has found it impossible to proceed with this great reform of which he is the principal protagonist. The first year was taken up in rapt retrospect of that election campaign from which he appeared unlikely at one stage to emerge with much credit; but out of darkness came light, and he arrived breathless, but happy, where he is now. Then for twelve months his eyes were still dazzled with the unaccustomed glare, and action was impossible. In the next year, being then firmly in the saddle, he might have been expected to take the jump, but for some unexplained reason he baulked the fence and arrived nowhere. The third year brought the shadow of things sufficiently ominous to damp his enthusiasm, and again he did nothing. Then followed the last general election—and here we are. Stated in that way, the honorable gentleman's explanation covers the whole ground so amply as to leave not a chink through which the demon of doubt can enter. But I am bound to say that to those who believe in the New States movement—and I suppose there are still some who do—it is strange, to say the least, that the Treasurer has not been able to persuade his colleagues to do anything to further this great reform. Because of his advocacy of it he got into public life, and when he still stands hesitant on the threshold, after three years and four months of office, and after six years of unremitting public effort, one becomes a little doubtful whether anything can come of this movement. The Treasurer pointed out the difficulties in its way, but these are not new, and when a few years ago I ventured to point them out to him, he received them with every evidence of incredulity. I remember that a most enthusiastic deputation waited upon me at Tamworth. Nothing would serve those advocates of the New States movement but an amendment of the Constitution, by which a sure and speedy way would be found into the heart of the citadel. I pointed out that an amendment of the Constitution, as

ordinarily understood, would bring them no nearer to their goal than the alternative method set out in that instrument. The fact cannot be over-emphasized that before a State can be subdivided its parliament must approve, and any amendment of the Constitution needs the consent of the majority of the people voting in a majority of the States. Before the Constitution can be amended to provide for the creation of new States, the proposal must have the approval not only of the majority of people voting in the majority of States, but also of a majority of the people in the State to be cut up, and if it is desired to subdivide all the States, a majority of the people in all the States must be in favour of the subdivision. Human nature being what it is, the day is very far distant when our fellow citizens will agree to such a proposal. A great State like Western Australia, where the citizens in the closely settled parts are so remote from those in the outlying provinces that they seem a world apart, is in an entirely different position from New South Wales, whose smaller area is gridironed by railways and roads, and whose people have a community of feeling which inspires in them a more intense local patriotism. It is eminently desirable that there should repose in some authority means whereby at the proper stage of development in any part of Australia new States may be created. Those who belong to the New States movement ought to be told plainly that no new States convention, and no amendment of the Constitution, will bring them nearer to their desire than they are at this moment. When I ventured to recommend the Tamworth deputation to ask the Parliament of New South Wales to do that which they thought should be done—which, with certain reservations that I then stated, I favoured myself—they despised the recommendation. Like Naaman, the Syrian, when told to bathe seven times in the Jordan, they asked were not Abana and Pharfar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel. They preferred to go the long way round to attain their objective. But they are no nearer to attaining it; nay, they are further from the goal to-day than ever. The New States movement has been with

time, and has served as a stalking horse for political parties, and for individual politicians, who have used it for their own ends, but have done nothing to bring about a reform which they declare to be essential to the welfare of this country. There can be no subdivision of any State without the consent of its people. If every elector in the Commonwealth, except those of Tasmania, favoured the subdivision of that State, Tasmania's "No" would overwhelm Australia's "Aye." No majority counts in this matter except the majority of the electors of the State which it is proposed to subdivide. If it is desired to bring about the reform by first amending the Constitution, it will be necessary to get also a majority of the States and a majority of the people of Australia in favour of the proposed amendment. It has been suggested that an act of the British Parliament could be passed to amend our Constitution; but to ask the British Parliament to pass such a measure would be an affront to the dignity of the Commonwealth, which the people would not tolerate. The Constitution is the charter of our rights, and, although it is in form a British statute, it was approved by the people of this country before the British Parliament was asked to give it legal sanction. It is now, in fact, no longer a British statute; it is the charter of our liberties and rights, and we alone ought to say what shall be done with it. I should oppose tooth and nail a proposal for the creation of new States by a statute of the British Parliament. I say nothing against the holding of a constitutional convention—I believe in it—but, in any case, the situation to be faced will be the same. It was suggested to me at Tamworth—and the honorable member for New England seems to hold the same view—that there is some way of evading the difficulty. There is no way of evading it. If it is desired to substitute for section 128 of the Constitution an entirely new section, under which what we wish to do could be done, there is no way by which that amendment can be made except that provided by section 128 as it exists. The majority of the people of the States out of which new States are to be carved, must ap-

prove of the amendment. The advocates of new States should realize that. If public opinion on this subject were sufficiently strong to make it an election issue, it would not necessarily follow that the people would give the authority needed to consummate the purpose in view. But the New States question, which was continually dinned in our ears a few years ago, has now become a faint and negligible echo.

Mr. RODGERS.—The movement started in a parochial instead of a national way.

Mr. HUGHES.—I have not said that. I am content to declare myself in favour of the creation of means for making new States from time to time as the development of the Commonwealth may require. But that cannot be done until the people are enthusiastically in favour of it. What was malleable three years ago has now become cold, and has set hard; what was conceivable has now become so remotely possible that it has passed out of the sphere of practical politics, so that the echoes that are raised by this debate sound to us like the reading of the names on the tombstones in a cemetery.

Mr. THOMPSON (New England) [4.16].—I accept the amendment with approval, because it is the suggestion of the Government, and provides the most sensible way out of this difficulty. This debate has shown that great constitutional difficulties surround this matter which require the consideration of honorable members at a special constitutional session. We have had the definite announcement of the Government that next year—presumably when we are at Canberra—there will be a special session to deal with constitutional issues. That is one of the most important statements that has been made by the Government since this Parliament came into existence, because it opens up a vista of big possibilities for Australia. As secretary to the All-Australian New State Movement, and to the Northern New South Wales Movement particularly, which have ardently advocated the subdivision of the State, I can safely say that the proposal of the Government to accept this matter as a question for the agenda-paper at the special constitutional session is entirely acceptable. If we decide to hold a referendum on the subject during the life

of this Parliament, we shall still be faced with constitutional difficulties in establishing the new States. For that reason it is better, especially as this Parliament has from two and a half to three years to go, to relegate this question to a special constitutional session. At such a session there will be a different atmosphere from that existing to-day. Although this question has been threshed out from one end of Australia to the other, and although the Labour party has flaunted its unification scheme before the people for several years, there are, when it is being discussed here to-day, empty benches on the Labour side. When honorable members of the Labour party have an opportunity to discuss their unification proposals, their interest in them appears so small that, with the exception of the honorable member for Capricornia (Mr. Forde), they have not participated in the debate or even remained to hear the discussion.

Mr. FORDE.—It is the duty of the Government, not of the Opposition, to keep a House. I submit that there is not a quorum present.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Bayley).—The honorable member for Capricornia is out of order.

Mr. THOMPSON.—It is necessary to create for the discussion of this question a different atmosphere from that which prevails to-day.

Mr. FORDE.—I call attention to the state of the House. It is the duty of the Government to keep a "House."

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.—The honorable member is not entitled to make remarks of that kind. Do I understand that the honorable member is calling for a quorum?

Mr. FORDE.—I am. [*Quorum formed.*]

Mr. THOMPSON.—I am prepared to accept the amendment of the honorable member for Gwydir (Mr. Abbott). I hope that the new States issue will have a prominent place on the agenda of the proposed constitutional session. There has been a great deal of agitation, and there still is, though I admit that it is carried on by disappointed people, for the formation of new States, and I trust that something definite will soon be done in the matter.

Mr. FENTON (Maribyrnong) [4.23].—The honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson), and some of his

colleagues, have endeavoured to brand honorable members on this side of the chamber as unificationists. Although I am not afraid of the name I do not consider myself a unificationist, because I would substitute for the present State Parliaments, provincial Parliaments clothed with limited power, such as operate now in Canada and South Africa.

Mr. THOMPSON.—We do not suggest that new State Parliaments, with powers such as are possessed by those now in operation, should be established.

Mr. FENTON.—It would be folly in every sense of the word to enlarge the number of such parliaments in Australia. The desire of the Labour party, as I think the overwhelming majority of our people understand, is to substitute for the existing State Parliaments provincial parliaments which will act within the authority conferred upon them by the National Parliament. I am not a unificationist in the sense that I favour only one Parliament for the Commonwealth; but during the twenty years I have been in public life I have advocated, on both Federal and State platforms, increasing the power of the National Parliament and decreasing that of the State Parliaments. I have said without equivocation that the State Parliaments must decrease, and the Commonwealth Parliament increase in importance and power. That view is in accord with the sentiments of the great majority of the Australian people. It has been said that the Labour party is seeking to deprive our people of home rule, but if we had our way we would give a greater measure of home rule than the people now enjoy, for we would bring them into closer contact with their governing authorities.

I object to this piece-meal method of dealing with the new States issue. This Parliament should consider the interests, not only of Queensland and New South Wales, but of all the States. Western Australia, for instance, is just as much entitled to a subdivision of her territory as New South Wales, Victoria, or Queensland. I believe in decentralization. A few days ago, when I suggested, in the course of a debate, that Australia could, with benefit to the people, be divided into twenty provinces, each with a population of 300,000, the

Attorney-General (Mr. Latham) interjected that Sydney itself, would, in that case, contain about three provinces. I do not suggest anything like that. I consider that capital cities with a community of interests should have provincial parliaments of their own; but I do not think that provincial parliaments in sparsely-populated areas should have as many members as provincial parliaments in the capital cities. Our Federal system of dividing the Commonwealth into electoral divisions with a community of interests, is excellent. In any new State subdivisions that I might suggest, I should pay no heed whatever to the present State boundaries. As the people on the borders of Queensland and New South Wales have similar interests, I should forget the imaginary line that separates the two States; and, as the people in the northern part of Victoria and the Riverina, in New South Wales, also have like interests, I should pay no attention to the fact that the Murray River is the present State boundary. I regret that our population is centred in our metropolitan areas; but, in my opinion, the setting up of provincial parliaments such as I have proposed would counteract centralization. I should not think of providing separate governors and agents-general for the new States, nor of setting up two houses of parliament in them. We shall never secure any real financial reforms until the spheres of Federal and State activity have been substantially altered.

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—In which direction?

Mr. FENTON.—I should place all our big national services under the control of the Commonwealth.

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—Would the honorable member make the Commonwealth the controlling authority in finance?

Mr. FENTON.—Yes; I consider it would be wise for the people to give this Parliament unlimited power, and allow it to take over the State debts.

Mr. THOMPSON.—Would the honorable member be in favour of the Commonwealth Parliament delegating powers to the provincial parliaments from time to time?

Mr. FENTON.—I would. It is most unfortunate that section 128 is in the

Constitution. The concluding paragraph of it reads—

No alteration diminishing the proportionate representation of any State in either House of the Parliament or the minimum number of representatives of a State in the House of Representatives, or increasing, diminishing, or otherwise altering the limits of the State, or in any manner affecting the provisions of the Constitution in relation thereto, shall become law unless the majority of the electors voting in that State approve the proposed law.

Mr. THOMPSON.—That spoils our whole Federal system.

Mr. FENTON.—I do not propose to enter into a discussion of the legal aspect of the matter, but, in my opinion, the right honorable member for North Sydney (Mr. Hughes) has stated the case correctly.

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—What we suggest is that both people and Parliament should have the right to take action.

Mr. FENTON.—As things are now, although five States in the Commonwealth determined on an alteration, Tasmania, our smallest State, could, with a majority of only two votes, prevent it from being made; and that is an intolerable position. From a propaganda point of view, a constitutional session might help us in this matter. I believe that if I were to conduct a vigorous campaign in the Maribyrnong electorate, and the main plank of my platform was unification, my majority would be increased rather than diminished. I, therefore, have no fear of being called a unificationist, but it is not fair to describe the whole of the members of the Labour party as unificationists, though it is true that some members of the party propounded a tentative scheme for discussion. The honorable member for Lang (Sir Elliot Johnson) said that he does not believe in the creation of new States, because the result would be to impose further burdens upon the taxpayers. We might have twenty provincial parliaments, each of which would have a comparatively small area to look after and fewer powers than are now possessed by the State Parliaments. Big questions such as the control of railways, the floating of loans, and so on, could be dealt with in the Federal arena. The provincial parliaments might be given some of the powers now possessed by our State Parliaments, and might, in addition, be given power to deal with questions which are now

dealt with by municipal authorities. By the adoption of such a system, we should have something like real home rule. The provincial parliaments would not be invested with all the pomp and glory of our present State Parliaments, but the people they would control would be much better governed than are the people of the States under existing conditions. This Parliament, freed from its fetters, could be run on truly national lines, and would be able to do far more for the people than it can do now. We are desirous in this Parliament of doing great things for the people, but the Constitution calls a halt whenever we propose to make an advance.

Mr. THOMPSON.—The Constitution can be altered.

Mr. FENTON.—That is so, but it is a most difficult matter to alter it. I have often said that in our Constitution we have too slavishly followed the United States' Constitution, and would have done better if we had followed the Canadian Constitution.

Mr. THOMPSON.—So far as the establishment of new states is concerned, it is much worse than the Constitution of the United States of America.

Mr. FENTON.—It might not be as suitable for the settlement of some questions, but, speaking generally, we have, in Australia, followed the Constitution of the United States of America too closely. I remind honorable members of the statement made by General Smuts when the framing of a Constitution for South Africa was under consideration. He said that they had avoided the mistakes made by the Australian people. They retained for the Federal Parliament full industrial powers over railways and many other activities which the Australian people failed to do. The framers of the South African Constitution were advised to avoid the mistakes we made. I say nothing to the injury of the memory of the late Alfred Deakin, or to the reputation of Mr. Patrick Glynn, when I say that these gentlemen, when members of the same Government, advised the people charged with the framing of a constitution for South Africa, to avoid the mistake made in Australia of copying too slavishly the Constitution of the United States of America.

Mr. THOMPSON.—The South African provincial experiment has failed.

Mr. FENTON.—I do not know that it has.

Mr. THOMPSON.—They have had half a dozen commissions inquiring into it.

Mr. FENTON.—We required a flexible constitution which could be altered and adjusted to meet altered circumstances; but we copied a constitution that was 125 years old. We need to reduce the powers of the State Parliaments and to increase the powers of the Federal Parliament. In the place of our present State Parliaments, we should have provincial parliaments of one house only. All these questions of detail could be worked out later. I am not satisfied that we should be able to effect the savings that are so necessary. With 20 provincial parliaments, comprised of 30 members each, we would have about the same number of members of Parliament that we have in Australia to-day, excluding the Federal Parliament.

Mr. THOMPSON.—How many members should there be in a provincial parliament?

Mr. FENTON.—I have put the number, roughly, at 30.

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—How many senators should there be?

Mr. FENTON.—The honorable gentleman wants to know how many senators there should be in the national Parliament. That is a detail which could be carefully considered. I do not say that it would not be necessary to increase the membership of the Federal Parliament.

Mr. THOMPSON.—Is the Labour party in favour of abolishing the Senate?

Mr. FENTON.—Yes. I see very little use in the Senate or in any upper house in any country in the world, beginning with the House of Lords. If I had my way, I should abolish the House of Lords. It is, in my mind, iniquitous that there should be hereditary peers, and that persons belonging to one section of the Christian church should be entitled to seats in the House of Lords to the exclusion of persons belonging to other sections of the church.

Mr. THOMPSON.—Does the Labour party provide in its new scheme for the abolition of the Senate?

Mr. FENTON.—The abolition of the Senate and of all upper houses in Australia is a part of the Labour party's platform. When our system of government is brought into greater conformity with modern ideas, the eyes of the world

will be turned upon us much less critically than they are at the present time. Australia, as at present governed, is the laughing stock of the world.

Mr. ABBOTT.—One person in every seven of our population of Australia is a public servant.

Mr. FENTON.—We are often reminded of that, but, so far as the Public Service is concerned, the question is whether the members of it are doing their duty and earning their salaries. Some will complain that, if the Commonwealth took over the control of the railways, they would all be controlled from Canberra. That complaint would be made in every State with the exception of New South Wales. Already, in the daily press of this State, we are being told that the Federal Parliament is going to Canberra, that it will be far away, and goodness knows what will happen when everything is run from the Federal Capital. Australia is a country of great distances, and yet I would remind honorable members of the wonderful service that is rendered to the people by the Postmaster-General's Department. Its benefits are extended to every little hamlet in Australia, as well as to the great cities. Every one will admit the value of the services rendered by the Postal Department and the importance of the work that it is doing for Australia. It is, under Federal auspices, doing better work than it did when controlled by the several States. If the Federal authority can carry out such good work in the extension of postal facilities to the people, there is no reason why it should not be able to do equally good work if it controlled the railways of the Commonwealth in the same way.

Mr. THOMPSON.—Does the honorable member believe that railways in the north-west of Western Australia could be properly managed from Canberra?

Mr. FENTON.—They would not be managed from Canberra. Postal affairs in Western Australia are not managed from Melbourne; they are managed from Perth by the Deputy Director-General for Western Australia. The central administration will be at Canberra, but it will be the Deputy Directors who will really administer the affairs of the Postal Department in the various States. They are doing that work now, and are doing it well.

Mr. THOMPSON.—Has the Labour party any proposal for an amendment of the Constitution to bring its scheme into effect?

Mr. FENTON.—If the Labour party was in power it would not only propound a scheme of government for Australia, but it would submit it for consideration either at a special session of the Parliament or to the people by way of referendum. The creation of new States is only one matter in connexion with which amendments of the Constitution are required. We pledged ourselves at the 1910 election that if the Labour party were returned it would repeal the Naval Loan Act. That was believed by many people to be an awful proposal, but we did repeal it. The Labour party was in power for only a few months when that act was removed from the statute-book; and we made a start with the establishment of an Australian Navy on Australian lines. We said that if returned to power the people would be given an opportunity to amend the Constitution, and they were given such an opportunity in 1911, when proposals for the amendment of the Constitution were submitted to them.

Mr. THOMPSON.—The Labour party does not say that it will follow that course in connexion with its new scheme.

Mr. FENTON.—We have our own scheme, and it will be put forward at the proper time. The Treasurer (Dr. Earle Page) and the honorable member for New England have accepted the amendment moved by the honorable member for Gwydir (Mr. Abbott). There is no doubt that it will be carried, and the question dealt with by the motion will be remitted to a constitutional session of the Parliament at Canberra. I rose chiefly to refute some statements made by the honorable member for New England, suggesting that the Labour party is in favour of unification. He has said that the Labour party's scheme is a unification scheme.

Mr. THOMPSON.—Members of the party have always so described it.

Mr. FENTON.—Doubtless there are rash members in the Labour party, as well as in the party opposite, who sometimes make use of terms without considering their exact meaning. I have said that, personally, I do not fear to be called a unificationist, but I do not

think the term should be applied to the Labour party as a whole. I have tried to outline the policy of the party to replace the existing State Parliaments by provincial parliaments, and to establish a federal system of government suited to the circumstances of Australia. A federal system suited to Australia would not be suited to South Africa, where a different territory and different classes of people require a different form of government. We should suit ourselves to our circumstances, and that is why I say we made a big mistake in copying what was done by people on the other side of the world.

Mr. THOMPSON.—We did not copy the United States of America.

Mr. FENTON.—In some directions we did not, but in other directions we followed the Constitution of the United States of America too closely. If alive

well I hope to take part in the proposed constitutional session. In the meantime I hope the Government will be fortified by the best legal advice as to what the Constitution means. We do not want to put people to the trouble of going to the courts to ascertain what it means. I hope that whatever alterations are made will be framed in such clear and unambiguous language that he who runs may read our law and be able to obey it. I am prepared to defer the further consideration of this question until we can have a constitutional session, and I hope that as a result of the deliberations of that session we shall be in a position to ask the people to accept some most desirable constitutional amendments.

Mr. FORDE (Capricornia) [4.53].—I understand that the honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson) has agreed to accept the amendment moved by the honorable member for Gwydir (Mr. Abbott) that the method of establishing new States should be considered along with other constitutional questions at the proposed constitutional session of this Parliament. I have always been very reasonable on this matter. My chief object in speaking to-day was to prevent the motion from being delayed for another three weeks, as the Treasurer suggested that it should be. Although I was not actually prepared to speak to the motion, I realized that further delay would be most unfair to the supporters of the New States movement who want

some definite pronouncement from the Government on the question. If my speech did nothing more than provoke the Treasurer to state his attitude on the matter, and what he intends to do to give effect to his election promises, it has done some good. I am glad to find that the Treasurer has now announced that the Government will consider this question at the constitutional session to be held at Canberra next year. All I ask in that regard is that the Government shall carry out its promise; because I have in mind the definite promise made by the Prime Minister in 1923 that the question would be dealt with at a constitutional session of this Parliament in 1924, and nothing was done to carry out that promise. It is the duty of the honorable member for New England and others who take an interest in the New States movement to see that the Government adheres to the promise that it has made to-day, but I feel sure that it would not have been made but for my criticism of the Treasurer for his apathy and indifference towards a matter which was mainly responsible for his election to this Parliament. I made no personal references to the Treasurer. I have absolutely nothing against the honorable member personally. My criticism of him was solely of a political kind, but it would have been cowardly on my part if I had said nothing on behalf of a movement in which I have taken a very keen interest. I disagree in certain respects with a number of supporters of the New States movement. For instance, some of them would establish a number of additional State parliaments.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.—The honorable member has already spoken to the motion. He must now confine his remarks to the amendment.

Mr. FORDE.—I am dealing with the amendment. I cannot join with those supporters of the New States movement who would create additional State parliaments with upper houses and departments which would multiply the cost of government in Australia. I have always held that the Commonwealth should be the sovereign authority, with a number of subordinate provincial councils or State parliaments.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.—The honorable member is still going beyond the amendment.

Mr. FORDE.—I recognize that the amendment moved by the honorable member for Gwydir proposes to defer the question until the constitutional session is held next year.

Mr. MATHEWS.—That means nothing.

Mr. FORDE.—It means that the Government is not prepared to deal with the matter at the present time. Its decision will not meet with the approval of the New States League of Central Queensland, which has written to me as follows:—

At a meeting of the Executive, held on the 23rd March, I was requested to convey to you the following resolution:—

"That this meeting is against the suggestion that the referendum on the matter of amendment of the Federal Constitution to give the Commonwealth Parliament power to create new States, should be bracketed with other extraneous matters, and affirm the fact that the suggested amendment of the Constitution in regard to the creation of new States is so important nationally that it should be submitted to the electors as a single issue, and that the elimination of the State Government's veto, and the vesting of the power of creating new States in the Commonwealth Parliament be put as briefly and simply as possible, so that the electors be not confused."

A copy of that resolution was sent to the secretary of the Parliamentary New States Committee, of which the honorable member for New England is secretary. The members of this league will be disappointed to learn that the Government will not submit the New States issue at a separate referendum.

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—The honorable member has received my reply to that communication, stating definitely the Government's attitude.

Mr. FORDE.—I know that I sent the communication to the Treasurer, and that he furnished me with a reply. However, the Government has its majority, and we have now its definite promise that the matter will be dealt with at the constitutional session. It is not my intention to vote against the amendment. As a matter of fact, I must accept it, because it is the best we can get under the circumstances. At the constitutional session, honorable members of all parties will have ample opportunity to discuss the Government's proposals, and submit amendments. It is a big step forward, for those who desire the creation of new States, to have succeeded in inducing the Treasurer to announce the Government's

policy, and arouse him out of the state of apathy in regard to the question into which he has fallen since he took office four and a half years ago. The honorable member for New England has done good work in trying to induce the Government to take some action; but it was, of course, impossible to get the Treasurer to say in this House what his attitude during the last four and a half years was. When I attacked the Treasurer's political actions, and his indifference to the New States movement, he made the lame excuse that I was making a personal attack upon him. I attempted no such thing. The Treasurer is responsible to his own electors; but honorable members here are entitled to point to any breach of faith on his part.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.—The honorable member is again going beyond the scope of the amendment.

Mr. FORDE.—I am keeping the amendment in mind. I have also in mind that a very evasive Treasurer has side-tracked this matter long enough. I propose to see that he lives right up to his election promises in regard to the New States question.

Mr. THOMPSON (New England) [5.1].—My action in submitting my motion twice within the last three years has been fully justified by the discussion we have had upon it to-day. At last we have had a definite pronouncement as to the attitude of the Government. With that attitude, I for the present entirely agree. I have already explained why I have accepted the amendment, and there is no need for me to go over that ground again. I do not seek to take undue credit for being consistent in my advocacy of the New States cause in this Parliament. I appreciate the frequent references of the honorable member for Capricornia to the subject; but I cannot allow this occasion to pass without reminding the honorable member that he has assiduously avoided taking an active part in the Parliamentary New States movement. I have no wish to divulge the nature of conversations I have had with the honorable member, but he has had every opportunity to join the Parliamentary League. He declined very definitely, for the reason that the league was not actually working along the lines in which his party believed. I thought it was a very reasonable attitude for him to take

up; but I am surprised that he did not stand up to it in Capricornia, where the Central Queensland New States movement is fairly active. Had he done so, I could have admired his consistency more than I do.

Mr. FORDE.—In January last I called a meeting of the New States League in Central Queensland, and explained my reasons for not joining the Parliamentary Committee. These reasons were published in the issue of the Rockhampton *Miner* for the 5th January last.

Mr. THOMPSON.—I accept the honorable member's assurance. He is, I think, sincere in his advocacy of new States. He attended two big conventions at Armidale, and made speeches that greatly impressed the 300 delegates present on each occasion. As a personal friend of the honorable member, I should be sorry to think that he could speak as he did on those occasions, and at other conferences, if he were not sincere. I look forward to active co-operation, henceforth, with him in preparing the case which the New-Staters hope to present to this Parliament when it meets for a constitutional session at Canberra next year.

Mr. FORDE.—The trouble is that some of the honorable member's friends import party politics into this movement, to the detriment of the Labour party.

Mr. THOMPSON.—Some people may have done that, but I hope I have never been guilty of such tactics. This is a non-party question. The speech delivered by the honorable member for Maribyrnong (Mr. Fenton) disclosed the need for forcing even the Labour party to submit definite proposals. The honorable member said that that party has varied the unification scheme originally disclosed in this House by the honorable member for Dalley (Mr. Mahony), in 1920. Bearing the title *Unification*, a pamphlet has been widely distributed, with the result that a large number of people regard the scheme put forward by the Labour party as a straight-out proposal for unification. With the principle of that scheme, I have no disagreement, but I think it is waste of time for any party to advocate the abrogation of the Federal compact. The people of Australia accepted federation on the understanding that the Federal principle

would be observed. The great weakness in the scheme of unification, originally propounded by the Labour party, was that it definitely abrogated the Federal compact and proposed the substitution of an entirely new system of government. We have been assured to-day by the honorable member for Maribyrnong and the honorable member for Capricornia that, at the instigation of Mr. Theodore, the Labour party has adopted a modified scheme, which is not essentially unification. If this debate has done nothing more than disclose that important fact, it has been well worth while. Although the Labour party is not in power in this Parliament to-day, it has held office in the past, and will probably do so in the future. It is a great party, representing a large number of people, and if it has a proposal that is vital to the welfare of Australia, it should disclose both the principles and the details of it. The original scheme did include such details as the granting of constitutions to municipal and shire councils. The sooner the Labour party submits its revised scheme of subdivision to the people, the better. The agitators in the New States movement may take credit to themselves for having forced the Labour party to advocate a definite scheme of constitutional reform to permit of the further subdivision of Australia. As a party, it has not consistently advocated unification; that has been done spasmodically by individual members, but the party appeared to sponsor the scheme. The only means by which the Labour party can bring its proposals before the people, is an agitation such as the New Staters have conducted, which has led to an important declaration by the Commonwealth Government that the claims of the movement will be considered at the constitutional session. The right honorable member for North Sydney (Mr. Hughes) dealt in characteristic fashion with this matter, but, although he has claims to be regarded as a constitutional authority, his declaration that it would be impossible to amend section 128 did not help us very much. The framers of the Constitution evidently designed that section to prevent the subdivision of a State without the consent of its local legislature. At the time when the people accepted that provision, they could have

had no idea of its effect, but after 25 years of federation, we know that it definitely prevents the creation of new States, except in Commonwealth Territories. This Parliament has already provided machinery for the establishment of two new States in the Northern Territory, but many years may elapse before the population there is sufficiently large to justify the operation of that machinery. I do not think the founders of the Commonwealth intended that it should forever consist of only the six existing States. In Western Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales, where subdivision movements have been fairly strong at times, the matter has been debated by the State legislatures, but even when they decided to accept the principle of subdivision they always referred the scheme back to the Commonwealth Parliament. Therefore, unless section 128 is amended, the impossibility of creating new States without the consent of the State Parliaments will continue. In the 25 years of federation not one State Parliament has consented to the establishment of a new State within its boundaries. The Parliament of New South Wales expressed the opinion that that State should be subdivided, but referred the matter to the Commonwealth Parliament. A royal commission in New South Wales, which spent £25,000 in the collecting of evidence and generally investigating this matter, reported that it was neither practicable nor desirable to create new States within New South Wales. We must, therefore, turn back to where we started 25 years ago, and ask the people to agree to the deletion of section 128, or to insert in the Constitution a provision giving to this Parliament power to create new States. The longer that step is delayed the more difficult it will become. In all the States the population in the capital cities is becoming greater, vested and political interests more powerful, and the voice of the rural interests feebler. If we delay taking action for another twenty years it will be practically impossible to successfully agitate in the rural areas for the creation of new States. Now is the time to act. The right honorable member for North Sydney (Mr. Hughes) said that under the present Constitution the consent of the majority of the people voting in the majority of States must be obtained before this Parliament can begin to create a new State without the consent

of the State Parliament concerned. As an afterthought, he added, that if any State did not record the necessary majority of votes in favour of the proposal, no subdivision could take place within its boundaries. If that opinion is correct the meaning of the Constitution is this: If a majority in favour of the creation of new States were obtained in four of the existing States, and the majority of the people of the Commonwealth were of the same opinion, subdivision proposals could be put into operation in those four States without the consent of the local Parliament, but not in the two dissenting States. If five States consented and Victoria dissented, the five could be subdivided, but Victoria could not be. That, I know, is the opinion held by the Attorney-General (Mr. Latham), but even if it is correct it is not impossible to secure the necessary majority of votes so that this Parliament can subdivide four or five of the existing States. If that step were taken the force of example might operate to induce the dissenting States to surrender the necessary power to the Commonwealth. It is not impossible for this Parliament to secure a majority in all the six States in favour of subdivision. If this matter were removed from the arena of party politics, and the two great parties in this Parliament unitedly asked the people to amend or repeal section 128, and the other provisions relating to new States, and to give to this Parliament absolute power to create new States when and in such manner as circumstances might dictate, the overwhelming majority of the people would assent. But if one party goes to the people with a scheme, and another party advocates a proposal that is the same in essence but not in details, both will be courting defeat. I hope that between now and the constitutional session to be held at Canberra, various projects for obtaining constitutional authority to subdivide Australia will be devised, and that the Labour party will seize the opportunity to spread its so-called unification gospel amongst the people. It should not continue to sit down on the job as it has been doing during the last four years. If it will explain its scheme to the people, by the time the constitutional session is held a weighty public opinion in favour of subdivision will have been created. I assure members of the Labour

party that the leaders of the New States movement, who in the past have bumped their heads against brick walls, will rest no longer. They have explored every constitutional means of getting new States created with the consent of the State legislatures, but owing to the powerful influence of city interests they have always failed. If, however, it is definitely decided that the Federal Parliament shall tackle the question, and that within the next two and a half years the necessary amendments to the Constitution will be submitted to the people as a major issue, there will be no cause for further complaint about the apathy or lethargy of those engaged in the movement. Of what avail is it for people to be alert and enthusiastic when they are continually told that their proposals are hopeless, that they are up against a constitutional dead-end, and that they had better accept things as they are? When they see that there is a chance of achieving something they will continue the fight with renewed zest. When they were led to believe that if they agitated they would be able to swing the State Parliaments behind their movement, they were full of life and hope, and they worked to such good purpose that for two or three years the creation of new States was the most widely discussed question in Australian politics. But when they found that their efforts were useless, and that they always came back to the dead end of section 128 of the Constitution, they decided that, until Parliament would take the cause in hand, they would not waste more of their time and substance on it. They subsided, and left the job to be done by the politicians. I happen to be one of the politicians to whom the job was left. One honorable member has said that I have pursued the subject to distraction in this House. I have consistently tried to bring it under the notice of this Parliament, and I hope that it will be evident, in a few minutes, that I have done so with success. I hope that the Government will not regard the carrying of this amendment as the shelving of the question, but rather as a definite instruction from this Parliament that it should set its constitutional authorities to work to try to devise suggestions to place before the people. Those suggestions should be made, not two or three weeks before the constitu-

tional session, but as soon as possible, so that they may be considered and thoroughly discussed by the people.

Mr. FORDE.—I wish to make a personal explanation. The honorable member for New England (Mr. Thompson) said that he sympathized with me for not joining the Parliamentary New States Committee, but that I had been inconsistent in not going to Central Queensland and telling the electors there why I would not join the committee. He is not correct in saying that I was inconsistent, for I wrote to the Central Queensland New States League, and told it that I was not prepared to join the parliamentary committee, and asked it to convene a meeting on the subject. That meeting was held on the 4th January, and I attended and clearly gave my reasons for not joining the committee. I have an extract from a newspaper report of the meeting, at which I definitely stated that I considered that the Government, which had a following comprising a majority of members of the Parliament, should submit its policy. I told them that the members of the Labour party, although they were not prepared to join the committee, would give the question full consideration, but would not consent to be dragged at the heels of any other party.

Amendment agreed to.

Question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION.

Debate, resumed from 25th February (*vide page 1150*), on motion by Mr. MANNING—

That it is essential for the proper development of Northern Australia that a railway be constructed from Bourke, New South Wales, through Central Queensland towards Cloncurry, and thence across the Barkly Tablelands to a point on the North-South Railway in the Northern Territory—the carrying of this resolution to be taken as an instruction from this House to the Government to approach the State Governments of New South Wales and Queensland with a view of apportioning the expense of constructing this line between the Commonwealth and the States mentioned.

Upon which Mr. GREGORY had moved, by way of amendment—

That all the words after the words "constructed from" up to an inclusive of the words "Northern Territory" be omitted with a view to inserting in lieu thereof the words "Broome or Derby starting in an easterly direction u-

to its junction with the North-South Railway at or about Newcastle Waters, thence south of east to Camooweal."

Mr. MACKAY (Lilley) [5.25].—The motion of the honorable member for Macquarie (Mr. Manning) refers to an important railway proposal which is undoubtedly necessary for the development, not only of a portion of the Northern Territory, but also of a very large area in Queensland. As the Commonwealth Parliament has already decided on the construction of the north-south line, which will connect Darwin with Port Augusta, the motion should not excite suspicion in the minds of those honorable members who represent South Australian constituencies. There is undoubtedly room for a number of railways in the Northern Territory, and this proposal meets requirements only in one direction. I regret that the honorable member for Swan moved an amendment to the motion. He did not, however, oppose the motion, but said that he thought the construction of the line proposed in his amendment should be the first step in railway construction after the construction of the north-south line. If his amendment had been a separate motion, it would undoubtedly have had the support of the majority of honorable members. There can be no doubt that the Northern Territory in the future will need a number of railways, and as the suggestion of the honorable member for Swan is that a railway should be built to the West, and the suggestion of the honorable member for Macquarie is that one should be built to the east, the two proposals are not in conflict. The honorable member for Macquarie dealt exhaustively with the pastoral possibilities of the Barkly Tablelands, and generally his speech corroborated the statements of many persons who have personal knowledge of that portion of the Territory. I wish to quote one or two authorities who have not been mentioned in the debate. Last year the Commonwealth Government asked Sir George Buchanan, K.C.I.E., an eminent engineer, to express his opinion on certain developmental problems in the Northern Territory, and in his report, which has been issued as a parliamentary paper, he said, "I feel satisfied that the development of the Northern Territory must begin through Queensland, and, in the first instance, by an extension of the pastoral industry." After referring to

a report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, which inquired very closely into the question of railway construction in the Northern Territory, he said:—

I believe that the interests of the country would be best served by building, as soon as possible, the railway to Camooweal, and I suggest construction should take place simultaneously from Camooweal North, and from Emungalan South, and that the Queensland Government should be urged to construct at once, the line from Cloncurry to Camooweal, thus bringing the Queensland railway system to the frontier of the Northern Territory.

Mr. Bell, the Commonwealth Commissioner of Railways, in giving evidence before the committee, said:—

The Bourke-Camooweal connexion would be of immense advantage to Australia, and must be built eventually. The Queensland portion of the route was approved by the Queensland Parliament fifteen years ago. The route would give the Northern Territory the advantage of direct access to the tremendously big Sydney market.

A glance at the map of Australia shows that Queensland can justly claim to have the best planned system of railways in the Commonwealth. In the matter of accidents, it has a record that compares favorably with that of any other railway system. In that State there are 6,147 miles of government railways open for traffic, and they have been built at a capital cost of £52,000,000. There is a railway from the port of Townsville running due west via Cloncurry to Dajarra, which is 120 miles from Camooweal, and on the border of the Territory. That line is 640 miles in length. The line proposed by the honorable member for Macquarie across the Tablelands could be connected at Dajarra or Cloncurry, and direct communication could thus be provided with the seaboard at Townsville. We have a useful line running from Rockhampton due west to Yaraka, through the rich central districts of Queensland, a distance of 475 miles. In addition, there is the Brisbane to Quilpie line of 624 miles, and quite recently the coastal line of 1,042 miles has been completed connecting Brisbane with Cairns in the far north. Great credit is due to the past statesmen of Queensland, who looked into the future before planning the railway system of that State. Their foresight has undoubtedly led to the establishment of large centres of population outside the capital city, and there is no doubt that the motion offers

a splendid opportunity for further developing the back country of Queensland. The Queensland Parliament has already given its approval to a proposal for a railway line from Camooweal, to connect up all the rail heads I have mentioned with Tobermory, which is within 250 miles of Hungerford on the border of New South Wales, and that would establish connexion with Bourke and Sydney. In my opinion, this railway could be quickly and economically constructed, because there are four existing railheads adjacent to the suggested route. No difficulty need be anticipated in the Commonwealth and State Governments reaching an agreement on the matter; and development would occur that would undoubtedly lead to the settlement of a big population. Queensland does not expect the Commonwealth Government to provide the whole construction cost; all she desires is that the matter shall be dealt with on a business basis. All the parties that would benefit by the construction of the line should contribute to its cost, and the Commonwealth would undoubtedly benefit, for the railway would tap the valuable Barkly Tableland. I should like part of the £34,000,000 that Great Britain has offered to the Commonwealth and States allocated to the building of this railway, as it would provide employment for immigrants, and would absorb all the unemployed in the Commonwealth, as well as a large number of migrants from overseas.

Mr. MANNING.—It is essentially a developmental line, and would come within the terms of the agreement.

Mr. MACKAY.—That is my opinion. The history of railway construction indicates that a proportion of the men engaged on work like this select a piece of land near the railway when it is completed and settle there; and undoubtedly some of the immigrants would be glad to get such excellent country. Many people shudder at our Commonwealth and State public debt of £160 per head of the population; but it must be remembered that we have tens of thousands of miles of railways, harbour improvements, roads and bridges, and many other valuable permanent works to set against it.

Mr. FOSTER.—Will the honorable member tell us the total loss on the working of our railways in the last ten years?

Mr. MACKAY.—I have not the figures by me. The honorable member for Wakefield (Mr. Foster) is inclined to forget that Australia is just emerging from the pioneering stage of her development. Future generations will marvel at the manner in which we have surmounted our difficulties. In my opinion, there is no reason whatever for pessimism. We must build railways to develop our country. It is foolish, in my opinion, to expect people to settle on areas that lie from 100 to 150 miles away from a railway line. We should make our railways first, and then send settlers forward to undertake developmental enterprises. We should not hesitate to borrow money to build developmental railways into good country. I trust that the honorable member for Swan (Mr. Gregory) will withdraw his amendment and give us the opportunity to record a straight-out vote on the motion. If, later, he saw fit to introduce his amendment in the form of a motion, I am sure that practically every honorable member would support it.

Dr. NOTT (Herbert) [5.43].—I support the motion. Certain interjections that were hurled at the honorable member for Macquarie (Mr. Manning) when he introduced it, notably those by the honorable member for Angas (Mr. Parsons), indicate that there is a feeling on the part of some honorable members that the building of this line would sound the death-knell of the north-south line, or at least delay the building of it for many years. I disagree with that view, and remind honorable members who subscribe to it that we who favour this motion also support the building of the north-south line. We believe that the Commonwealth Government should honour its undertaking with the South Australian people; but even then this line will be necessary. As a matter of fact they are two entirely different propositions. The Northern Territory, in my opinion, will never be successfully developed by settlers who go to it direct from our capital cities. Before they can hope to succeed they must have some knowledge of the conditions that prevail there. I support this motion, for I believe that it will cause settlers of the right type to gravitate to the Northern Territory, and later to take up land in it. Many of the big

holdings in the Territory that will revert to the Crown shortly will be subdivided for closer settlement, and it is highly necessary that there should be some settlers with suitable experience ready to take up the smaller holdings. It has been suggested also, by interjection, that the Queensland Government should bear the full cost of constructing this line. I disagree with that view. New South Wales will benefit at least as much as Queensland by the building of the line, and should bear part of the cost of it. Another justification for building the line is that it will pass through country that is generally and rightly regarded as the stock nursery of Australia. Until comparatively recently there were 17,000,000 sheep in Queensland, but the calamitous drought that has prevailed in the last twelve months has caused 6,000,000 of them to die. The physical features of Queensland are such that it rarely happens that the whole State is drought-stricken at the same time. If this line had been operating in the last twelve months it would have been possible to transport practically all the sheep that have died to areas where there was plenty of feed and water, and so to have saved them. The district that I represent, for instance, from Mackay to Thursday Island, is a smiling garden with an abundant water supply, and it would have been of tremendous advantage to us if we could have transported those 6,000,000 sheep into some of the luxuriant country that is available there; but, as it is, the nation has suffered a loss the extent of which it is almost impossible to compute.

Mr. MANNING.—If only some of the 6,000,000 sheep had been transhipped the remainder would have had more country.

Dr. NOTT.—That is so. The best that could be done under existing conditions was to send away as many as possible of the stud ewes and rams. The wethers were left to their fate and practically all of them died. That will adversely affect the prosperity of Queensland for many years. Many pastoralists and graziers are experiencing the greatest difficulty in artificially feeding cattle and sheep. Some are expending as much as £2,000 per week in importing maize to keep alive the remnants of what were at one time magnificent herds and flocks. Were such

a railway as is proposed in the motion constructed by the State and Commonwealth Governments in co-operation, the expenditure involved in its construction would be recouped in the first three months of any drought that might occur in the future. There is an economic aspect of the proposed railway construction in the effect it would have upon our beef industry. There are being grazed in the vicinity of the route of the proposed railway, half the cattle in Queensland, and Queensland produces half the cattle reared in Australia. Our surplus of cattle is roughly 800,000. Twenty per cent. of the number are used for export under conditions that show no profit to the grower. About half the number are taken over the borders into the southern States, and used as store cattle, and for consumption in those States. The country through which the proposed line would go is the actual breeding ground of most of these cattle, and if facilities were provided for their transport to the coastal areas, in times of emergency they could be treated in a satisfactory manner, and at a profit to the growers. Queensland is the only State that is still engaged in the beef export trade, and for the simple reason that she cannot get out of it. Costs of production and wages are high. The factories must be very large, for the reason that the killing and preserving of beef is a seasonal industry. Enormous numbers of cattle have to be passed through the meat works during a short season, and, consequently, wages in the industry are very high. Cattle having to travel long journeys on the hoof, must often be put through the factories in a condition which does not reflect credit on the output of the industry. Anomalous conditions existing at present in the southern portions of Australia might be, to a great extent, overcome by the construction of such a railway as the honorable member for Macquarie has proposed. As the average price which Queensland producers get for their beef at the slaughteryards or meat works is about 17s. per 100 lb. at the meat works, and 45s. for beef brought 9,000 miles, we can easily understand why there is no profit in the industry, and why Mr. Hardacre, who is now a member of the Land Court in Queensland,

and was at one time Minister for Agriculture in a Labour Government, stated recently that if existing conditions continued the pastoral industry would shortly be a thing of the past. The price of 17s. per 100 lb. of beef at the slaughteryards and meatworks practically fixes the price of cattle for the whole of northern Queensland. Whilst producers in Queensland receive only 17s. per 100 lb. for their cattle, cattle are sold in the southern markets at the extraordinary price of 65s. per 100 lb. Only the other day I noticed the sale, in this southern market, of a four-months old heifer for £7, which is practically the price that would be paid for two cows in Queensland.

Mr. FENTON.—Bullocks are sold here for £24 a head.

Dr. NOTT.—I noticed that at recent sales here 40 fat cows averaged £25 per head, whereas £4 10s. is a fair price in Queensland for a fat bullock. No one by any stretch of the imagination can suggest that one Victorian cow is worth four fat Queensland bullocks. Because of their inability to get to the southern markets Queensland pastoralists are suffering very severe losses.

Mr. FORDE.—Their losses are not due to their having to pay high wages.

Dr. NOTT.—No; but the fact that high wages have to be paid to men engaged in a seasonal occupation at the slaughter-yards and meatworks contributes to the unsatisfactory condition of the beef industry. Queensland producers may not be envious of the price paid for beef in Victoria, but they are not satisfied with the conditions that exist in their own State. If a railway were constructed by the route suggested by the honorable member for Macquarie, it would link up the western portion of Queensland with the coast in such a way that a continuous supply of cattle would be available for the meatworks. Townsville could then be made a slaughtering dépôt for the supply to southern consumers, not of frozen beef, but of chilled beef. This would greatly benefit the cattle industry of Australia, as well as consumers of beef in Victoria. Australia should have an enormous meat export trade, but those engaged in the pastoral industry have been up against the wall for a very considerable time. Various methods have been suggested to overcome their difficulties. An Advisory

Meat Council was brought into being, but its establishment was followed by little or no success, though it was able to secure some concessions in freight and other charges. So long as the council continues in the effort to open up a foreign market in Great Britain and Europe, the beef industry must remain in the pitiable position it is in to-day. The natural market for the Australian beef industry is first the Australian market, and subsequently the eastern market. We have not so far been very successful in reaching the eastern market, but persistence will eventually secure that market for Australian meat. If we carried out railway construction which would enable continuous supplies of cattle to be taken from the interior to the coast for fattening purposes, the enormous size of our slaughter-houses and meatworks might be reduced, and with continuous operations throughout a lengthy season it should be possible to establish at Townsville a second Chicago. With scientific advice as to the best methods of freezing and chilling beef, there is no reason why we should not be able to capture the whole of the eastern trade. The British market has been captured by the people of Argentina because they are in a position to slaughter their cattle continuously. The cattle are brought from the interior to the coastal areas, where they are fattened in alfalfa or lucerne paddocks, and can be slaughtered when in fine condition. Those engaged in the meat exporting industry in Argentina are able to chill their beef, whilst we are compelled to freeze ours. One of the subjects which could be taken up successfully by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research is the scientific freezing of beef. Fat cattle freeze better killed at one age than if killed at another age. Meat that freezes quickly is in better condition when thawed than meat that is frozen slowly. These are all questions pertinent to the motion, and I hope that at no distant date the Commonwealth Government, in co-operation with the Queensland Government, will carry out a railway system which will enable a continuous supply of cattle to be available to our meatworks.

Mr. RODGERS.—Whilst the honorable member's argument is sound as affecting the home market, it would not solve the difficulty with regard to the export market.

Dr. NOTT.—It would solve it in so far as a continuous supply of cattle to a centre like Townsville, where shipping is available, would lead to specialization in the beef industry on scientific principles, which should result in the production of a better article than is produced at the present time.

Mr. RODGERS.—Our export margin is too small at present.

Dr. NOTT.—It is small, and it will, unfortunately, continue to become smaller unless we can scientifically solve the question of freezing our beef in such a way that, to the discriminating palates of people in Europe, it will compare with the chilled meat obtained from Argentina or locally-killed beef. In my opinion the honorable member for Macquarie was wise in refraining from laying down a definite route in his motion for the railway construction he proposes. The route to be followed is a matter to be left to experts. When the bill for the north-south railway was under discussion in this House, a good deal of time was spent, and a great deal of heat engendered, during the debate because different members advocated the adoption of different routes, and endeavoured to support their views by the fact that half a point more or less of rain fell on the east or west of a particular route. The route of the line might very well be left to inquiry by the Public Works Committee, and local residents of particular areas could advance the special claims of those areas. I do not think the time has arrived when we should be warranted in adopting the amendment moved by the honorable member for Swan (Mr. Gregorv). The honorable member is, no doubt, anticipating what will in the future become an accomplished fact. He referred to the potentialities for agriculture and grazing of the country along the route that he has suggested for the construction of a railway. I am willing to agree with him as to the fertility of the region which he thinks ought to be opened up; but up to the present it is practically virgin country, there are no large herds of cattle or flocks of sheep there, and settlement in the region is not far advanced.

Mr. GREGORY.—In the Wave Hill district there is a considerable area of good cattle country.

Dr. NOTT.—But I understood the honorable member to say that although there was a great future for the district

he proposed to serve by means of the railway he suggests, there are not very many herds there now. There is not the slightest doubt that that portion of Australia will ultimately be served by a railway, and I should be favorably disposed towards a proposal to build a road through it as a foundation upon which subsequently a railway could be laid. Personally, I think that a road built at a cost of about £2,000 a mile would admirably suit the requirements of the Northern Territory, but we are obliged to honour an obligation to build a railway, and, apparently, it is the desire of Parliament that such a line shall be built. A railway is evidently the solution of the problem of transport in the Northern Territory, but I suggest that the honorable member for Swan should withdraw his proposal for a railway, and substitute for it a proposal for the construction of a good road in that part of northern Australia he wishes to provide with transport facilities. I understand that it is the practice for many private motions to become hardy annuals, or almost perennials, but I hope that will not be the case with this motion. There are many reasons why the construction of a railway from Bourke to the Northern Territory is an urgent matter. When built, such a line will prove a great factor in the successful development of the fringes of Queensland and New South Wales, as well as the Northern Territory; it will afford enormous relief to the pastoralists and graziers along its route, and it will mean an enormous saving to Australia, through the prevention of losses from droughts. I hope, therefore, that the motion will not need to be put on the business-paper again, and that the Government will regard its adoption to-day as an instruction from Parliament that it should take the necessary steps to approach the States concerned in the construction of the railway. It gives me no little pleasure to support wholeheartedly the motion submitted by the honorable member for Macquarie.

Mr. FORDE (Capricornia) [6.9].—I am pleased to give my support to the motion submitted by the honorable member for Macquarie (Mr. Manning) for the building of a railway from Bourke in New South Wales, through Central Queensland towards Cloncurry, and across the Barkly Tablelands, to a point

on the North-South Railway in the Northern Territory. The pastoral areas between Bourke and Camooweal are among the best in Australia. The country through which the line would pass presents no engineering difficulties, and the railway should be a sound, economic, and commercial proposition. I think it is the duty of the Commonwealth Government to take the initial steps towards having it built. It is difficult to induce State Governments, with naturally circumscribed views on such questions, to visualize a great project from an Australian perspective. Therefore, as the Federal Government took the first step towards the unification of the railway gauges of Australia, and as the first link from Kyogle to Brisbane is being constructed the Government should also take into serious consideration the building of the railway proposed by the honorable member for Macquarie. Unfortunately, many motions standing in the names of private members are passed over and forgotten; but now that the Minister for Works and Railways (Mr. Hill) is in the chamber listening to what is said, possibly he will take up to the matter with the seriousness that it deserves. From a defence point of view, the railway would be of great importance to Australia.

Mr. GREGORY.—Building the railway as suggested in my amendment would bring about more settlement in the north.

Mr. FORDE.—The railway suggested by the honorable member for Macquarie would be a commercial and economic proposition. It would be a wonderful asset to Australia as a means of developing the continent. We all recognize that it is the duty of the Commonwealth to build the north-south railway, and Parliament has decided to build that line; but the proposal of the honorable member for Macquarie is an additional proposition which the Commonwealth should take in hand with every intention to push it through to completion. It will be a long line costing a great deal of money, but I think that the Commonwealth as a whole will be recouped its expenditure several times over in the first twenty years. It is estimated that every four years in the area to be served by this railway, the pastoralists lose approximately 20,000,000 sheep. In a good season a

sheep is worth from £1 to 27s. 6d., but at times the price paid in Queensland is as high as 30s. Taking 30s. as the value of a sheep, the loss of 20,000,000 sheep every four years means, approximately, a loss to Australia of £30,000,000. There are at present along the route within a reasonable distance of the proposed line, and in an area that would be benefited thereby, about 4,000,000 head of cattle and 10,000,000 sheep. During the recent drought in Central Queensland many large fortunes were lost owing to the difficulty experienced by the pastoralists in transferring their stock to areas in the southern portion of the State where there had been a good rainfall. Some of the pastoralists spent all their capital in feeding their stock on corn or any other fodder they could get. Some stock was transferred to the coastal areas and fed on sugar cane, and thousands of head were railed from Longreach down to Rockhampton, and thence to Brisbane, and then on to Charleville, a distance of, approximately, 1,200 miles. If the railway proposed by the honorable member for Macquarie had been built, the stock could have been saved by a railway journey of 400 miles. If the line suggested is built it will presumably touch the main east and west Queensland lines at Dajarra, 500 miles from Townsville, on the Cloncurry line, at Winton on the Townsville line, and at Blackall, 300 miles from Rockhampton, and Quilpie, 500 miles west of Brisbane. For the whole of the distance from Bourke to Daly Waters there is some of the finest country in Australia. It is necessary to build this line for national reasons. I have not the exact figures with me at the present time, but I think that Australia exports about 20 per cent. of its cattle; 80 per cent. are killed for local consumption. At any rate, it is estimated that Australia can supply its own meat requirements until its population is increased by another 2,000,000, and that afterwards there will be a shortage. It is stated in the *Commonwealth Year-Book* that in 60 years our population will be approximately 20,000,000. It can be readily seen that, unless we build railways such as that now proposed, to develop our pastoral areas, there must be a serious shortage of cattle to meet the local consumption in Australia. Within the next few years,

great areas of rich pastoral leasehold lands in the centre, south, west, and north of Queensland will revert to the Crown and be cut up for closer settlement. Where there are to-day a few hundreds of pastoralists, in a few years there will be thousands of small graziers. The wealthy squatter with a big capital behind him can pass through a period of drought without being wiped out, but the small graziers with limited capital will not be in the same fortunate position. For instance, they will not be able to send their stock over the long, circuitous rail journey between Longreach and Charleville by way of Rockhampton and Brisbane; but, if the proposed railway is built, they can save their stock by transporting them over the much shorter route between Longreach and Charleville.

Mr. MANNING.—Even if the small settlers could bear the expense of the long railway journey referred to by the honorable member, there would not be sufficient rolling-stock available for them.

Mr. FORDE.—That is another point. In times of drought hundreds of people are calling out for rolling-stock. There are dozens of applications for special trains, and the result is that many of the pastoralists are subjected to long delays. When sheep are in a very low condition, thousands of them may perish before a train is available to remove them. This railway would bring Darwin into direct rail communication with Sydney, from which it is distant about 2,241 miles, and also with Canberra, the new Seat of Government. In the event of an invasion—which we hope will never happen—such a line would be of immense strategic value, and I believe that the Commonwealth would be justified in building it, if only for defence purposes. Royal commissions have reported upon proposals for the construction of a railway along this route, but a good deal of opposition has been shown to it, because of a fear that it might prejudice the north-south railway, and the honorable member for Swan (Mr. Gregory) has moved an amendment to the motion to provide for the construction of a line from Broome, or Derby, in an easterly direction to junction with the north-south railway at or near Newcastle Waters, and then south of east to Camooweal. That railway is entirely distinct from the pro-

posal now before the House. A section of the north-south railway has already been authorized by this Parliament, and the Western Australian project must be considered apart from the proposed line from Bourke through western Queensland to the Northern Territory. None of these railways should be considered as competitive. It is the responsibility of this Parliament to develop the Northern Territory expeditiously and effectively. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, in a report upon the north-south and Central Queensland railway proposals, said:—

The Barkly Tableland comprises a stretch of rich country something in the shape of a rhomboid, extending in a south-westerly direction from a little east of Newcastle Waters practically to the Queensland border, a distance of about 300 miles, by a width of about 150 miles, and containing an area of approximately 40,000 square miles. It consists of slightly undulating country, varying from 600 to 1,000 feet above sea level, and the rocks are almost wholly cambrian quartzites, sandstone, limestones, etc. The quartzites constituted the so-called deserts—generally low rises, covered with sparse timber—and the black soil plains are covered with Mitchell grass. It has no permanent surface water of any consequence, with the exception of Anthony's lagoon, which has been known to be dry in particularly bad seasons, but has an annual average rainfall of between 15 and 20 inches, and large quantities of sub-artesian water can be obtained by boring practically anywhere. There are a number of stations on the tableland, and some 200,000 cattle are grazed there. At one period there were also 50,000 sheep at Avon Downs, but the breeding of sheep has lately been discontinued.

I have been informed that the Barkly Tableland is very suitable for the grazing of sheep; but, in order to put the wool-growing industry on a commercial basis, safeguard the graziers against drought, and provide communication with a portion of the coast, the railway is necessary. If it were constructed, settlers on the tableland would have direct and speedy access to the ports of Townsville and Rockhampton, and to Brisbane and Sydney. I am a firm believer in the past American and Canadian system of land development by the construction of railways in rich areas in advance of settlement. In those countries railways are regarded as pioneering agents, and are not expected to pay immediately. We cannot expect people to invest large sums in the Northern Territory until railway communication is provided.

Mr. RODGERS.—But I do not think we can expect any railways in that country to pay.

Mr. FORDE.—I could supply the honorable member with statistics to prove that railways are not profitable in any new country, and, with few exceptions, are unprofitable the world over. It is better to supplement the earnings of railway systems from the general revenue than, by the charging of exorbitant fares and freights, to place an unbearable burden upon the people in country districts. Any one travelling through Central Western Queensland at the present time must appreciate the urgent necessity for the construction of the proposed railway. When I was in Rockhampton a few weeks ago four and five sheep trains were passing through every night with stock that was being removed from drought-affected areas to southern pastures. People with stout hearts and great expectations have invested money in land and stock in Western Queensland, and some of them told me that they have suffered losses ranging from £5,000 to £20,000 during the last few months owing to the drought. Many of them have lost the savings of a life time. We must give adequate means of transport to the people who are prepared to pioneer this country. It is the duty of this Parliament to do anything possible to ameliorate the distress of the settlers of inland Australia and the Northern Territory. Honorable members have a responsibility to view this project, not from a State point of view, but as a great national concern, worthy of the intelligent consideration of the Parliament of the Commonwealth.

Sitting suspended from 6.28 to 8 p.m.

Mr. DUNCAN-HUGHES (Boothby) [8.0].—I have listened with interest to the debate on this motion—there has been very little discussion of the amendment. The motion appears to me to be one of great importance, which will repay full consideration before a decision on it is registered. I shall not speak this evening at great length, but I hope to present a few facts in support of the claim which I have made. The suggestion was made by the honorable member for Herbert (Dr. Nott) that as honorable members from his State

voted for the north-south line, honorable members from the southern States should reciprocate by voting for this motion. I do not wish to display ingratitude to any honorable member, whether he is a Queenslander or not for his attitude to the north-south line; but I point out that the construction of that line will be simply the partial fulfilment of a contract entered into years ago, and that no possible claim can arise in regard to it. The responsibility for proceeding with the construction of that line rested on the whole House, and I was glad to see that honorable members from Queensland recognized that fact just as did honorable members from other States. I should like to ask the honorable member for Herbert, as he recognizes the obligation resting upon this Parliament in regard to the line from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs, whether he agrees that the responsibility is equally great to construct the line northwards from Alice Springs to Daly Waters. If he admits the one obligation, it seems to me that he is forced to concede the other.

Dr. NOTT.—I admitted that in agreeing to construct the north-south line we were honouring an obligation.

Mr. DUNCAN-HUGHES.—That is to say, so far as the line to Alice Springs is concerned, but what about the line not yet authorized from Alice Springs to Daly Waters?

Dr. NOTT.—I am willing to agree to the construction of that.

Mr. DUNCAN-HUGHES.—Then I suggest to the honorable member that the proper thing for him to do is to support the construction of that line before he votes for this motion, which refers to a line which is not a contractual responsibility of the Commonwealth. It has been stated by honorable members, including the honorable member for Herbert, that it is futile to suggest that the line proposed has anything to do with the north-south line. I must say plainly and briefly, that I cannot for one moment agree with that. I endorse the interjections of the honorable member for Angas (Mr. Parsons), and I fail to see how any one can escape the point expressed in them. It is surely within the knowledge of every honorable member that for some years there has been much discussion as to the route which

should be followed, and particularly as to whether the line should be constructed entirely in South Australia and the Northern Territory, or should be diverted into New South Wales and Queensland, in which event it would pass through Camooweal, and proceed from there in a north-westerly direction to Darwin. It is within the knowledge of every member of the community who takes an interest in these matters that there has been a division of opinion as to which is the best route. Residents in my State have always maintained that the direct route should be followed, because that is specified in the contract; but honorable members from the eastern States have sometimes thought that the contract did not exist, and that the line should be diverted eastwards. I am sure that there is no one who will not agree that those two routes have been under consideration, and that the construction of neither of them has yet been completely approved. Therefore, I put it to honorable members that if this motion were carried, and were acted upon by the Government, the effect of it would be to renounce the contract, and to give effect to the alternative scheme.

Dr. Nott.—That is not the object of the motion.

Mr. DUNCAN-HUGHES.—I am not imputing an object or an improper motive to any one, but that will be the effect of carrying the motion if the Government considers that it should give effect to it. The motion is that a line be constructed from Bourke to Cloncurry, and from there, presumably via or close to Camooweal, to Daly Waters. The inevitable result of that would be that for many years, and possibly for all time, the obligation to construct a line southwards from Daly Waters to Alice Springs would be shelved. For my part I have made my attitude clear right from the time when I entered this Parliament, and I repeat to-night that I will not be a party to any proposal which, in my opinion, will alter the route of the north-south line so as to remove it outside the central State. If the line from Bourke to Cloncurry, Camooweal, and Daly Waters is constructed, we may say that, almost as a matter of course, the proposed line from Daly Waters south to Alice Springs will be left unfinished for many years. I repeat that that line has to be

constructed under a definite contract, to which the Commonwealth Government has set its hand; but in regard to the line covered by the motion, the Government has accepted no responsibility, although I do not say that it may not have a moral responsibility in such cases. The line from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs is even yet only in course of survey. When I voted three years ago for the Emungalan to Daly Waters line, I anticipated that there would be a more vigorous prosecution of the enterprise than there appears to have been. The real point to which I wish to address myself has not yet been referred to in this debate, and yet it is a point of some importance—the cost of the proposal. We may all agree that the proposal, on the face of it, seems to be desirable. If we take a map of Australia and notice where Bourke, Cloncurry, Camooweal and Daly Waters are, it is obvious that the line would develop undeveloped country, or at any rate, would provide modern transport where it is needed. I say that one should not embark on schemes of this kind for no other reason than that they appear to be desirable. I am the seventh member to speak in this debate. Of those who have spoken before me, four have come from Queensland. I do not suggest that those honorable members have not studied the question, at least in print; but has one of them, and if there is one of them, have two of them, seen this route? Have they been to Bourke and worked their way northwards via Cloncurry across the Barkly Tablelands to Daly Waters? It is very unlikely that any one of them has done that, and yet it is most important, before we come to a decision on this question, that we should have information from persons, not necessarily experts, who have studied the question on the spot.

Dr. Nott.—Is it not a fact that 6,000,000 sheep died there recently as a result of the drought?

Mr. DUNCAN-HUGHES.—Many unfortunate things happen in this world which would be prevented if it were financially possible to prevent them. It is a question of the extent to which the country can afford to remedy them, and which of our troubles should be remedied first. We cannot say that because a proposal seems desirable on the face

of it, or can be proved to be desirable, it must be at once accepted. Particularly is that so when dealing with a country of such enormous area of the country as that with which we are now concerned. I shall say very little on the question of cost, but what I have to say I hope will cause some honorable members to think seriously before they vote for what will be a heavy incubus on the Commonwealth. In 1923 we passed an act for the construction of the Emungalan to Daly Waters line. That was an extension of the existing line southwards for 160 miles, and it was to cost the Commonwealth a sum not exceeding £1,545,000. In 1924 we authorized the construction of the Grafton to South Brisbane line, which was to cost the Commonwealth £3,500,000, plus discount, and the expenses of borrowing. Early in this year we passed the act for the Oodnadatta to Alice Springs line, which is to cost £1,700,000. In these circumstances, I feel perfectly justified in raising the question of the probable cost of giving effect to this new scheme.

Mr. RODGERS.—Have the sponsors of the line given any particulars as to that?

Mr. DUNCAN-HUGHES.—Not to my knowledge.

Mr. MANNING.—If this line had been in operation during the last twelve months the lives of 6,000,000 sheep could have been saved.

Mr. DUNCAN-HUGHES. — The question is not what could have been saved, but whether from a business point of view there is sufficient capital available to expend on the project. A business man has to consider what undertakings shall be the first charge on his available capital, and I submit that that is the standpoint from which we should look at this proposal. The cost of the line from Emungalan to Daly Waters works out at nearly £10,000 a mile, possibly portions of the suggested line might be built for a little less than that. The honorable member for Kennedy (Mr. G. Francis) stated that the distance from Bourke to Daly Waters is 1,230 miles. In that event, this line would probably cost between £12,000,000 and £13,000,000, although it might be built for £10,000,000. If my figures are wrong I shall be glad to have them corrected. I submit that this House ought to give very careful consideration to any

project which involves the country in such heavy expenditure, notwithstanding that the work might be most desirable from many points of view. In addition to the railway undertakings that I have enumerated as having been agreed to by this Parliament in the last four years, we must not forget that our railway gauges need unifying: I shall not evade the fact that a large expenditure is necessary under that heading in my own State. It has been suggested that the £12,000,000 necessary to build this railway might be appropriated from migration loans, but before that could be done, the States concerned would have to agree, and as New South Wales has not yet approved of the migration scheme, I do not see how it can be expected that this railway, at least in so far as New South Wales is concerned, can be built out of money derived from that source.

Mr. MANNING.—Only 100 miles of the line would run through New South Wales.

Mr. DUNCAN-HUGHES. — Apart from the New South Wales portion, for a long distance it would run through the Northern Territory, and the question arises whether, in present circumstances, the Government would be justified in spending immigration money in building that portion of it. With all due deference may I say that it appears to me that such a project should have been introduced, not by means of a private member's motion, but by a responsible Government, and then only after the fullest and closest investigation had been made. This would be a very long railway, and as it would involve the country in enormous expense, it should have been left to the Government to consider the wisdom or otherwise of bringing the proposal before us. It is not a matter for surprise that honorable members who represent divisions in New South Wales and Queensland support the building of the suggested line from the eastern side, while honorable members who represent Western Australian divisions contend that it should be constructed from the western side.

Mr. MANNING.—Honorable members who represent New South Wales and Queensland had sufficient vision to support the building of the north-south railway.

Mr. DUNCAN-HUGHES.—I do not desire to appear ungrateful for what has been done in that respect, but since

the honorable member presses me, I may be permitted to point out that no division was taken on the proposal to build the Oodnadatta to Alice Springs line. I do not suppose for a moment that honorable members who represent New South Wales and Queensland would deliberately hinder the Government fulfilling both a legal and a moral obligation. But there is nothing of that kind to be considered in connexion with this scheme, which is entirely different from either the north-south or the east-west railway projects. The building of the north-south line is a matter of contract between the Commonwealth and South Australian Governments; and the east-west line was laid, not only for defence purposes, but also to provide Western Australia with some internal means of communication with the rest of the Commonwealth; but this proposal is for a purely developmental railway. I agree that it would be within the power of the Commonwealth to undertake the work under the provisions of section 51 subsection xxxiv. of the Constitution, which provides that—

The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to—

(xxxiv.) railway construction and extension in any State with the consent of the State.

But there is no reason for it having anything to do with the matter yet, for it has not been approached by either of the States concerned. I regret that the Government will not give me permission to continue my remarks at a later date, for, not only is there a good deal more that I should like to say, but I know that other honorable members who are absent to-day desire to discuss the question. If the motion is to be forced to a vote to-night, as the Grafton to South Brisbane proposal was forced to a vote some years ago, I shall vote against it and also the amendment. A contract made by the Commonwealth Government with the South Australian Government has not yet been completed, and no suggestion has been made that the Government intends to introduce a bill in the near future for a railway from Alice Springs to Daly Waters. What is more important to me is, that if the House should pass this

Mr. Duncan-Hughes.

motion, and the Government gave effect to it, it is unlikely that the north-south railway would be completed for very many years, if at all. In these circumstances, I have no alternative but to vote against both the motion and the amendment.

Mr. PROWSE (Forrest) [8.27].—I intend to support the amendment. All schemes for constructing railways into undeveloped country should be subjected to the most careful investigation. Reports submitted to us from time to time have recommended that, for strategical purposes, a railway line should be constructed right round the Commonwealth, but a considerable distance from the coast. The late Earl Kitchener advised that that should be done. The proposal of the honorable member for Swan (Mr. Gregory) is that a section of that belt of railway shall be constructed through one of the highest portions of tropical Australia, which has been known for more than 80 years. After Sir George Grey visited the Kimberleys, he strongly recommended the Government of the day to encourage settlement there. The land in that locality is unquestionably fertile, and the only reason for its non-development is that it is not connected by railway with the settled parts of Australia. The honorable member for Boothby (Mr. Duncan-Hughes) suggested that the adoption of this proposal would render most unlikely the completion of the north-south railway; but that is not in my mind. I consider that the State Governments should build their own railway lines, except when special railways are needed in their territory for strategic purposes. New South Wales and Queensland have constructed railways running inland from the coast. In Western Australia we have already three lateral railways connected up, by means of which settlers are enabled to go into the back country. The railway suggested by the honorable member for Swan would form a part of a necessary permanent railway round Australia. It would pass through excellent country from Broome or Derby to Newcastle Waters. It should quickly induce settlement, because that country is capable of carrying many sheep and cattle. It might be connected with the line which Western Australia has constructed from Perth to Geraldton and away up to Meekathara.

Dr. NOTT.—Has the honorable member read Sir George Buchanan's report, and his reference to a proposed connexion with the Queensland central railway?

Mr. PROWSE.—I have read his report in connexion with harbour improvement. The coastal portions of Australia are served by shipping facilities. The railway proposed by the honorable member for Swan is absolutely necessary in order to promote settlement on the rich and fertile country which it would open up. At Newcastle Waters the proposed line would connect with the north-south railway, and could then be continued through to Camooweal to link up with the Queensland railway system. I have no wish to question the reasonableness of the proposal of the honorable member for Macquarie, for the construction of a line that would be of service to the sometimes arid portions of New South Wales and Queensland; but we should have a concerted plan of railway construction, and if a line were constructed from Meekathara to Broome, thence across to Newcastle Waters and on to Camooweal, we should have a railway right round Australia. The construction of a railway at the same time strategic and developmental, such as that suggested by the honorable member for Swan, is deserving of the gravest consideration by this House.

Mr. BOWDEN (Parramatta) [8.35].—We can all agree that this is a very important motion, and that the railway construction suggested by the honorable member for Macquarie (Mr. Manning) will be necessary at some time or other. No doubt a railway will yet be constructed from Cloncurry to Newcastle Waters, and thence right across the continent to Derby or Broome. Such a line would open up the most productive portions of the Northern Territory, and would do, perhaps, more than anything else that could be suggested to encourage its settlement and development. But I cannot lose sight of the fact that the Government has proposed the appointment of a commission to govern the Northern Territory. The two railways referred to in the motion and amendment are lines which should assist in the development of the Territory. Our first thought in considering them should be its development. We have had before us, from time to time, different schemes for

railway construction. It has been suggested that a line should be built across the Barkly Tableland to the mouth of the McArthur River. Another scheme proposed would link that line up with the north-south railway at Newcastle Waters. But it seems to me that the House is not in a position, at the present time, either to affirm or to refuse to affirm the desirability of the proposed railway construction. If we did so, we should lay ourselves open to the charge of recklessly, and without due consideration, committing the Parliament to enormous expenditure. The cost of the railway construction proposed would not be thousands, or hundreds of thousands, but millions of pounds. That a proposal involving such an enormous expenditure should be submitted to the House in this way, and that honorable members should be expected to vote upon it is not very complimentary to them. We need further inquiry and a great deal more information than we have concerning these proposals. In all fairness to the Northern Territory Commission should we not, before agreeing to such proposals, learn what its policy of development and its opinion with regard to railway construction may be? I agree with the honorable member for Macquarie that the railway he has suggested would be of immense advantage to the people of Australia. I go so far with him, but I cannot go any farther. We have very scanty information as to the cost of the proposed line. We have had estimates running from £10,000,000 up to £40,000,000. We have no information as to the way in which the proposal is viewed by the State Governments concerned. We do not know whether they would or would not consent to it, or whether they would be prepared to bear part of the cost of the line within the boundaries of their States, or would expect the Commonwealth Government to bear the whole of the cost. We should have information on all these points before we are asked to vote for a proposal of this kind. These considerations prevent me from supporting the motion. The honorable member for Boothby (Mr. Duncan-Hughes) has suggested that if the line proposed by the honorable member for Macquarie were undertaken, the north-south railway would be allowed to go by the board. I do not think so,

because the construction of the railways proposed in the motion and amendment would not relieve this Parliament of its obligations in connexion with the north-south railway. Sympathetic as I am with both proposals suggested, I could not possibly vote for them. I think that the honorable member for Macquarie should be satisfied with the expression of opinion given in the discussion of his motion, and would do well not to press it to a division.

Mr. FOSTER (Wakefield) [8.40].—I agree with the honorable member for Parramatta (Mr. Bowden) in the view he has expressed of the impracticability of adopting the course suggested by the honorable member for Macquarie (Mr. Manning), and thus committing this House, as the passing of the motion would do, to a financial responsibility running into from £8,000,000 to £10,000,000, or more. What condition have we got into in this National Parliament when we talk of millions as if they were thousands? Five or six years ago such a proposal as the honorable member for Macquarie has submitted would never have been dreamed of in this Parliament. The honorable member does not know what the railway he proposes would cost. He has given us no information as to the route, nor has he told us the rainfall or character of the country through which the line would go. Yet the honorable member would commit this House to the expenditure of all these millions of money. No wonder the tax-payers say that this Parliament has money to burn. It is not decent to put honorable members in such a position as they are placed in by being asked to vote for such a motion. They should realize their responsibilities to the country. So far as the development of the Northern Territory is concerned, we have passed a bill under which a commission is to be appointed to which that development is to be entrusted. The bill imposes great responsibilities upon the commission, in order that action may be taken on the spot, and things requiring to be done may be done promptly, and there may be a cessation of the wasteful expenditure of money to no purpose that has taken place in the Northern Territory since it was transferred to the Commonwealth. I want honorable members to exercise a little commonsense, and to have some

regard for the position they occupy as representatives of the people. I should like a stop to be put to the hypocritical nonsense that is talked concerning the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government and Parliament for the construction of the north-south railway and the development of the Northern Territory on the lines agreed to when it was taken over by the Commonwealth. If it is not developed in a practical fashion, honorable members need not continue their hypocrisy about maintaining a White Australia. Without development of the Territory, they cannot have a White Australia. We have no right to continue to hold the Territory without using it. When we consider that there are millions of God's people close to our borders, who scarcely have room to turn, we cannot expect to keep Australia white if we do not make use of the country. The League of Nations has already intimated that we must be prepared to make use of the Territory under our control or tear down our barriers against coloured labour.

Mr. FENTON.—The honorable member should not talk in that way.

Mr. FOSTER.—The world will soon be talking in that way. The League of Nations has given an unmistakable note of warning to Australia.

Mr. FENTON.—I think the honorable member had better leave that subject alone.

Mr. FOSTER.—I shall approach the question from another aspect. It is about time that this Parliament decided whether it is to attend to its own business, or build railways here, there, and everywhere. We have had before us during the last three or four years proposals unsupported by expert advice to embark upon projects involving the expenditure of millions of pounds; but fortunately, by vigorous and definite resistance in this House, we have been delivered from many financial responsibilities into which we would otherwise have been rushed. The history of railway construction in the States ought to teach us a lesson. Before plunging into the expenditure of money on building a network of railways that would be an incubus on the Commonwealth and keep taxation high, we should endeavour to secure efficiency on the lines already controlled by the Commonwealth. In any case, we have no right to build

railways outside our own territory. It is the business of the States to do that. Nor can we build railways properly from Melbourne. Railway companies operating in other parts of the world never dream of undertaking the construction and control of railways which are separated from their own particular systems. If a wise railway company intends to build a railway which is separated from its own system, it will arrange for another company whose system adjoins its new line to build and operate it, turning into a profitable concern what otherwise could not fail to be a losing proposition. Before we enter upon any project to build railways outside our own territory, we ought to have most efficient expert advice to tell us whether we are likely to do right or wrong. Political railways have been the curse of the Australian railway systems. In every State lines built by political influence have been abandoned, and in many cases pulled up. The honorable member for Macquarie proposes to build a line through pastoral country with a very limited rainfall. Railways never pay in pastoral country.

Dr. NOTT.—Does the honorable member contend that the north-south line will pay?

Mr. FOSTER.—I do not expect it to pay unless, in addition to pastoral country, it opens up mineral and other wealth. There are more unprofitable railways in Queensland than there are in any other State. The Queensland railways did not succeed in paying even before the calamitous reign of terror through which the State is now passing. I do not think I am far wrong in describing the administration of the Labour Government in Queensland as a reign of terror. This Parliament has put its signature to an agreement to build a railway from Oodnadatta to Darwin, but that agreement was made on the understanding that even when the Territory was cut through from north to south by a railway its transport requirements would not be fully met. It was anticipated, even before the transfer of the Territory to the Commonwealth, that the building of the north-south railway would be but the beginning, and that the programme of railway development in the Northern Territory would not be completed until lines were built running east and west to the nearest ports in Queens-

land and Western Australia. The proposal of the honorable member for Macquarie is not new. Twenty years ago our old friend, Mr. Waddell, brought forward a similar proposal. It was examined and dissected in every way, and if it was a good proposition why was it not taken in hand by the wealthy State of New South Wales, or the State of Queensland, the wealthiest in the Commonwealth while it was under good management and was enjoying bounteous prosperity? It was not carried out because it would have brought no advantage to those States. Yet the honorable member for Macquarie is quite willing that the Commonwealth should accept the responsibility. It is about time the Commonwealth ceased doing so much work for the States. A thorough investigation of our financial position, which we have not had for many years, would show how impossible it is for us to embark upon these wild-goose proposals, which have nothing to recommend them. Honorable members should cease recommending the Commonwealth to embark on the expenditure of millions of pounds on projects which have not been reported on by experts.

Mr. FORDE.—The building of this line would save millions of pounds' worth of cattle and sheep.

Mr. FOSTER.—How many times would it do so?

Mr. FORDE.—Every four years.

Mr. FOSTER.—Then all I can say is that it would pass through some very poor country.

Mr. FORDE.—Drought occurs in the very best country.

Mr. FOSTER.—I am aware of that, but I also know that a drought very rarely occurs everywhere at the same time, and that except about once in fifteen or twenty years, the pastoralists always have a getaway for their stock. I ask leave to continue my remarks on some future occasion.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

POSTPONED BUSINESS.

Orders of the Day—General business—standing in the name of Dr. Maloney, relating to the Referendum and Initiative, and the Nationalization of Medical Services, postponed to 8th July.

SUPPLY (*Formal*).

PACIFIC ISLANDS MAIL SUBSIDY—
WIRELESS BROADCASTING—TASMANIAN POST OFFICES—COMMONWEALTH BANK, HOBART—ALLOWANCE POST OFFICES—PUBLICATION OF WIRELESS NEWS—COUNTRY AUTOMATIC POST OFFICES—TELEPHONE SERVICE.

Question—That Mr. Speaker do now leave the chair—proposed.

Mr. COLEMAN (Reid) [9.0].—I take this opportunity to protest against the delay of the Government in announcing its decision in regard to the subsidy for the mail and shipping services to the Pacific Islands. For many years past, Burns, Philp and Company has been paid by the Commonwealth a subsidy for the maintenance of regular shipping and mail services to the mandated Territory of New Guinea, Papua, and other Pacific Islands, with which Australia trades. The inference to be drawn from a departmental paper, dated the 16th March, and tabled in this House a few weeks ago, is that the Government intends to abandon the arrangement with Burns, Philp and Company, and endeavour to substitute an arrangement with foreign shipping companies, possibly employing Chinamen, lascars, and other coloured labour. If that is the intention of the Government, I enter my emphatic protest against a step which is calculated to seriously injure Australian shipping and trade and throw out of work several hundred white seamen. In excusing the long delay that has taken place, in completing the arrangements for a new Pacific mail contract, the document to which I have already referred says—

It is, therefore, proposed to invite offers from companies trading between Melbourne on the one hand, and Singapore and Hong Kong on the other hand, to make regular calls at the principal ports of Papua and the Mandated Territory. Any service offered as a result of such an advertisement will be considered as an alternative to the present services, which make the Territories terminal ports.

I interpret that statement to mean that the Government intends to offer to the Nippon Yusen Kaisha line, of Japan, and the E. and A. line of China, and other shipping lines a subsidy, to engage in the island trade. Such a policy will not find favour with the people of

Australia, or the people who are interested in the development of Australian trade with Papua and New Guinea. The whole tenor of the published statement is that the present service is unsatisfactory. The existing mail contract was investigated by the Navigation Commission when it visited Papua and New Guinea, and its report was tabled in this House twelve months ago. I am not so much concerned in defending Burns, Philp and Company as in ensuring that an Australian company, employing white labour upon Australian conditions, shall be continued in this trade; but that company has, undoubtedly, a legitimate grievance against the Government, because of its delay in finalizing the contract. In September, 1924, tenders were invited for this service, returnable on the 15th January, 1925. Burns, Philp and Company were, I understand, the only tenderers, and the amount of their tender was subsequently published in the press. How and why the information was disclosed, the Government professes not to know, but it was unfair to the company that the amount of the tender should have been allowed to leak out. Again, on the 8th October, 1925, the Government called for tenders which closed on the 30th November last. Since that date, nothing has been done by the Government, but Burns, Philp and Company has been asked to carry on the service by temporary extensions of the contract. To the complaint that the Pacific mail service has been unsatisfactory the company's reply is that the delay of the Government in declaring its policy has precluded it from acquiring new ships to improve the service. If that is so, the Government's unbusinesslike methods are responsible for any complaints that have been made. Apparently the purpose of the Government in deferring its decision is to induce other companies to enter into this trade. The application of the Navigation Act to New Guinea and Papua was suspended last year, in face of the bitterest opposition from this side of the House, but despite that inducement no foreign companies have attempted to enter this trade. Therefore, I suspect that the Government is offering to some foreign company special inducements to establish a service between Australia and the islands. The retention

of an Australian-controlled service is of vital importance to the defence of Australia, and having regard to the fact that our Pacific possessions are costing the Commonwealth a large sum every year for administration and the maintenance of shipping and mail facilities, Australia is surely entitled to the major portion of the trade with them. Although it may be advisable to develop the Eastern markets for the products of Papua and New Guinea, we must not lose sight of the fact that an Australian service is necessary in order to hold our share of the trade. At the present time the service maintained by Burns, Philp and Company means the expenditure in Australia upon repairs and stores of, approximately, £100,000 per annum, whilst the annual value of cargoes carried to and from the mainland is about £2,000,000. The wages paid to Australian seamen represent £87,000 per annum. If, owing to the Government's failure to continue the subsidy for a definite period, the company withdraws its service, the Commonwealth will lose a substantial sum of money that is now spent here, and many men will be thrown out of work. Moreover, Burns, Philp and Company may be compelled by competition and economic pressure to man their ships with coloured labour, and hundreds of white Australians will be thrown out of employment. It is for them I am principally concerned because of the present state of the labour market. I have received a protest from certain marine transport unions interested in the trade against any such action on the part of the Government. They point out that in addition to throwing hundreds of men out of work the termination of the contract will mean a direct loss of £150,000 now expended in Australia each year for repairs to ships and other incidentals. There is no excuse for the Government's delaying of its decision for over twelve months. It has had ample time to arrive at a decision. It is not fair that Burns, Philp and Company should be kept in suspense; and I hope that before the Government discontinues the subsidy—if that is its intention—it will give its supporters an opportunity to consider whether that course will be wise, or fraught with disaster and loss to Australia. The company, which I approached unofficially for

confirmation of the information I have given to the House, has, I understand, told the Government that it realizes that the present service can be improved. It is prepared to improve it if the Government will be business-like, and indicate its intentions in regard to the subsidy. Until the company knows what the Government proposes to do, it will not incur additional expenditure in connexion with the Pacific services.

Dr. NOTT (Herbert) [9.13].—I am very pleased that the honorable member for Reid (Mr. Coleman) has drawn attention to the condition of the island shipping services. I have previously referred to this matter in the House, and have been awaiting an announcement of the Government's intention in regard to the continuation or termination of the existing agreement with Burns, Philp and Company. I have discussed the matter with the managers of the company, and they have made it clear to me that the existing uncertainty as to the Government's policy prevents them from instituting a thoroughly efficient service. The company is prepared to improve the service in any way desired, but under existing conditions it is not prepared to incur the expense of putting new ships into commission. This Parliament has from time to time passed measures for the development of Papua, and quite recently I heard a suggestion that some of the Papuan trade might with advantage be deviated as far south as Melbourne. All effort at centralization I strongly deprecate. I have no animus against Burns, Philp and Company. For 40 years that company has pioneered the Eastern and Pacific trade, and, therefore, it is entitled to consideration commensurate with the services it has rendered. I should like the Government to increase the existing subsidy to such an extent as would offer an inducement to Burns, Philp and Company to make Townsville the terminal port for the island services. All the facilities needed for handling deep-sea ships and large cargoes are already available at that port, which would be an excellent base for the export trade. If Townsville were made the terminal port for the island trade, the north of Queensland would be brought more closely into contact with Papua and the Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

Those possessions can be successfully developed only by people who are accustomed to tropical conditions, and the climatic conditions of North Queensland are almost identical with those in Papua and New Guinea. I urge the Government to bring this matter to finality at an early date, so that the people of the islands may have an assurance of an efficient shipping and mail service, without which there is little likelihood of development proceeding on the lines we desire. I am quite in accord with the remarks of the honorable member for Reid (Mr. Coleman), and hope that at no distant date the Government will announce its intention.

Mr. FENTON (Maribyrnong) [9.16].—I wish to bring under the notice of the honorable the Postmaster-General (Mr. Gibson) certain matters connected with wireless broadcasting. There seems to be a likelihood of the broadcasting business in this State being monopolized by one company. The Postmaster-General has already said that his department is alert in the matter and does not intend to allow a broadcasting monopoly, but, notwithstanding that assurance, suspicious movements are afoot. I wish to place all my cards on the table, so that the Minister, in any investigation that he may make, will have a knowledge of all the facts obtainable. From a man who is well-known in the wireless world, and who seems to know the facts, I have received the following letter relating to the proposed sale, or swallowing up, of the 3AR Broadcasting Company—

Mr. GIBSON.—This matter is before the courts at the present time. I think there is a case arising out of the letter referred to by the honorable member.

Mr. SPEAKER.—If that is so, I hope the honorable member will not proceed to read the letter.

Mr. FENTON.—In the circumstances, I shall not do so. I shall deal, instead, with the refusal of certain broadcasting companies to supply certain journals with copies of their programmes, for publication in advance. The honorable the Postmaster-General may know that the officers of his department have sent a communication to a company called Journals Proprietary Limited, which

publishes a wireless magazine. Mr. C. R. Benjamin is the managing director of that company, and he has made a complaint to me, and I believe to the department, that 3LO, in Melbourne, and Farmers Limited, in Sydney—I believe there is a connexion between the two—will not supply that journal with their week's programmes in advance. I should like the Postmaster-General to say whether his department has power to prevent a broadcasting company from supplying its programmes to one journal and denying them to others. In addition to the letter from Mr. Benjamin, I have letters from Mr. Malone, head of the wireless department of the Post Office, and Mr. Brown, secretary of the department, who intimate to the company that the department has no power to take the action desired. The letter from Mr. Benjamin to the department is as follows:—

5th October, 1925.

The Secretary,
Postmaster-General's Department,
Melbourne.

Dear Sir,

In further reference to the writer's interview with Mr. Malone, we enclose herewith copy of correspondence between ourselves and the Broadcasting Company of Australia Pty. Ltd., 3LO.

You will notice that their last reply to us was dated 3rd inst. 3LO is supplying all the daily papers two or three days ahead, the *Listener In*, owned by the *Herald* and *Weekly Times*, a week ahead, and *Wireless Weekly*, published in Sydney, also a week ahead with their broadcasting programmes.

As our magazine, *Popular Radio Weekly*, has a large circulation, we see no reason why 3LO should not supply us with their programme also, it being of great interest to listeners-in who pay their licence-fee.

We understand that a similar case was reported to you from Sydney, when you compelled the Broadcasting Company there to supply the programme. We are also given to understand that you have power under the act to compel the broadcasting companies to supply their programmes in advance.

We also enclose copies of correspondence between ourselves and Farmer's, Sydney (2FC). Farmer's supply the *Listener In* with their full week's programme a week ahead but refuse us any portion of it.

To our mind, the reason for 3LO declining to supply us with their programme is because Mr. Theodore Fink being chairman of directors of the *Herald* and *Weekly Times* publishing Co., is also a director of 3LO. The *Listener In* is owned by the *Herald* and *Weekly Times* Co., and our paper, *Popular Radio Weekly*, is in opposition to them, although we enjoy a much larger circulation than their publication.

We have no trouble in obtaining the broadcasting programmes from 3AR and 2BL:

We will be obliged if you will kindly give this matter your usual prompt attention, and thanking you in anticipation,

Yours faithfully,

JOURNALS PTY. LTD.,
CHAS. R. BENJAMIN, Director.

The magazine published by this company is intended for the information of listeners-in, and it should certainly include the complete programmes of all broadcasting stations. I hope that the Minister, if he has not power under the present regulations to prevent this preferential treatment of journals, will see that new regulations are introduced under which he can take action.

Mr. SEABROOK (Franklin) [9.24].—At Huonville, in my electorate, there is a very small post office, which was built over 40 years ago. The accommodation there for the staff is very cramped. A piece of ground was purchased by the department for the erection of a new office, the building of which I urge the Postmaster-General to expedite. The present office is situated in a growing district, and its staff has to handle the mails of outlying parts. It was built at a time when residences were included in post offices, and as a result the greater part of the building is now used as a residence.

I have another complaint to make about the post office at Sorell. Land was purchased for a new office there over twelve months ago. The residence in which the post office was previously located was sold, and the office has been moved to another residence, where the only accommodation available for the transaction of postal business is a verandah, covered over the front with glass. The district should have an official office. The department ought not to expect its servants to work in conditions such as exist at that office. When the department knew that the residence in which the post office was previously situated had been sold, it should have started the building of the proposed new office at once.

Some time ago, I asked the Treasurer (Dr. Earle Page) a question relating to the Commonwealth Bank building at Hobart. His answer was that the matter had nothing to do with him, but concerned only the board of directors of the

bank. When an honorable member ventilates such a grievance in this House, which is the only place where he can ventilate it, it is the duty of the Government to bring it before the directors of the bank. The bank building at Hobart is 70 years old. The Commonwealth bought it cheaply, but has spent a lot of money extending its scanty accommodation. The money that is being spent on this old building is virtually thrown away. A city like Hobart is entitled to a much better building for the accommodation of the Commonwealth Bank. The building is in the centre of the town, next to the post office, and arrangements could be made to conduct the bank business in the post office building during the erection of the new building. Many country towns have far better bank buildings than that which houses the Commonwealth Bank in Hobart, and I hope that the Government will very shortly erect a new building for it.

Mr. PERKINS (Eden-Monaro) [9.31].—I should like the Postmaster-General to announce the intention of the Government in regard to broadcasting wave lengths. At present many listeners-in in Sydney complain that it is impossible for them to hear 3LO when 2BL station is operating, and Melbourne people complain that they cannot hear 2BL when 3LO is operating. The wave lengths in Australia come within a narrow band and it is most difficult, unless one has an excellent receiving set, to listen-in to the desired station. I understand that the department takes the view that as listeners-in pay only one fee, they are entitled to listen-in to only one station; but that unsatisfactory position will need to be vastly improved before broadcasting can become as popular as it ought to be in a sparsely populated country of wide distances such as this is. I have been informed that the number of wireless broadcasting licences in New South Wales has decreased considerably in the last twelve months, and that is not as it should be. More licences have been issued in Victoria in proportion to its population than in any other State. It should be possible to provide wave lengths that could be selected on an ordinary set without difficulty. Even listeners-in who have first class sets find it difficult, unless they are experts, to listen in to the programme of their choice without interruptions from another station.

Mr. GIBSON.—Selectivity does not depend upon the number of valves.

Mr. PERKINS.—I am aware of that, but the position could be greatly improved. A few months ago a conference of wireless experts in Sydney decided to ask the Government to appoint a royal commission to inquire into the whole matter of broadcasting in Australia. I should like the Postmaster-General to intimate the decision of the Government on that matter. Country newspaper proprietors in New South Wales, and I suppose in the other States also, feel that they have a grievance, because they are prohibited by certain wireless regulations from installing receiving sets in their offices. It often happens that news of public importance is known in country towns by means of wireless long before the country newspaper offices receive it by telegraph or telephone. I understand that the department takes the view that if the newspaper offices were allowed to install receiving sets the telegraph and telephone revenue would suffer considerably; but I am afraid that we must face that loss. We might just as reasonably prohibit people from travelling by motor on the ground that it reduces the railway revenue, as prohibit newspaper proprietors from using the wireless on the ground that it reduces the telephone and telegraph revenue. With all due respect to the Postmaster-General (Mr. Gibson), I say that it is folly to prevent our people from making the fullest possible use of wireless. I trust that the Postmaster-General will indicate the attitude of the Government on these matters.

Mr. GIBSON (Corangamite — Postmaster-General) [9.35].—The department is unable to meet the wishes of the honorable member for Franklin (Mr. Seabrook) in regard to allowance post offices, where the business is carried on in private premises. In many instances the department pays more for the service that is rendered than it receives through the offices. Its policy is to establish allowance post offices throughout the length and breadth of the country, so that the postal service to the people may be as efficient as possible. Honorable members who have travelled in Great Britain will bear me out when I say that very few post office buildings are to be seen there, for practically the whole of the operations of the postal department are carried on in private business

premises; but the people have their mail delivered three or four times a day even in the country districts. We have about 7,000 allowance post offices in the Commonwealth, but it is most difficult to get people to maintain some of them. They tell us sometimes that the office consists of only a mailbag and a date stamp, and that they feel like throwing them out of the window.

I am hopeful that, in the near future, it will be possible to provide automatic post offices in many country centres. In the meantime, an automatic post office is operating for Gippsland districts with great success. It is situated next to a school, the mistress of which had not time to sort the mail, and the people come along and collect their letters when they please. If that arrangement is generally adopted, the practice will be to sort mail matter in the post offices and deposit it in the boxes of people within the district by the mail contractor, so that they may collect it at any hour they like, on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, as well as on ordinary week days.

I am also hopeful that it will be possible, in the near future, to establish an automatic telephone service in country districts. Two of our engineers have been working on a scheme for six months which they have high hopes will be completely successful. I cannot say any more on that point just now.

The honorable member for Maribyrnong (Mr. Fenton) expressed fears that there will be a monopoly of "A" class wireless stations. I understand that a law case affecting "A" class stations is pending, if it has not been actually commenced, so the least said on that question at present the better. But I can assure the honorable member that there is no fear of a monopoly occurring, for the department not only controls the programmes that are broadcast, but also allocates the revenue, in accordance with the programmes presented.

Mr. FENTON.—But is not a monopoly likely to occur when one broadcasting company can buy out another?

Mr. GIBSON.—No monopoly need be feared while the department controls the programmes, and allocates the revenue in accordance with them.

I appreciate the desirableness of announcing wireless programmes as early as possible, and will go as far as I can

to meet the wishes of the honorable member in that respect. Programmes should be available to the public at least a week in advance. Although many people may not desire to listen to racing and other sporting results, they may be very interested in some other matter that is to be broadcast, so it is desirable to fix the time at which specific matter will be broadcast.

It appears that the mantle of Sir Austin Chapman has, in very truth, fallen upon the shoulders of his successor in this house (Mr. Perkins), for he has already displayed that keen interest in postal matters which distinguished his predecessor, and now he is taking up the cudgels on behalf of listeners-in. The matters he referred to are important, but difficult to deal with. The majority of the wireless sets manufactured in Great Britain and the United States of America are sufficiently selective to take twelve wave lengths between the limits of 2BL and 3AR, and then can cut out eleven of them, so that any one may be heard distinctly; but, unfortunately, many of those manufactured in Australia are not selective enough to separate 2BL from the Melbourne station. During July the department will be inquiring into the whole of the wireless regulations, and will make a close study of the wave lengths. The difficulty in disturbing the present arrangements is that it may compel a great many listeners-in to purchase new receiving sets and alterations to broadcasting equipment. Only between 20 and 30 per cent. of the listeners-in in Australia use valve sets; so that a comparatively small number experience any disturbance. I assure the honorable member that the Government will give careful consideration to the whole position. Broadcasting in Australia is not in the condition which the honorable member would suggest. It is probably in a more favorable position here than it is in any other country. The honorable member referred to a conference held in New South Wales. It was a conference of men associated with wireless, who had held a previous conference in Melbourne. I opened the conference held in Melbourne, which represented the whole of the interests of the wireless associations of Australia. The conference was instrumental in fixing certain conditions, including

wave lengths round 1,000 metres, and was unanimous. When concluding the conference, I said that I was astonished that it should have come to that conclusion, and that the responsibility for it, if it were a failure, would be upon its shoulders. It was a failure. No one would accept the sealed sets, and receiving sets of the long wave lengths. Broadcasting has been in operation in Australia for something like two years, and the whole progress of the business has been, generally, satisfactory. The position with which we are confronted today is that every one is endeavouring to listen in, not only to stations in their own States, but to stations in other States. There is no harm in that, and the Government does not object to it, but we say that the licence issued to those having receiving sets is for listening in to the stations in their own States. They try to listen in not merely to stations in their own States, but to those in other States, in Java, and in almost every country in the world. I agree with the honorable member that we cannot stand still in this business, but must march with the times. With regard to a broadcasting service for the country press, if we find that the telegraph is obsolete, we must scrap the telegraph, and must adopt more modern methods for the transmission of news. If we attempt that unlikely step, there is a difficulty in the way. The whole of the news is copyright for 24 hours. News broadcast is copyrighted by the *Age*, *Argus* and *Herald* in Victoria for 24 hours, and cannot be used by the country press, except by arrangement with those newspapers. Broadcast news appears in the country press, but we are unable to say where it comes from. I can assure honorable members that we have made good progress in the new art of wireless, which has been so very successfully tried throughout Australia and throughout the world.

Mr. MARR (Parkes—Honorary Minister) [9.47].—I wish to reply to some comments by the honorable members for Reid (Mr. Coleman) and Herbert (Dr. Nott), as to the alleged dilatoriness of the Government in connexion with the shipping service to the islands and the Mandated Territories. It has been contended that the Government intends to

enter into contracts with companies employing Lascars, Chinese and other coloured seamen. The Government has no intention to do anything of the sort. It was stated that the Government had been permitting Burns, Philp and Company to carry on the service from month to month. The contract with that company expired on the 31st July, 1925. Prior to that the Government had called for fresh tenders for the carrying on of the service, but those received were not satisfactory. Burns, Philp and Company were then asked to continue to carry on the work for a further six months, which expired at the end of February last, when the Government again called for tenders. It has been admitted that the service is not satisfactorily carried out. That was reported by a committee of this Parliament, notwithstanding the fact that Burns Philp and Company have been carrying on the service for 30 or 40 years. The Government asked that company to carry on the work for a further six months, which expires on the 31st July next. We are told that the company is prepared to put on better ships if it is given a higher subsidy. The company has had a monopoly of the service for years, and has received a considerable amount in subsidies. We claim that the people of Australia are entitled to a fair return for the money paid to the company carrying on this service, and as the honorable members to whom I have referred have said, the people in the islands and in the Mandated Territories and Papua demand a better service than they are receiving at the present time. The Government have called tenders for the service with a desire to secure the best service possible. The honorable member for Reid said that the Government was approaching a Japanese company. As a matter of fact, it has approached no company, beyond asking Burns, Philp and Company to continue to carry on the service temporarily. It has called for tenders two or three times in the press, and it is open to any company to send in a tender. It is merely camouflage to suggest that the service is likely to be withdrawn. I do not believe that Burns, Philp and Company can afford to withdraw from the island trade.

Mr. FOSTER.—Its own business will compel the company to carry it on.

Mr. Marr.

Mr. MARR.—I believe it will. Honorable members are aware that ships of all nations, no matter what the colour of their crews, carry our mails on the poundage basis. If we can give the Mandated Territories a better service in the carriage of mails and cargo we shall be in a position to give greater satisfaction to the League of Nations in our administration of those territories. Several proposals have been made in connexion with the tariff for the islands, and the supply of a shipping service, and in this connexion the operation of the Navigation Act has been discussed. I think that honorable members will admit that the Government is sincere in its desire to do what is best in the interests of the islands and the Mandated Territories. In calling for tenders for the shipping service to the islands, we have no desire to in any way injure the Australian unions to which the honorable member for Reid referred. We have as much faith in our own people as the honorable member has, and are just as desirous as he is of providing work for our own people, not only in the running of ships to the islands, but also in the making of necessary repairs to those ships. I can assure the honorable members who raised this question that the Government have given the matter a great deal of consideration. In the very near future I hope to be able to make an announcement upon the whole matter, and I believe that the honorable members who have dealt with this matter, and honorable members generally, will be perfectly satisfied with the decision that will be arrived at.

Question resolved in the negative.

PAPERS.

The following papers were presented:

Arbitration (Public Service) Act—Determinations by the Arbitrator, &c.—

No. 13 and 14 of 1926—The Professional Officers' Association, Commonwealth Public Service.

Treaty of Peace (Germany) Act—Regulations Amended—Statutory Rules 1926, No. 78.

DEFENCE EQUIPMENT BILL.

Message recommending appropriation reported.

Ordered—That the message be taken into consideration in committee forthwith.

In committee (Consideration of Governor-General's message):

Motion (by Sir NEVILLE HOWSE) agreed to—

That it is expedient that an appropriation of revenue be made for the purposes of a bill for an act to grant and apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund the sum of £1,250,000 for naval construction, and for a reserve for defence.

Resolution reported.

Standing Orders suspended; resolution adopted.

Ordered—

That Sir Neville Howse and Dr. Earle Page do prepare and bring in a bill to carry out the foregoing resolution.

Bill presented by Sir NEVILLE HOWSE, and read a first time.

SECOND READING.

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE (Calare—Minister for Defence and Health) [9.58].—I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This is a bill to appropriate from the Consolidated Revenue Fund an amount of £1,000,000 for the defence equipment fund which was established in 1924 to give effect to the naval construction policy, and an amount of £250,000 for air purposes. Honorable members will remember that in 1924 the defence policy of the country was considered and a definite programme agreed upon, to be completed in 1928-29. The money to be appropriated under this bill is required to fulfil in part the commitments entered into at that time. The defence of Australia is based on the definite principle that each dominion of the British Empire shall prepare its own home defence, and a second very important principle that all expenditure in carrying out a construction policy shall be paid out of revenue. The sum of £1,000,000 is required to assist in meeting the commitment of £7,000,000 for the construction policy entered into.

Mr. CHARLTON.—Which includes the cruisers, and what else?

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—It includes the cruisers and submarines for 1926-27, and £586,520 towards the cost of the seaplane carrier which is being built at Cockatoo Island dockyard. It is estimated that the total cost of the construction of the seaplane carrier will amount to £1,300,000. I have said that an appropriation of £250,000 is required for a defence fund for air purposes. Honorable members will recognize that since the de-

fence policy was laid down in 1924 the whole idea of the air service necessary to co-operate with the sister defence services has altered. Every strategist now lays it down that the air service should be increased fivefold beyond what was considered necessary in 1924, and that no forward action by an army or navy should be begun without very careful reconnaissance. With the object of commencing this very necessary portion of our defence system, the work of building a seaplane carrier has been taken in hand. It is estimated that by the use of a seaplane carrier equipped with modern seagulls and amphibians, a radius of 400 to 500 miles is added to the range of any naval defence force. I need not weary the House by going into the details of every item of expenditure. It is recognized that an enormous advance has been made in recent years in air service, and the Government has decided to commence building up this branch of its defence forces by setting aside an additional amount of £250,000 as a trust fund for the purpose.

Mr. CHARLTON (Hunter) [10.1].—I recognize that with the exception possibly of the £250,000 for the Air Force, the money the House is asked to appropriate to-night is for work that has already been authorized by Parliament. It is, therefore, useless at this stage to criticize the defence policy of the Government. But I may be pardoned for stating once more that the Labour party exceedingly regrets that about £500,000 of the money the House is now asked to appropriate is for naval construction abroad. It is money that could very well have been spent in Australia in providing employment for our own people. We have quite a number of persons in every State who are unable to get work. Among them are artisans who are capable of doing the work of building cruisers. The policy of sending overseas to have work done for us will never make Australia self-contained, or help to increase our population. We cannot hope to absorb immigrants unless we build up secondary industries which will provide a local market for those who are engaged in primary industries. As the seaplane carrier is to be built at Cockatoo Island, the £500,000 we are asked to set aside

towards the cost of its construction will be of considerable benefit to Australians. But it is hard to realize that it is the policy of an Australian Government to spend £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 overseas for cruisers while at the same time it is having certain naval work done in its own dockyard. It is well known that we can build cruisers here just as well as they can be built in any other part of the world.

Mr. G. FRANCIS.—Yes; but at what cost?

Mr. CHARLTON.—The question of cost should not be taken too much into consideration. Wages are high in Australia, and we cannot expect to build vessels as cheaply as they can be built abroad. If the honorable member applied his policy to everything we use there would be no work done in Australia.

Mr. G. FRANCIS.—I merely wanted to know at what cost the cruisers could be built in Australia.

Mr. CHARLTON.—The fact that it costs more to build the cruisers in Australia than abroad is no justification for having the work done abroad if we are anxious to advance Australia; and to say that the cost of this class of work in Australia should only equal the cost overseas in tantamount to saying that Australian workmen should be brought down to the level of workmen abroad. For the future advancement of Australia, we ought to keep our wages and working conditions on a very high plane. They ought to be better here than elsewhere. In other words, we ought to lead the world in such matters, but this we can do only by providing employment for our own people. The great majority of the citizens of Australia would not complain about having to find money to have work done in the Commonwealth if it would lead to their advancement. I question very much if it would not be a better proposition in the long run to pay more for building the ships in Australia than to have them built abroad. It would provide work not only for the men directly employed in constructing the vessels, but also for many others in handling the raw material, and for business people in supplying the requirements of the men directly employed on construction. The State would derive income tax from all who were engaged

in the work of construction, and the Customs revenue derivable from the consumers at large would be considerably increased. A proper comparison cannot really be instituted unless every aspect of the question is taken into consideration. I believe that, if that were done, the figures would show the advantage of having the work done in Australia. It is idle for us to talk about bringing immigrants here if we cannot find employment for our own people. However, as Parliament has already decided to have these cruisers built in Great Britain. I have no desire to reopen a discussion upon the question. I think the Government is doing right in building up our air force. I regret the necessity for a defence system, but, as very little progress is being made towards disarmament, I think we should have an efficient air force. It will prove to be the most important branch of our defence system should it ever be necessary for us to defend our shores. The Labour party believes in air defence. Quite recently, when we were dealing with the defence policy of the Government, we were told in the press and on the public platform that the building up of an air force was not of very great moment so far as Australia was concerned, and that for our defence we must depend entirely on our naval forces. In order to show that there is some justification for the Labour party's adoption of the policy of having an adequate air force, I quote a few authorities on the subject. The late Admiral Sir Percy Scott said—

Australia's line of defence was obviously aeroplanes, submarines, and torpedo boats, against which no hostile fleet would dare approach within 200 miles.

Lord Fisher, on the 30th October, 1919, in a letter to the *Times*, said—

It is as clear as daylight that the future of war on the sea absolutely precludes the use of any war vessel except submarines. . . . All we want is the present naval side of the Air Force. . . . Submarines would make Australia impregnable.

Brigadier-General T. H. Dodds says—

Australasia must have tanks, fast motor transport, anti-aircraft guns, and an enormous increase in aircraft.

It is the opinion of Admiral Kerr, of the British Navy, that—

The Australian line of defence is obviously comprised of aeroplanes, submarines, and torpedo boats..

Lieutenant-Commander Rawson declares—

It needs little technical knowledge to see that Australia must concentrate on submarines, mine-layers, fast torpedo boats, and aircraft. Sixteen submarines can be built for the price of one battleship.

Stanley Goble, Chief of the Australian Air Staff, says—

The cost of equipment for air defence will be £3,000,000—less than the cost of one battleship. No progress has been made towards a definite policy of air defence.

Admiral Sims, of the United States Navy, says—

Had any enemy submarines been present in April, 1915, the landing of troops on the Peninsula would have been impossible.

In the *Text Book of Military Aeronautics*, two experts, Henry Woodhouse and Clem Hawley, say—

One of the principal uses of aircraft is to prevent the landing of enemy forces by attacking the hostile ships and transports.

An aerial service is one which can be used in times of peace to carry messages, mails, or goods to the remote parts of the Commonwealth. Therefore it serves a double purpose. Time will not permit me this evening to make a statement in regard to the defence policy of the Labour party, but the opinions I have just quoted indicate that its policy of having an adequate Air Force is supported by men of standing, who declare that it is the best line of defence for Australia. But, while I support the establishment of an Air Force, I regret the action of the Government in building cruisers overseas. If it is the Government's policy to build cruisers in preference to aeroplanes, torpedoes, and submarines, the work of construction should be carried out in Australia. We have here the men, the dockyard, and everything requisite for the building of cruisers, and the work should be done in our own country, giving employment to our own people, assisting to populate the Commonwealth, and providing employment for the immigrants we may desire to bring here. But it is idle to debate that issue now, because the House has already authorized the building of cruisers overseas. The only new proposal in the bill before us is to establish an Air Force, and as it is part of the Labour party's platform to have an Air Force in Australia, I can offer no objec-

tion to the bill. Had the Labour party been returned to power at the last election, it would have taken steps to establish an Air Force and to make Australia self-contained in regard to its defence by providing factories that could easily be converted in time of war to the manufacture of munitions.

Mr. MANN (Perth) [10.12].—It is perfectly true that the general defence programme to extend over five years was submitted and tacitly approved by this House; but I think one is justified in expressing regret that we have had so little information in regard to the large expenditure authorized by this bill. It is not in accord with what we have been led to expect from the Minister for Defence (Sir Neville Howse). When he has been submitting estimates of expenditure, he has, as a rule, given most lucid, interesting, and full explanations.

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—This is not an estimate; it is merely an appropriation to meet a commitment already entered into.

Mr. MANN.—It may be a commitment, but I am at a loss to understand just how far it is a definite commitment. If I remember rightly, when the five-year's programme was agreed to the Government made the announcement that it would build a seaplane carrier in Australia at a cost which was estimated to be about £800,000. The Minister will doubtless correct me if I am wrong.

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—There was a tentative suggestion at that time that it would cost not less than £835,000.

Mr. MANN.—The general impression honorable members formed was that £800,000 would be about the cost of the seaplane carrier to be built at Cockatoo Island, but the Minister, in introducing this bill to-night, has told us, in a somewhat cursory manner, that it includes an amount of £586,000 for a seaplane carrier, the total cost of which is now estimated to be £1,300,000. I ask the Minister if that is correct?

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—It is.

Mr. MANN.—In other words, the seaplane carrier which was estimated to cost £800,000 is now likely to cost another £500,000. Such a huge advance upon the original estimate calls for some explanation by the Minister.

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—It was not a definite estimate.

Mr. MANN.—It may not have been, but the House and the public were led to believe that the seaplane carrier would cost about £835,000. Now we are told that the cost will be £500,000 more..

Mr. WEST.—A million pounds is not much.

Mr. MANN.—Apparently the Commonwealth is becoming so accustomed to playing the part of a Crœsus that it is prepared to throw millions of pounds about here, there, and everywhere.

Mr. CHARLTON.—I consider that an increase of half a million pounds on the original estimate is serious, and the House should be furnished with an explanation of it. I did not hear the figures when the Minister was speaking.

Mr. MANN.—I submit that the Minister should explain how the increased cost has been arrived at. Have competitive tenders been invited, or reliable comparative estimates prepared by which the amount can be checked? I am not opposed to a progressive defence policy, but the House is entitled to more detailed information than the Minister furnished. Is £1,250,000 such an insignificant amount that we can pass it in a few minutes without any explanation? I venture to say that honorable members are shocked at being asked to expend upon a seaplane carrier £500,000 more than was originally estimated. Some honorable members opposite seem not to mind how much things cost so long as the money is spent in Australia. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that the proposed development of the air service is most advisable, but the country should have some assurance that it is receiving value for its money. There must exist in the department large resources of information upon which the Minister could have drawn for the enlightenment of the House. He referred to certain aeroplanes by name; he might have told us more of what is intended to be done with this money, so that we should be qualified to record an intelligent vote upon the bill.

Mr. MAHONY (Dalley) [10.20].—The Minister for Defence failed to give to the House adequate information concerning the proposed expenditure. For instance, he might have told us of the progress of the construction of the cruisers overseas. When these vessels were under discussion in the House in 1925, the Prime Minis-

ter, in combating the contention of myself and other honorable members on this side of the House, that they should be built in Australia, said that time was of the essence of the contract, and that, if the vessels were built in the Commonwealth, they could not be delivered within the contract period. Will the Minister tell us whether the successful tenderer, John Brown and Company, is proceeding with the work up to schedule time, and whether the vessels will be delivered on the due date? I am in possession of certain information on this subject, which suggests that the time condition of the contract is not now considered so important as the Prime Minister declared it to be; but I shall refrain from disclosing what I have been told until the Minister has had an opportunity to give to the House further details. John Brown and Company obtained from the Commonwealth Government a contract which will cost the taxpayers of Australia over £4,000,000. With that money work is being provided for people thousands of miles away, while our own artisans are hopelessly looking for employment. How is the contract progressing? The committee is entitled to know also what payments have been made to John Brown and Company. If we vote this money without any further explanation, we are not guarding the finances of the country so jealously as the Treasurer urged us to do before he became a Minister of the Crown. I remember him speaking of "switching on the light" and compelling certain persons to "drop the loot." It would be well if the honorable gentleman were as enthusiastic and energetic an advocate of economy as he was when merely a private member. I remember the anxiety of ministerialists to examine the closest details of Australian tenders in order to ascertain whether, if the contract were let locally, the cruisers could be delivered within the specified time, and at the contract price. I would like those gentlemen to be equally curious about John Brown and Company's performance of its contracts. Has that firm done sufficient work to entitle it to the money it has already received from the Government?

Mr. MANNING (Macquarie) [10.28].—This money is needed to meet commitments already entered into. We all recognize the important strides that aviation has made during the last few months,

and we have every reason to be proud of the work being done by Australian experimenters. Squadron-Commander Wackett has produced an amphibian, which would be a credit to any country in the world. It is made entirely of Australian material. I am afraid that insufficient money is allowed our aviation engineers with which to test the suitability of Australian timbers, and other local material for aeroplane purposes. I know that these men have to scratch for every penny they expend in carrying on this most important research work. This bill will make money available for the purchase, reconditioning, and equipment of aircraft, and for other purposes, but if the amount is not adequate to provide also for the experiments which are of such importance, it should be increased. The engineers should be given every encouragement and assistance to continue the magnificent work in which they are engaged. At present they are hampered in their experiments in a way that is not in the interests of the country. I saw the Wackett machine make its first flight, and it was certainly a very thrilling spectacle. I know that official flights have been made since. To a layman, the machine is a masterpiece of workmanship, and its performances have been as good as its appearance.

Mr. E. RILEY (South Sydney) [10.32].—The honorable member for Perth (Mr. Mann) has complained about the honorable the Minister not giving full information to this House about the seaplane carrier. It is possible that the naval authorities have altered the design of the ship. That is generally done when naval works are being carried out. If complete drawings are not ready when the work is started, or if the plans are altered afterwards, the cost is increased. My information is that the Navy Department is not giving the builders a reasonable chance to construct the seaplane carrier cheaply. The department has not made up its mind about many of the details. I know that the Royal Navy does the same kind of thing. H.M.A.S. *Adelaide* when completed at Cockatoo was almost a different ship from H.M.A.S. *Adelaide* as designed.

Dr. EARLE PAGE.—How many times was she obsolete before she was finished?

Mr. E. RILEY.—In other countries naval vessels often become obsolete while they are being built. It is a mistake to spend large sums of money on warships.

Mr. MANN.—Then why not cease building the seaplane carrier?

Mr. E. RILEY.—It is too late to do that. I would vote at any time to stop the building of warships, and to spend the money instead on merchant ships that could render service to the community. I hate to think that we are spending so much money on warships. The two cruisers that are being built in the Old Country will be obsolete in four or five years. In that matter the Government would not take the advice of members of the Opposition and spend the money on aeroplanes and submarines, which will comprise the future defence of this country. I hope that the dockyard will not be blamed for the extra cost of the seaplane carrier until it is known whether the plans were complete when the work was started, and whether they have been altered since; and that the public will not attribute the increased cost to the workmen. The workmen of this country can build ships as cheaply, having regard to their wages, as the workmen of any other country. Men in the shipyards here do more work per man than the men in the shipyards of other countries. I do not know whether that is because they are better fed and better housed, or because they work in a better climate; but the fact is that in almost every industry the Australian workman is superior. I hope that the Minister will be able to give a satisfactory explanation of the increase in the cost of the seaplane carrier.

Mr. RODGERS (Wannon) [10.36].—The honorable member for Perth (Mr. Mann) has stated my view of this matter. Honorable members have not had the privilege of hearing from the honorable the Minister for Defence (Sir Neville Howse) an outline of the general defence system of the nation. I know that great confidence is felt throughout Australia in the Minister, and it would certainly be a stimulus to the people were he to make a broad statement on the subject of defence. A high military authority in this country, Sir John Monash, recently made some pointed remarks about the shortcomings of Australia's defence provisions.

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—In his last speech he praised our defence.

Mr. RODGERS.—And he spoke of shortcomings, too. He criticized, not the honorable the Minister, but the nation as a whole. I thought the Minister would have taken this opportunity to give an outline of the steps that are being taken to make the arms of defence effective. It will come as a great surprise to the people to know that in this new venture of building a seaplane carrier the departmental estimate has been exceeded by 63 per cent. That is a very substantial increase, and I hope that there is more warrant for it than we have heard to-night. I believe that, so far as possible, the nation's work should be done in Australia. This nation can be made great only from within, and I hope that the wide gulf that now exists between costs here and elsewhere will be overcome by an overhaul of our internal economic conditions. We should not, if we can help it, farm out the nation's work. I have the most sincere confidence in the honorable the Minister, and I hope that he will take an early opportunity to give a reasonably complete sketch of the forward steps that are being taken to defend this nation. It rang across the cables the other day that in the councils of the world Labour Congress great exception was being taken to the White Australia policy. I have already said in this House that if we are ever challenged on this matter, we shall not be supported by many nations from whom, in the past, we have expected support. Of the 400,000,000 subjects of the British Empire, not more than 65,000,000 are white persons; the rest belong to coloured races. If we are challenged on such a question there may be something in the nature of a general upheaval. We cannot expect very much assistance from our kinsmen in the United States of America, where they are faced with a problem which we wish to avoid. This is the most important subject with which an Australian Parliament can deal, and, consequently, demands full consideration and a definite assurance that everything is being done in the interests of the nation.

Mr. WEST (East Sydney) [10.41].—I understand that the object of the measure is to place £1,250,000 into a trust

fund to meet payments on certain defence works. I should be more pleased if the expenditure was to be incurred in constructing homes for the people, instead of on machines for blowing out other peoples' brains. If the Government wishes the air service to be properly developed, further consideration should be given to a suggestion already made that the machines now under the control of the Defence Department be used by the Postal Department for the carriage of mails and passengers. They could be in charge of Air Force officers, who would then have an opportunity of being efficiently trained. There are at present two companies carrying mails and passengers, but the passenger rates are so heavy that the service is of no benefit to the community.

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE (Calare—Minister for Defence and Health [10.45].—The honorable member for Perth (Mr. Mann), and the honorable member who followed him, are evidently under the impression that this is the occasion on which some definite announcement should be made concerning the defence policy of the Government. The defence policy of the Government will be fully outlined when the Estimates are under consideration, I hope next month.

Mr. MANN.—This money will then have been spent.

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—Commitments have already been entered into. The sum of £1,000,000 is to be spent on naval construction, and the expenditure has already been agreed to by the House. The £250,000 is something additional.

Mr. FOSTER.—When will the seaplane carrier be completed?

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—In 1928. In reply to the question of the honorable member for Dalley (Mr. Mahony), I may explain that according to the information received from London there will be no delay in the completion of the cruisers. A delay of, approximately, three months is expected in the delivery of the submarines. The work of the seaplane carrier is being carried out within contract time. The seaplane carrier is to cost £1,300,000. The tentative estimate was £350,000, but certain modifications have increased the amount.

Mr. MANN.—Is that due to alteration in the plans?

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE.—Partly, and to the extra cost of material. As the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Charlton) pointed out, there can be no question as to the value to Australia of an adequate air force, and I only wish that the amount we propose spending were £1,000,000 instead of £250,000. If the larger amount were available during the next two or three years, the air force could effectively co-operate with the sister services.

Question resolved in the affirmative.
Bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2 (Appropriation of £1,000,000 for naval construction)—

Mr. MANN (Perth) [10.49].—I merely wish to say a few words concerning the Minister's explanation of the manner in which the money is to be spent. My protest was not against the policy of the Government; for I said most distinctly that I favoured a progressive defence policy. The Minister apparently misunderstood my remarks, for I did not suggest that this occasion was appropriate for the Government to announce its defence policy. The policy, as a matter of fact, has been announced, and has been approved by Parliament, although some new members have been elected since it was agreed to. But surely, even though the general lines of the policy have been agreed upon, the Minister has not been relieved of the duty of explaining the items which make up the total of an appropriation bill of this character. It is quite likely that modifications and alterations may be made in the policy, in regard to which honorable members should be enlightened. The Minister has admitted that greater expenditure is being incurred now in regard to air defence. I think we are entitled to a progress report on matters of that kind, and also to some information on the general trend of defence affairs. I asked the Minister, I think in a courteous way; to give us an explanation of how this money was being expended, but we were given one only after considerable pressure had been applied. I submit that that is not treating honorable members courteously. It is customary to include a schedule in bills of this character setting out details of the expenditure. I am sure that we

all have the greatest confidence in the Minister, but, nevertheless, he should accede to reasonable requests for explanations in matters of this character.

Sir NEVILLE HOWSE (Calare—Minister for Defence and Health) [10.54].—I thought I had made it perfectly clear that this money was necessary to meet definite commitments in regard to the two 10,000-ton cruisers and two submarines and one seaplane carrier that the Government is having built. I repeat that this is not the appropriate time to explain in detail the progress that is being made in carrying out our £7,000,000 defence constructional policy.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Preamble and title agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

House adjourned at 10.56 p.m.
