orable members generally. I believe that the House is entitled to that information, but, in the form in which it is sought, it is very difficult to obtain. I am of the opinion that we cannot institute inquisitorial interrogatories among the employees of the State Coal Mine. I do not think that we are justified in interrogating them in that way.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.13 p.m., until Tuesday, September 27.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, September 27, 1927.

The PRESIDENT (**Sir Frank Clarke**) took the chair at 4.50 p.m., and read the prayer.

METROPOLITAN TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION BILL.

The PRESIDENT (**Sir Frank Clarke**) —On our last day of meeting, the Minister of Forests, in speaking on the second reading of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission Bill, referred to the proceedings in connexion with a similar Bill passed in 1925. As the honorable gentleman's remarks, and the passage he quoted from the *Hansard* report of the debate on the 1925 Bill, might convey the impression that the officers of this House, in sending that Bill back to the Assembly, had inserted amendments which had not been made in this House, I wish to inform honorable members that I have had the records searched, and I find that no such mistake was made by the officers. Honorable members will recollect that the Minister of Forests drew the attention of the House to the fact that in 1925 the House had altered the provision for one year's extension of the tenure of the Commission to two years' extension. The House had no power to increase the amount provided for salaries and other expenditure so as to cover the two years, and the other House could have made the increase in the amount to provide for the two years an amendment consequential on the amendment which this House made, as we had a perfect right to do. The Bill went back to another place on the 22nd of December, I believe in the early hours of the morning, and the Honorary Minister in charge of the measure there put it to his House that this House had made "amendments" instead of "an amendment," one being to extend the Commission's tenure for two years, and the other being to increase the amount of expenditure provided for to £15,000. *Hansard* reported the Honorary Minister in the other House as having said that, and therefore the Minister of Forests was perfectly correct, so far as he knew, in making the statement that he did. But *Hansard* is not the official record. The official record of this House is the *Minutes of the Proceedings*, and the *Minutes of the Proceedings* put the matter perfectly correctly. The official record shows that the only amendment made by this House extending the tenure of the Commission to two years was accepted by another place, and that the Minister in another place should have asked his House to make a consequential amendment altering £7,500 to £15,000. I think it is due to the officers both of this Chamber and of the other Chamber to place it on record that there was no mistake on their part, but that the mistake was that of a Minister in another place. It was probably very excusable, owing to the lateness of the hour and the length of the sitting.

SPENCER-STREET BRIDGE BILL.

This Bill was returned from the Legislative Assembly with a message intimating that they insisted on disagreeing with the amendment insisted on by the Council.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

> That the Council do not now insist on their amendment with which the Assembly insist on disagreeing.

The amendment in question was the insertion of the words "by contract after public tenders being called for the work" after the word "Board" in sub-clause (1) of clause 3, which reads—

> Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in any other Act, the bridge shall be constructed by the Board.

I should like to recall to the minds of honorable members statements that were made by me when the Bill was under discussion previously. I then told the House that it was my own personal view that it would be better to construct the subaqueous portion of the bridge by day

labour, and to call for tenders for the other portions. Since that statement was made by me, I have received a report from Mr. Kermode, one of the most valued officers we have in the State, who is Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department and Engineer for Ports and Harbours. His statement, which I have here, has already been read in another place. I shall read it if honorable members wish, but if they do not desire to hear it I shall not take up their time by doing so.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Read it.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—The statement is as follows:—

Ports and Harbours, Melbourne.
14th September, 1927.

Re Spencer-street Bridge.

As far as the sub-structure—including the foundations—of the above bridge is concerned, it is my opinion that this work could be carried out more satisfactorily and economically by day labour than by contract.

Although the nature of the bed of the river at the site of the bridge has been ascertained as far as practicable by a series of borings, it is well known that such borings give an approximate idea only of the nature of the materials met with, especially when the depth approaches 100 feet below water, as is the case in this instance.

Any constructing authority, when submitting information regarding foundations obtained as a result of boring operations, protects itself against claims for damage by contractors owing to the borings not being accurate, by inserting a clause to the effect that information as to the correct depths of the various strata is approximate only, and cannot be guaranteed.

For example, the Country Roads Board inserts in all its contracts the following paragraph dealing with this matter.

This paragraph was inserted in the Country Roads Board's contract forms owing to their having to contest an action—

> Information. The data shown on the plans as to the character and depths of the various strata are approximate only, and no warranty, expressed or implied, is given by the Board, council, or the engineer that the same or similar materials will be encountered during the progress of work. The contractor must satisfy himself as to the character of the material to be penetrated, and must assume all responsibility and risks involved therein.

The natural result is that a prudent contractor assumes the conditions may be worse than disclosed by the borings and includes in his contract amount a considerable sum by way of contingencies to guard against any loss which he would suffer in the event of the bed of the river being of a much more treacherous nature than is disclosed by the borings.

Should the nature of the foundations prove to be no worse than shown the extra amount allowed by the contractor adds to his profit, whereas if the work were being carried out by day labour under the worst conditions the cost of the foundations would not exceed that allowed by the contractor.

On the other hand, should the foundations be of a more satisfactory nature—as is often the case—than is shown by the borings, the Government would get the benefit of this improvement in conditions if the work were carried out by day labour.

In other words, if the worst conditions existed the cost would probably be more or less the same, whether by day labour or by contract; but if the conditions are better than anticipated, it would be to the manifest advantage of the constructing authority if the work were carried out by day labour.

On account of the difficult and important nature of the work, very close supervision has necessarily to be exercised by the Department over the contractor, and the cost of this supervision would probably be as much as the supervision of the work by day labour.

There is no reason why progress of the work should be faster under contract than by day labour, as sub-aqueous work may be expected to be slow under any system.

The estimated cost of the portion of the work which, in my opinion, it is desirable to carry out by day labour is £60,000, or approximately one-third the total cost of the bridge.

That report is comprehensive. It has been made by a Government officer of high standing in the engineering profession, and I am sure that he has given the Government the benefit of his long experience and his well-considered opinion of what is the best method to adopt in the circumstances. The Ministry considered this question in Cabinet, and decided that in view of the advice tendered by Mr. Kermode the sub-aqueous portion of the work should be carried out by day labour. With reference to the remainder of the work, the Government is prepared to give an undertaking that tenders will be invited. The officers of the Railway Construction Branch will be asked to submit a quotation for the superstructure, and that quotation will be treated by the Government in the same way as tenders received from private contractors will be treated. The estimate will be treated confidentially by the Government, and regarded as a tender. The Government will then be in a position to determine whether the Railway Construction Branch is in the position to carry out the work at a lesser cost than any private contractor who may tender.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—Will the Railway Construction Branch obtain the job if its quotation is the lowest of those received?

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—I presume that it will get the job in that event.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—And then it will do it by day labour.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—I believe that the best way to handle this question will be as I have indicated. As I stated on a previous occasion, the inviting of tenders should secure a wide range of offers to carry out the work, and there can be no doubt that, if private contractors are prepared to do it at a lower price than the Railway Construction Branch, the Government would be well-advised to accept, and would no doubt accept, the lowest tender, providing, of course, that the Government were satisfied that that tenderer would perform the work satisfactorily. That is the usual procedure in carrying out work by contract. I ask the House to accept the position as I have explained it. Honorable members need not be concerned or worried as to what will be done in regard to this work. I can assure the House that the Government will do the right thing in the interests of the State. The Government are as anxious as any private member of the House is that the Spencer-street bridge shall be built in the most economical way possible. In dealing with other undertakings, the Government have shown that they are determined that public work shall be done in such a way that public money will not be wasted. Only last week I had before me a case in which a considerable amount of public money was saved by my insistence that a certain public authority should invite tenders for certain supplies. It was the desire of the Board in question to give an order for certain materials without inviting tenders. I did not agree with that view, and I insisted that tenders should be called. The Board did not agree with me, and I informed it that I would not give my approval to the supplies being obtained unless tenders were invited. After some argument with the Board I prevailed on it to accept my view.

The Hon. W. TYNER.—What was the amount involved?

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—Between £33,000 and £34,000. The House will, no doubt, be pleased to learn that as a result of my insistence that tenders should be invited £7,300 of public money was saved. I think it can be said truthfully that I dealt with the matter in a business-like manner. The Board proposed to pay £1,000 for each article. When tenders were called the lowest quotation was found to be £816. Therefore £184 was saved on each article.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—The tenders were for commodities. Day labour was not involved in the matter.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—The Board required commodities. I have mentioned this matter in order to demonstrate to honorable members that the Government are alive to the need for competition in matters which involve the expenditure of public money. We believe that by healthy competition we secure a fair and reasonable opportunity of obtaining satisfactory quotations. I ask the House again to agree to the motion, and to trust the Government to do the right and proper thing in the interests of the State. Having given that assurance, I do not think it is necessary for me to detain the House longer.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—I have listened with keen interest to the Minister's statement. I have gone into this matter carefully since this House insisted that its amendment should be made in clause 3. The sub-aqueous work is not of great importance so far as that amendment is concerned, because that work will require to be carried out by experienced men, of whom a great number will not be required. I am, therefore, ready to accept the Minister's assurance in regard to that section of the work, although I am loath—and I presume other honorable members will also be loath—to accept any assurance which will involve the carrying out of any portion of an important public work by day labour. I was interested recently in a letter which a contractor wrote to the *Argus* newspaper, in which he criticized the policy of the Railway Department of sending men to country districts to carry out work by day labour which could have been done more economically by contract. He cited the instance of a job for which the Railway Department's estimate was £850 under the day-labour system. Tenders were invited for the work, and the contractor who wrote the letter offered to do it for £600. His tender was accepted. He carried out the work, and made a considerable profit. From inquiries that I have made, I have found that the Railway Department often sends men from Melbourne to carry out work by day labour when that work can be done at lower cost by local contractors. If anybody

ought to be able to carry out public works at a reasonable cost, it should be the Railway Construction Branch, with its expert officers and small overhead expenses. I am certain that if any Ministers, or those members who support them on this matter, wanted a private building job carried out, they would not have it done by day labour. Is it not a fact, I ask the Minister, that Government works being carried out at the present time by day labour are costing more than they would cost if the contract system was employed? In my discussions with contractors and other business men in the city regarding the Spencer-street bridge work, I have found the opinion general that in nearly every case large bridge works have been carried out more economically under the contract system than by day labour. I consider that this House should insist that if it accepts the proposal of the Ministry that the sub-aqueous portion of the work shall be carried out by day labour, the superstructure shall be built by contract. I think the Minister, on behalf of the Government, should give the House a definite assurance to that effect. Our desire in pressing for that assurance is to save money for the State in the construction of the Spencer-street bridge. The people of Melbourne want to be sure that the work will be done in the most economical manner possible. They do not want to find, on the completion of the bridge, that it has cost £300,000 or £400,000 after an estimate by the Government of £200,000. It may be that when the bridge is completed another Ministry will be in office, and the present Government will not then be called to account if the cost exceeds the estimate. I ask the Minister to give the House a definite assurance that the superstructure of the bridge will be built by contract.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—I hope that the House will persist with the amendment which it made in clause 3 of the Bill. I make that statement very reluctantly, but I see no other way out of the difficulty. I agree that the sub-aqueous work may be done satisfactorily by day labour, because that work is an unknown quantity. If tenders were invited for the sub-aqueous work, contractors would be likely to insert in their quotations a fairly large amount to compensate them for any unknown difficulties which they might meet. I quite agree with the departmental officers and with the Minister of Public Works with regard to the sub-aqueous work. I take it that the officers in the Public Works Department have advised the Minister to have the superstructure completed by contract. The Bill itself is so framed that, if Parliament did not insist on the superstructure being constructed for a definite amount, the general taxpayer would be mulct in all extras. Under the Bill, the municipalities are to contribute £200,000, or less, but they are not to contribute any more. That means that if the bridge is built by the Railway Construction Branch on the basis of estimates, and those estimates are exceeded, so that the work costs more than £200,000, the general taxpayer will be mulct in that additional expense.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Suppose that the lowest tender is £250,000. What then?

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—Then the Bill will not apply.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—But the bridge will have to be built. Some one will have to pay for it.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—I know that. But the Ministry then in power—and I hope that it would not be the present Ministry—would have to bring in a Bill to suit the cost of construction.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Not at all.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—Of course! How otherwise? If the Minister of Public Works had agreed to the sum of £200,000, "or more," being contributed by the municipalities, then I, as a representative of country interests, and of the taxpayers of the country generally, would not have disagreed with this measure at all. As far as I am concerned, the Government could then have constructed the bridge in any way it wished; except that, as a political principle, I believe in the performance of all such works by contract and in payment by results, while my friends, the members of the Government, believe in day labour and in going slow. The Government is making this bridge the stalking horse of its principles. The people of Melbourne have allowed the construction of the bridge to remain in abeyance for so long that the work has become an urgent matter. The Government has brought in a Bill

which sets down a definite sum of money for the work; and the Government has said, further, that the job shall be performed by the Railway Construction Branch, which, however, can do such work only by day labour. Next, the Government says that it will obtain firm estimates, which will compete, in effect, with the tenders of private contractors. Another point of which I am reminded here is that the Railway Construction Branch has not any overhead expenses to include in its estimates. All the officers of the Branch are engaged on definite salaries. Contractors, when tendering, will have their overhead expenses to bear in mind in estimating their costs.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—But the salaries of the officers of the Branch will be made a charge on the work of constructing the bridge, surely?

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—Not necessarily. None of the officers employed on the work right up to the time of construction will have any of their salaries added to the amount of the departmental estimate, or tender. There having been given a definite assurance by the Minister of Public Works, and by the Premier, that this firm tender will be considered, it is safe to say that no other tenderer will have a hope of competing successfully. Then we shall have day labour. And if the estimated cost, under day labour, is exceeded, what will happen? The same will happen as in connexion with the building of the Eildon weir, and the Hume reservoir, and every other Government work of the same character. That is to say, the original estimate will be exceeded, and, perhaps, more than doubled. I advise the House not to pass the Bill unless there is given a definite assurance by the Minister of Public Works that the superstructure of the bridge will be built by contract.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—It had been scarcely my intention to speak on this phase of our deliberations upon the Spencer-street Bridge Bill, and I should not have done so but for one remark which fell from the lips of Dr. Harris. He has stated that the Ministry is making a stalking horse of its principles in connexion with this measure. I am very much afraid that both sides of the House are doing precisely the same thing. A more inappropriate occasion for the parading of principles could not have been found. The House is dealing with a matter of great urgency, yet there has been a good deal of idle talk about principles in connexion with it. So far as I can see, there are no principles involved at all, but there are what are known as the political policies of the two principal parties. The Minister of Public Works has seen fit, outside this Chamber, to take exception to the fact that the building of the bridge has been held up for political reasons. He has accused the party in Opposition of having used the occasion to present its political policy in a way that has served to hinder the passage of the Bill. The Bill was drafted originally in such a fashion as would leave it open to the Ministry to have the work of construction carried out in accordance with its well-recognized political policy. I use the word "policy" advisedly; and, advisedly again, I refrain from using the word "principle," because there are no principles involved. Honorable members know my views perfectly well. When this measure was being debated in another place, the occasion was taken by the Opposition to present an amendment in a form which crystallized its political policy; that is, that work of this nature should be performed by contract. The amendment was moved in a form which made it impossible for any self-respecting Government—one that had the true interests of the community at heart—to adopt it. Subsequently, there was moved an amendment upon the amendment which the Leader of the Opposition, seeing where his amendment was likely to lead, accepted. The amendment upon the amendment was put to the vote, and rejected, and the original amendment was negatived. When the Bill came before this House, I was the author of a proposed amendment, which I pass by for the moment. Then came Mr. Smith's amendment, in the very terms of that which was proposed originally in another place. His amendment was agreed to by a large majority of this House, and it is that amendment which we are now being asked to insist on despite the assurance of the Minister of Public Works. This is the last of all conceivable occasions, I repeat, on which we should attempt to operate our respective political

policies, for our policies must always yield to the interests of the community at large. What would be the result of the insistence by this House on the stand that Dr. Harris is taking? It is a suggestion that while we may permit the subaqueous work to be done by day labour, we should persist in our insistence that the superstructure shall be built by contract. That would mean that tenders would have to be called for, and that this community would be at the mercy of the tenderers, whoever they might be. No self-respecting Government could put itself in such a position. Its first duty is to the community as a whole. It must let all its political policy stand aside in the best interests of the people. Of the tenders received, it might be entirely against public policy to accept any one.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—The Government could call again for tenders.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—And the same position might be reached again, so that there would be a deadlock. We cannot tie the hands of the Government in such a fashion. Dr. Harris has been frank to this extent, namely, that if the Bill provided that the metropolitan municipalities shall pay the whole of the cost of the bridge, it would not matter to him, as a country member, what were the remaining provisions of the Bill.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—It is a metropolitan parochial thing.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Let us consider Dr. Harris's candour. He says frankly, in effect, "I do not care what comes out of the public purse, so long as it comes direct from the pockets of the metropolitan municipalities."

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—No fear! I was prevented from suggesting an amendment.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Dr. Harris says, further, that either the contract system or the day-labour system could go by the board so far as he was concerned, so long as he was assured that the municipalities, and not the people of the country, paid.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—Dr. Harris is as honest as you are.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I have never met a more honest man than Dr. Harris, but I have never met a more illogical one. Dr. Harris has said that if it was a matter in regard to which the metropolitan municipalities alone had to pay, he would not care whether the work was carried out by contract or by day labour. I accept his statement, and I congratulate him on his frankness. I hope, however, that the same considerations will not affect other members of this House. If we are going to hold up the building of the bridge it is idle to say that we all want this bridge to be built; that it is an urgent necessity; and that we recognize that the prosperity of the country is inter-dependent on the prosperity of the metropolis.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—But you are saying that.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—And I continue to say it. Anything of especial interest to the country has my vote, which I cast irrespective of the source of the revenue which is to provide the water channels or whatever other particular country requirement is before the House at the moment. But we cannot ask the Government to accept an amendment which would make it imperative for it to adopt any tender, whether after the first, second, or third calling of tenders for the building of the bridge. The Government has presented a very fair proposition. If my amendment had been carried, it would have provided that tenders should be called for every part of the work, and that only in circumstances in which it became abundantly clear that the work could be best done by day labour should the Government have liberty to perform it in that fashion.

The Hon. R. H. S. ABBOTT.—Your amendment did not say that.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I have here a copy of my amendment. I invite Mr. Abbott to look at it again, when his knowledge of perfect English will enable him to comprehend that that is exactly what my amendment does say and does mean. The Government has made a fair offer, although I should prefer that every part of the structure were built after tenders had been called. Still, I accept the advice of Mr. Kermode. I have known that officer for a great number of years, and his opinions I respect and accept. He is not like the Vicar of Bray, who followed every Government that might be in power. He has his independent opinions, and will express them irre-

spective of the views of those gentlemen who happen to compose the Government of the day. And having the assurance of Mr. Kermode that the sub-structure can be best done by day labour, both from the point of view of economy and expedition, I am prepared to accept his dictum on the matter. As for the rest, I think that the Government should be left free. After they have called for tenders, after they have seen who the tenderers are, after they have made up their minds as business men whether to accept any one of the tenders, and after comparing the tenders with the estimate of the Railway Construction Branch, we can safely leave it to them to do what is best in the interests of the community. Unless we can trust the Government to do that much, the Government have no right to remain in office a day longer. If we can trust them to that extent, we ought to have no hesitation in accepting the motion which the Minister of Public Works has moved—that we no longer insist upon our amendment.

The Hon. H. KECK.—Do I understand the Minister of Public Works to say that tenders will be called for the superstructure of the bridge? I am not now referring to the sub-aqueous work. I am satisfied to allow that to be done by day labour. But do we understand from the Minister that tenders will be called for the superstructure, and that that work will be carried out by contract, and not by day labour? I am not quite satisfied on that point yet. I want the Minister to tell us whether, in the event of the motion being carried, the House can be assured that the work on the superstructure will be carried out by contract. If the work is entrusted to the Railway Construction Branch, in all probability it will be done by day labour. What the House wants is a definite assurance from the Minister that the work will be carried out by contract. I have seen enough work carried out by day labour, some of it quite recently, in my own constituency, and I should be sorry for the man who has to pay for it. The Minister of Public Works told us that a saving of £7,000 had been effected in his own Department, and that the saving represented the difference between day labour and the contract system. On my return home after attending Parliament three weeks ago a letter was handed to me that had been forwarded by the engineer of the Bendigo City Council. It was then 9 o'clock at night. The letter had been personally delivered at 9 o'clock in the morning. In the terms of that letter I was compelled to pull down a chimney stack 40 feet high, and I was given three days in which to do the work. On the following day I obtained three tenders. The tenders were, respectively, £69, £70, and £73. I thought these amounts too high. I saw the engineer, and asked for a delay of a few days. Eventually the work was done for £66.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—By day labour?

The Hon. H. KECK.—No, by contract. The House will be foolish to carry the motion unless we are assured that the work on the bridge will be carried out by contract.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—I think Mr. Keck stated the case for the contract system very clearly. Whilst I have every respect for the responsible Minister, and I accept his word that it is the desire of the Government to build the foundations of the bridge by day labour and to call for tenders for the superstructure, there is an element in the statement that is not reassuring. The Railway Construction Branch, as a corporate body, has not a body to kick or a soul to damn, financially. The Railway Construction Branch may put in an estimate—and the estimate is to be regarded as a tender—so low that it may be given the bridge to build, with an eventual loss to the State of thousands of pounds that will have to be made up by the taxpayers. We have been fighting for the principle that the superstructure shall be built by contract. If the tender of a private contractor is accepted, and the work entails a loss, the general taxpayer will not be called upon to make up that loss. If the Minister can answer Mr. Keck's question satisfactorily, I shall be only too pleased to assist the honorable gentleman. But I certainly want an assurance that the Railway Construction Branch is not to be allowed to carry out this work, because in that case the work will not be done by contract. If the Railway Construction Branch does the work, it will be done by day labour. The cost of the bridge by the day-labour system would be much higher than by contract. Generally speaking, day labour costs twice as much as contract labour.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—By leave, I should like to say that the statement that I made was similar to that made by the Premier in another place. It was the statement of the Government. The undertaking that I am giving here was satisfactory to members in another place. In order to prevent any misunderstanding, the position, as I stated previously, is this: The sub-aqueous work will be done by day labour. That, of course, we are all agreed upon. Whilst the sub-aqueous work is being done, plans, specifications, and quantities will be taken out, and the Railway Construction Branch, with which the Railways Commissioners have nothing whatever to do, will furnish an estimate. The Railway Construction Branch is a separate Department.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—The taxpayers have to do with it.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—But the Railways Commissioners have nothing to do with it.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—It will carry out the work by day labour.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—If honorable members will allow me to make my own statement in my own way, there will be no difference of opinion afterwards as to what I actually said. The Railway Construction Branch will be permitted to submit an estimate to the Government as to what they can build the superstructure for. That estimate will be treated confidentially by the Government. The Government will call for tenders for the work. Having called for tenders, the Government will determine whether it would be better for a contractor to build the bridge or for the Railway Construction Branch to build it. Now let me put this position: If the hands of the Government are tied by the insertion in the Bill of the Council's amendment, then, as the unofficial Leader has eloquently and clearly stated, the superstructure must be built by a contractor. Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that the contractor undertakes to do the superstructure work for £200,000, and that Mr. Perrin, of the Railway Construction Branch, who is a man of undoubted integrity and great capacity as a constructional engineer, undertakes to build the bridge for £150,000 or £160,000. Under the amendment the Government would be prohibited from handing over the work to the Railway Construction Branch. They would have to give it to the contractor whose tender would be £200,000. Everybody who has had anything to do with Mr. Perrin will admit that he is a most careful officer, and a man of exceedingly high standing.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—And very jealous of his reputation.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—Yes; Mr. Perrin is very jealous of his reputation as an engineer. He ranks with Mr. Kermode as one of the finest public officers in the State.

The Hon. M. SALTAU.—His would be only a nominal tender.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—It would be a firm estimate. I want to make it quite clear that if a contractor were to tender for the superstructure, and his tender was very much higher than the estimate of Mr. Perrin, the Government, if the wishes of some members of the Chamber were given effect to, would be bound to accept the tender of the contractor.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—There is a way out.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—The Government would be bound to accept the tender of the contractor no matter how high it was. The only alternative would be to forgo the building of the bridge.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—That would suit some honorable members.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—The Government might be forced into the position of having to accept a contract that in the opinion of Mr. Perrin was too high—very much higher than he would be prepared to do the work for. The Government would either have to accept that high tender, or say, "We cannot build the bridge at all."

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—The Government could call for fresh tenders.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—It would create an *impasse*.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—Absolutely! It would create an *impasse*. I ask the House to trust the Government. We are entitled to ask the House to trust the Government. I assure honorable members that if they will trust the Government, they need have no fear whatever. Every possible safeguard will be taken. If the Railway Construction Branch, whose head is Mr. Perrin, submits an estimate, and that estimate is lower than the tender of any contractor, the House

can rest assured that the Government will be extremely careful to see that there is no loophole. Mr. Perrin would be bound down to construct the bridge for the amount of the estimate.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—But supposing he made a mistake.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—Mr. Perrin's honour and reputation as head of the Railway Construction Branch would be involved. His integrity as a leading officer would undoubtedly be affected. But he would take all care and caution to see that in submitting an estimate to the Government he left very little room for errors to creep in. We have to remember that the Public Works Department, with its Chief Engineer, has something to say in this matter. That engineer will be advising the Government, and protecting the interests not only of the Government but of the State as a whole. Therefore, I think the House can be assured that the interests of the taxpayers will be adequately protected. I am of the opinion that the House can rest assured that the bridge will be built in the cheapest, most expeditious, and most efficient manner that is possible if the House will but trust the Government, and I think that that is a reasonable request to make. I ask the House to accept this statement on the matter.

The Hon. R. H. S. ABBOTT.—I certainly desire to support the attitude taken up by Dr. Harris, and I sincerely hope that the House will adhere to the position that it has already assumed in its endeavour to have the whole of the constructional work of the Spencer-street bridge done by contract, if that be at all possible. I fail to see that Dr. Harris has exhibited the slightest illogical tendency, notwithstanding the statement and the inference of the unofficial Leader. From the very beginning the Country party contended that there was no proper and definite method by which the financing of the Spencer-street bridge could be effected if it cost more than £200,000. The members of that party, by insisting that tenders should be called for the whole of the work of the bridge, endeavoured to indicate that it should not be constructed if it were to cost more than £200,000. That seems to be a reasonable statement of the situation as it affects Dr. Harris and other country members. We are asked to agree that the sub-aqueous portion of the work should be done by day labour, and that tenders shall be called for the rest of the work, the Railway Construction Branch practically having a priority in respect of the acceptance of its tender, if that be as good as or better than any public tender. We definitely object to that argument, because there will be no assurance, either to this House or to the people, that the cost of the work will not exceed the £200,000 which the municipalities are prepared to pay. We have allowed—with great reluctance—that the Railways Commissioners should contribute £50,000 towards the project. That money will practically be money contributed by railway users, and there is no justification for a payment of that kind. We are, however, still fighting for the definite principle that there shall be no money taken from the Consolidated Revenue, or contributed by the people in the country or in the State generally, other than the Bill provides. If tenders are called for the work, and it is shown definitely that the cost has been altogether under-estimated, then the building of the bridge should not be undertaken. That is the position which I wish the House to insist upon, if it be possible. So far as concerns the work done by the Railway Construction Branch, we have too much evidence of the shocking waste and extra cost in connexion with nearly all the works that are being carried out in the country by that Branch. This applies also to the works undertaken by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. Take the expenditure on the Kyneton railway station. Associated with that matter there was a public scandal that was referred to in this House by five or six honorable members. There were two tenders, each about £20,000 or £30,000, and the matter was in the hands of the Railway Construction Branch. Alterations were made to the Kyneton railway station, but the facilities for the public at that station to-day are nothing like what are acually required. Let us take the work that is proceeding on the day-labour system from Melbourne to Tottenham through Footscray. Members coming down from the north are continually criticizing the work that is going on

there. It has been said that allowing for the men who are working and for those who are walking—both these sections doing something really definite—one-third of the men are standing still and doing nothing. That has been proved two or three times, and these are the things that are causing people in the country to insist that there must be something done to stop the waste of public funds, and to prevent such work being so capitalized as to be a source of continual addition to the already heavy interest charges. The Hume reservoir has been referred to, and the Gunbower weir is a striking instance of actual waste of money owing to work being carried out by day labour, and of strikes and other industrial troubles that are making the cost of such undertakings far exceed any reasonable estimate made by most careful and capable engineers. The Minister of Public Works has said that the engineers in his Department cannot be challenged on the score of their ability and their desire to construct the proposed Spencer-street bridge at a reasonable cost. Individually we have the greatest confidence and trust in the gentlemen who form the present Government, but I am afraid that they will be unable to resist the pressure of organized Labour outside Parliament in connexion with a work such as the proposed bridge, despite their keen desire to do what they say they wish to do. It is possible, therefore, that the work of constructing the bridge will be begun on the day-labour basis, and continued on that basis, and result in the expenditure of a very large sum in addition to the £200,000 mentioned in the Bill. I hope that the House will vote against the proposition of the Minister of Public Works. That would possibly lead to a conference between this House and another place. I trust also that we shall continue to adopt a strong attitude so that we shall be able to prevent as far as possible further waste of public funds.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—When this matter came again before the House two weeks ago, I supported Mr. Smith in his contention that the amendment should be insisted on. I think that I am expressing the feelings of the other honorable members who supported Mr. Smith in the matter when I say that it is no political move. We believe that the contract system is the only system which will save the ratepayers' money. We have all had experience of the waste that has been incurred. Millions of pounds have been lost in Victoria because so much work has been carried out by day labour. I agree with Mr. Abbott in his references to the waste that has occurred in connexion with railway construction. He has mentioned work done at Kyneton railway station, and I can refer honorable members to the waste of money in relation to the Chalet at Mount Buffalo. About £100,000 has been spent on that project, which is showing a loss to the ratepayers. It is indicative of what is going on all over the State. Under the Local Government Act, municipal councils must invite tenders for work estimated to cost more than £100. Why should we not limit the Government and ensure that works such as the proposed Spencer-street bridge should be carried out on the contract—the public competition—basis? I cannot deny the fact that the whole of the constructional work could be made the subject of tender. Waste may occur if the superstructure is built by day labour, and there is no reason at all why specifications should not be prepared and tenders called for the whole of the work. There can be a good deal of waste in connexion with day labour even when the work is being done under the water. There would not be the supervision which would be given by a contractor over work of that kind. I want to see the bridge built. The last Government, of which I was a member, was anxious that it should be constructed. A proposal that we made was rejected by Parliament. I refer to the proposal that the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works should carry out the construction of the Spencer-street bridge and other bridges, and be a taxing authority. Metropolitan bridges are for the benefit of metropolitan people. I agree with Mr. Abbott when he asks, "Why should railway users contribute towards the cost of the bridge?" There is no reason at all. As I have said, the proposed Spencer-street bridge will be constructed for the benefit of the metropolitan area.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—And the people of the metropolitan area are paying £200,000.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—The Railway Department has to contribute a certain amount of money. It would have been only fair for the metropolitan municipalities to have contributed the entire cost of constructing this bridge. However, the municipalities concerned have agreed to the allocation of the cost, and it is not necessary to say anything more in regard to it. I may say this, however, that I think some municipalities too far removed from the site of the bridge are to be called upon to contribute while others on the southern side of the river have been let off too lightly. I do not know whether that is because those municipalities got the benefit of the influence of members of the present Government, but they do not seem to me to be contributing as much as they ought to. In all the circumstances, I cannot raise any objection to what has been done in this regard, and the best thing for us to do is to agree to the final passage of this measure. The Honorary Minister (Mr. Disney) is going bald waiting for the construction of this bridge, and the other Honorary Minister here (Mr. Williams) has lost almost all his hair in talking about it. I am going to accept the assurance of the Minister of Public Works that tenders will be invited for the erection of the superstructure, irrespective of what may take place in regard to the work to be done under the water. The Minister has told us that the Railway Construction Branch is going to submit a tender for the construction of this bridge. That authority, however, will not have the same liability that private contractors will have in submitting an offer for this work. I do not want the construction of the bridge to be delayed any longer, and in view of the Minister's assurance I will vote with the Government. I may add that I did not want to give a silent vote on this matter, and I have therefore made the statements I have.

The Hon. F. W. BRAWN.—I am prepared to accept the assurance which the Minister of Public Works has given us this afternoon. A good deal of time has been spent in discussing the matter. We have had the question of the construction of this bridge before us for about 30 years, and it is quite time some finality was arrived at. The Minister has shown us, by his statement, that he is quite as anxious as we are that too much shall not be paid for the bridge, and that he realizes the importance of inviting tenders for some of the work, at any rate. He has given us an instance of work which was estimated to cost over £33,000, and which, as the result of tenders being invited, he got done for £7,300 less. In the circumstances, I am quite prepared to trust the Minister in this matter.

The Hon. M. SALTAU.—I am also prepared to accept the assurance of the Government, as expressed by the Minister of Public Works. From my point of view, the whole matter is more or less of a two-penny half-penny character. We are told that the bridge is to cost £200,000, and it has been engaging attention for between 30 and 40 years. The bridge ought to have been built years ago. Reference has been made to the fact that the Railway Department will contribute £50,000 towards the cost of this bridge, and I suppose that is for the right to put railway lines on it.

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS.—No, the Railway Department proposes to build another bridge, and is consequently entitled to pay some compensation to the Melbourne Harbour Trust for the loss of its wharfage above the bridge. If it had not been for the Railway Department building a bridge in the neighbourhood, the bridge that it is now proposed to construct would be a swing-bridge.

The Hon. M. SALTAU.—However, all those who are immediately concerned seem to be prepared to accept the proposal of the Government, and the time has arrived when this bridge should be constructed.

The Hon. W. ANGLISS.—I was not here when the Minister of Public Works made a statement in regard to this matter, but I understand that he has given an undertaking that tenders will be called for the work and that the Government is prepared to accept the lowest. Like other members who have spoken, I think the time has arrived when some action should be taken to build this bridge, and apparently the Government has made an earnest effort to do what is necessary. In view of the Minister's statement, nothing is to be gained by further delaying the passage of this Bill. The construction of the bridge is long overdue. I regret that provision has not been made for a swing-bridge, but apparently those who should be in a position to judge better than I

am do not think such a bridge is necessary. One cannot help but pay attention to recommendations of men who have studied the question closely. I hope no further time will be wasted over this matter. If what the Minister promised is given effect to, the position will be amply safeguarded. If it turns out that the cost of this bridge greatly exceeds the amount of the departmental estimate, then this House will lose confidence in officers who make the estimates, and will not be able to place any reliance upon them in future.

The House divided on the motion (the Hon. W. H. Edgar in the chair).

Ayes	...	...	11
Noes	...	...	10
Majority for not insisting on the amendment	...		1

AYES.

Mr. Angliss	Mr. McGregor
,, Beckett	,, Richardson
,, Cohen	,, Williams.
,, Disney	*Tellers:*
,, Jones	Mr. Brawn
,, Kiernan	,, Saltau.

NOES.

Dr. Harris	Mr. White
Mr Hitchcock	,, Zwar.
,, Keck	
,, Smith	*Tellers:*
,, Tuckett	Mr. Abbott
,, Tyner	,, Bath.

MILK BOARD BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Forests), was read a first time.

(At 6.15 p.m. the sitting was suspended until 7.53 p.m.)

ELECTORAL (ABSENT VOTERS) BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works), was read a first time.

ALTONA RAILWAY BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works), was read a first time.

INSTRUMENTS BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works), was read a first time.

LAW INSTITUTE BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works), was read a first time.

CHARLTON LAND BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. R. WILLIAMS (Honorary Minister), was read a first time.

COWWARR LAND BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. J. H. DISNEY (Honorary Minister), was read a first time.

MILDURA COLLEGE LANDS BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. R. WILLIAMS (Honorary Minister), was read a first time.

FARM PRODUCE AGENTS BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works), was read a first time.

VICTORIAN LOAN AUTHORITY BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works), was read a first time.

STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION.

SALARIES OF OFFICERS: CONSULTING ENGINEERS: PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT.

The Hon. R. H. S. ABBOTT asked the Minister of Public Works—

1. What are the names of the officers constituting the staff of the State Electricity Commission receiving £600 and over per annum at the present time; in what capacity is each such officer employed; and what amount was paid to each such officer for the year ended 30th June, 1927?

2. What arrangements, if any, are in force by which the Commission can secure the advice of Mr. Clark as mining engineer, Mr. Michel as hydraulic engineer, and Mr. Merz as electrical engineer?

3. Have these gentlemen been consulted during the past two years; if so, what has been the cost of such consultations?

4. What was the cost of the Commission's publicity department for the year ended 30th June, 1927?

5. Does the publicity department supply to country newspapers leading and other articles intended to place Yallourn and the Commission's operations in a favorable light?

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—The answer to No. 1 is—

Department.	No. of Officers at present in receipt of £600 per annum and over.	Total payment to such officers for year ended 30th June, 1927.
		£ s. d.
1. Administration ..	14	9,827 15 7
2. Technical Officers—		
(*a*) Electric Supply..	17	12,913 15 0
(*b*) Coal Supply ..	4	3,862 10 0
(*c*) Briquetting ..	2	1,800 0 0
(*d*) Construction and Architectural ..	2	1,900 0 0
3. District Undertakings	5	2,843 15 0
Total ..	44	33,147 15 7

The list of officers is extensive, and with the permission of the House I intend to hand it to the Clerk. The other answers are—

2. No such arrangements are in force at the present time.

3. (i) Mr. Clark, Yes—£350 2s. 6d.; (ii) Mr. Michell, No; (iii) Mr. Merz, No.

4. The salaries paid to officers of the publicity department for the year ended 30th June, 1927, amounted to £658 2s. 3d.

5. The Commission's publicity department performs the functions pertaining to such a department, and, in so doing, provides country newspapers with news items which represent the facts regarding the Commission's operations, and do not place its operations in a more favorable light than the facts warrant.

IMMIGRATION.

SETTLEMENT OF MIGRANTS IN FOREST DISTRICTS.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON asked the Minister of Forests—

If he has taken any action to further the proposal adopted by the previous Government to settle migrants in the Beech Forest district and other parts of the State in connexion with forestry?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Forests).—The answer is—

These proposals are now under consideration, and when definitely decided upon the British Migration Commission will be consulted in respect of afforestation work in the Aire Valley in the Beech Forest district.

COMPANY FLOTATION.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON asked the Minister of Public Works—

If the Government will this session introduce legislation to prevent the hawking of shares in bogus and doubtful concerns, to prevent the floating of public companies with insufficient capital, and to provide that any new fire or life insurance company be required, before offering shares for sale to the public, to lodge a large deposit with the Government for the protection of the public and to show the bona fides of such companies?

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—The answer is—

This matter has not been overlooked, and is now receiving close scrutiny by the Government, with a view to introducing legislation on the subject as early as possible.

MEAT FREEZING COMPANIES.

INTERIM REPORT OF ROYAL COMMISSION.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works) presented the interim report of the Royal Commission on the origin, promotion, and management of the Amalgamated Freezing Company Proprietary Limited.

The report was ordered to lie on the table.

FORESTRY—IMMIGRATION—PUBLIC SERVICE ECONOMIES.

PLANTING OF PINUS INSIGNIS.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I wish to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the statements made by the Minister of Forests on the 2nd of August with regard to the planting of pinus insignis and other matters referred to by him on that occasion.

Six honorable members rose in their places (as required by the Standing Order) to support the motion.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Speaking in this House on the 2nd of August, when I was not present, the Minister of Forests made certain statements to which I intend to refer. The Minister said on that occasion—

I regret the absence of Mr. Richardson from this chamber to-night. I shall take the earliest opportunity, however, to forward him a proof of the official report of my remarks. So, if he desires to reply to them, he will have been given every facility for doing so.

I duly received a proof of the *Hansard* report of the Minister's remarks. It was sent to me by his private secretary, and I received it at Brisbane after my return from Cairns. I read the report in bed

one night, and I desire to inform the Minister that I did not spend a sleepless night. But I was surprised by some of the statements that he made. He replied to a statement that I had made in this chamber when speaking during the Address-in-Reply debate in relation to the Government's expressed determination to save some thousands of pounds annually on motor transport hire by the public Departments. The Minister declared that the Government intended to save as much public expenditure as it possibly could. Whether the Government's anticipation will be realized remains to be seen. I have grave doubts whether the Government will save thousands of pounds in connexion with motor hire by the Departments. However, at the end of the financial year we shall be able to see whether the Ministry has made good its intention. I have heard the Minister of Public Works state from this side of the House in past sessions when a Labour Government was not in power that the taxpayers of the State were being bled by the overmanning of the public Departments. I hope that, now that the honorable gentleman holds the important position of Minister of Public Works, he will be able to prove to the House and the country that there are too many men and women employed in the Public Service and that large savings can be effected in the administration of the public Departments. As I have mentioned on previous occasions, it is not an easy matter to curtail expenditure in connexion with our Public Service.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It is very difficult.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Yes, very difficult. The Minister of Public Works stated from this side of the House, when he was not in office, that the taxpayers were being bled by the Public Service.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—I suppose you will produce the *Hansard* report of my statement to that effect.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Exception was taken by the Minister of Forests to a statement I had made that the Trades Hall Council—I may be permitted to call them the bosses of the present Government—had adopted a resolution to the effect that no more immigrants should be brought into the State so long as there was unemployment here. I noticed the other day that the Trades Hall Council——

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—What has that to do with the planting of pinus insignis?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—The Honorary Minister does not want to hear about these things. The Minister of Forests stated that I had acted unfairly in making the statement with regard to the Trades Hall Council's resolution. I was merely stating what had appeared in the press to the effect that that resolution had been adopted. Both the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of Forests supported the Trades Hall Council on its attitude in regard to the stopping of immigration so long as unemployment existed in Victoria. I noticed last week, from a report in the *Argus*, that the Trades Hall Council had discussed the question of immigration and had adopted recommendations of a joint committee which had considered the subject. The *Argus* report contained the following recommendation which was adopted by the council:—

> That, while we believe that Australia is capable, with good government, to maintain in work and happiness a much larger population, we are compelled, in the interests of the workers already here, and in order to prevent our fellow-workers in other countries from being deluded by false statements into leaving home and kindred to become tools of the employers, to declare:—(1) That all recruiting of migrants by Australian authorities in London and elsewhere should cease forthwith; and (2) that no Government should countenance any further money being spent for these purposes or be a party, financially or otherwise, to any policy which lures people, by false promises, to come to Australia until work shall be made available for the thousands of unemployed already here, and unemployment insurance be made the law of the land.

I do not desire to act unfairly to either the Minister of Public Works or the Minister of Forests. I merely referred to a statement which was public property and which had remained uncontradicted until the Minister of Public Works referred to it in this chamber. I desire now to deal with matters relating to the administration of the Forests Commission when I was Minister of Forests in the last Ministry. The Minister of Forests stated in his speech that he had left a minute in the Forests Department to the effect that no pinus insignis was to be planted in localities suitable for growing a better class of softwood. There is nothing new in that policy. It has been

the policy of the Commission for years; but, unfortunately, we have comparatively little land under the control of the Commission suitable for growing the better class of softwoods. The greater part of the land which has been handed over to the Forests Commission is of poor quality. References have been made to the Ballarat Water Commission, and to the fact that it has been growing better classes of softwood timbers. I realize that that is the case, and that the commission can do so because the soil of the land over which it has control is of better quality than a good deal of other soil in that part of the State. With regard to the minute to which the Minister of Forests referred, I may say that that has been in the archives of the Department possibly ever since the Department has been in existence. The Minister proceeded to make a statement, particularly with regard to New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited. He said that that concern was obtaining money by fraudulent misrepresentation. That is, to my mind, a grossly unfair statement. If it had been made outside this House the Minister of Forests would have been required to withstand an action for damages. I do not consider it fair that a statement of that kind should have been made about a public company. It is a very large concern, and it has considerable capital, and it is doing a great thing for the advancement of forestry in Australasia. I propose to refer now to a statement that has been placed in my hands by this company, but, before quoting from it, I may say that I have no personal interest in the company. The Minister of Forests must recognize that there is a possibility of a very great shortage of softwood timbers throughout the world.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—In what parts of Australasia does this company operate?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I am referring to the New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited, which is planting trees in New Zealand. Referring to the words uttered by the Minister of Forests, the company asserts that it is unfair that the Minister should have made "an unwarranted attack upon a reputable company whose work in New Zealand has brought forth commendation from numerous authorities of renown." This was the company which took Mr. Owen Jones away from Victoria. He was chairman of the Forests Commission here, and was recognized as a man of wide knowledge and experience. He was not appointed by the Government of which I was a member, but he had been selected from overseas by a previous Government as one who possessed outstanding abilities. In its statement, the company proceeds:—

> The main concern of the Minister appeared to be the company's estimate of returns to be expected as a result of its enterprise. His absurd statements regarding the value of soft woods, particularly pinus insignis, irrespective of the conditions under which they might be grown, brought forth the following statement from the Ballarat Water Commission:—
>
> "At present pinus insignis trees aged 23 to 25 years were being sold at 6s. to 7s. per 100 super. feet at the stump. This worked out, on an average of 6s. 6d., at 22s. 6d. a tree. . . . Mr. Brawn, M.L.C., ... who is Chairman of the Water Commission. . . . said that he was satisfied that the present prices were equal to more than £500 to the acre."
>
> Mr. John Westwood, president of the Victorian Casemakers' Association, and one of the biggest users of insignis grown by the Commission, complains that in the past neither the Government nor private enterprise has shown sufficient foresight to cultivate supplies of insignis. He, in common with others, has consequently been forced to import and use large quantities of American timbers.
>
> The Premier, commenting on the subject, stated that Ballarat was an exception in that the Water Commission's reserves included some of the best land in Victoria, and that similar returns could not be expected in localities such as Anglesea and Scarsdale.

So far as Anglesea is concerned, that plantation is in the Geelong district. It is on land that was specially selected by Mr. Owen Jones, when he was chairman of the Commission, as being suitable in every way. It is protected on one side by the sea, and it is of an undulating character, and is recognized to be suitable for the growing of pinus insignis—

> The company claims that the areas it has acquired are more suitable for the growing of softwoods than even those owned by the Ballarat Water Commission, and submits in support of its contention samples of timber grown at Ballarat on the Commission's reserves and from the Waikato District, in New Zealand.

I may mention at this stage that the company has placed in one of the rooms of this House samples of its timbers. I hope that honorable members have had opportunities to examine them—

> Samples—
>
> (*a*) Selected from Ballarat Water Commission's mill, showing diameter growth of 12 inches in thirteen years.

(*b*) Sample from Waikato in the vicinity of New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited areas, showing 18 inches in thirteen years.

Such evidence shows that the return per acre should at least equal that obtained at Ballarat.

As further evidence that it should obtain a maximum return from its tree-planting enterprise, New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited quote Captain McIntosh Ellis, Director of Forestry in New Zealand, who, in 1925, replying to a personal inquiry regarding the operations of the company, wrote as follows:—

> "I am not personally familiar with the current operations of the New Zealand Perpetual Forests Company Limited. As to the tree-growing possibilities of the district, I can assure you that, without reservation, it embraces the best tree-growing district in New Zealand, having a rainfall of over 60 inches."

The Minister may probably put forth the following counter arguments:—(Assertion.)—Mr. Gibson, of the Indian Forests Service, stated that returns from forestry investment could not be expected in less than 40 years. (Reply.)—Owen Jones, from the same service, held similar views until he had been to New Zealand. (Assertion.)—Timber making such remarkable growth as indicated by the New Zealand sample is not as durable as that grown under less favorable conditions. (Reply.)—The Hon. T. Butterfield, Minister of Agriculture in the late Labour Government of South Australia, replying to the South Australian Builders and Contractors' Association, which had petitioned the Government requesting the discontinuance of the planting of pinus insignis, said—

> In an official bulletin of the New Zealand Department it was stated that "large quantities of the timber were exported to Australia as New Zealand white pine."
>
> Mr. Butterfield also said, "Pinus insignis was being cut in the New Zealand forests to the extent of 7,000,000 to 10,000,000 superficial feet board measurement annually, and that in South Australia builders had no experience of properly seasoned pinus insignis unless they had unwittingly used it as New Zealand white pine.

(Assertion.)—Too much money is leaving the State for investment in the Dominion. (Reply.)—This will be more than counterbalanced by the return of capital to the Australian investor when the forests are realized.

On the subject of the suitability of pinus insignis for pulping, the Minister stated that nowhere in the world is this timber being used on a commercial scale for the production of paper. The samples attached, which were produced at the laboratories of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, and which are regarded by experts as being equal to the best imported Swedish paper, indicate the tremendous possibilities for any Government or private enterprise with sufficiently large supplies of this timber to justify the establishment of pulping mills. That New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited is fortunate in possessing the necessary facilities is shown from the following letter:—

The Research Laboratory, Brunswick,
16th August, 1927.

The Manager, New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited, Melbourne.

Dear Sir.—With reference to your inquiry of even date regarding what I had seen during my visit to New Zealand when I was recently on leave, I wish to say that I had an opportunity of seeing over all your company's plantations, and of looking into the question of the suitability of sites for pulp mills, and generally sizing up the position in regard to the utilization of pinus insignis.

The things which struck me most were the remarkable growth of this species under the conditions existing in the pumice lands, the abundance of water, the ease of transport, possibilities of power development, and the splendid sites available for pulp mills.

As you are aware, I have for some time past carried out investigations for the Commonwealth on this timber, and publications already issued by the Government indicate the good opinion I have formed regarding it. I am convinced that pinus insignis will be one of the most important pulp woods used in Australasia inside twenty years, and, furthermore, that the plantations now being put down in New Zealand, both by your company and the Government, will supply the requirements of a very large industry in the centre of the North Island.

Yours faithfully,
(Sgd.) L. R. BENJAMIN.

The Minister may be interested to learn that Mr. L. R. Benjamin, who has been responsible for the research in connexion with the production of paper from insignis, is at present in Sydney supervising the erection of a plant which, operating on a semi-commercial scale, will manufacture both white and kraft paper from 100 per cent. insignis. When these tests have been completed, it will be known definitely what returns may be expected from this form of realization of the company's forests.

Independent authorities certify to the following facts regarding the operations of New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited at 31st May, 1927:—

Capital.—Subscribed capital, £167,935; paid-up capital, £128,892. Total number of bonds subscribed, 90,759; representing 15s. per head of population, New Zealand, and 4s. per head of population, Australia. The company controlled 153,088 acres; actual area planted was 72,545 acres.

The following extract from the report by the company's forestry administrator (Mr. Owen Jones) for 1926 gives some idea of the magnitude of the operations:—

"It is not easy to convey any real conception of the magnitude of the undertaking to those who have not actually seen it; visitors to the areas invariably express surprise at the extent of the work and the thorough manner in which it is being carried out. Some idea will,

however, be obtained when it is stated that the year's operations have included the clearing and planting of over 46,000 acres, the transport for planting or lining out of nearly 30,000,000 trees, the erection of 20 buildings, the installation of 34 miles of telephone, and the construction of 70 miles of road with all necessary bridges and culverts. A fleet of 17 motor lorries, 10 motor cars, 9 tractors, 6 graders, 8 scoops, and 10 ploughs has been busily engaged, whilst in the height of the planting season over 630 hands were employed, with a weekly wage bill of nearly £2,500. Already the young trees on the areas first planted (in 1924) are making a brave show, many of them being 6 to 8 feet high, and in the near future the areas now established will present an impressive spectacle, changing a bleak and dismal countryside into a thing of beauty, and converting lands hitherto waste and valueless into an asset of the utmost national importance."

The company's operations have been approved by the Dean of the Faculty of Forestry at Auckland University, as the following statement shows:—

"An innovation of some extent has been made recently through the courtesy of Mr. Owen Jones; several forestry scholars of the University School of Forestry have been given employment in the New Zealand Perpetual Forests. These students, it is expected, will prove their usefulness to the company, and it is hoped that this marks the commencement of a close co-operation in the training of foresters for the New Zealand forests between the company and the School of Forestry, for it cannot be denied that, as the forests develop, there will be a great deal of work which is more suitable for students in training to do than any one else, for it is often of such a nature as to be uneconomical to put a fully-trained forester on to it, while an uninstructed man cannot be relied upon. Later on in the matter of growth studies and assessments and such similar work, possibly the more senior students will find a place which will enable them to render considerable service and assistance which will be to the advantage of all parties concerned.

(Signed) H. HUGH CORBIN,
Dean of the Faculty of Forestry.

As evidence of the present state of the planted areas a number of authorities might be quoted. Sir Douglas Mawson states:—

As a result of my recent visit to New Zealand and inspection of properties and activities of the New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited, I am satisfied that you are working along sound lines and conscientiously carrying out the planting and maintenance of the afforestation areas. The character of the soil and the local climatic conditions all very favorably impressed me as being eminently suited for tree culture. At the same time, the bush fire risk is exceptionally small; in fact, it is a most favoured region in this respect.

There are other testimonials, including testimonials from the late Commissioner of Forests of New South Wales, Mr. R. Dalrymple-Hay; Mr. W. H. Horn, Forest Officer, State Plantations, Scarsdale; Mr. H. Hugh Corbin, Dean of the Faculty of Forestry, Auckland University; Messrs. T. C. Ellis and Norman Belcher, of Geelong; and the Putaruru Chamber of Commerce. I made reference to the statements of the New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited because I regard it as unfair that the Minister of Forests should make the statement he did—that this concern is practically a swindle. I repeat that, as far as I can see, the company is doing a great work, not only for New Zealand, but for Australia. I do not know whether the Minister would contend that the statements that have been made from time to time at conferences, and by men who understand the position as it affects the timbers of the world, and who realize that there is every possibility of a very great shortage of timber occurring within the next 25 or 30 years, are negligible. As I stated before, whilst I recognize that the pinus insignis is not the best softwood, it is none the less a most valuable timber. I do not care who may say anything to the contrary. We have the advice of experts that it is a most valuable timber, whether planted in New Zealand or in large areas of our own State. The climate and soil of New Zealand appear to be specially suited for the growth of pinus insignis. This softwood will supply an immense want in the future. There are people who, seeing an old gnarled pinus insignis growing in a garden, think that that is the type of tree we are cultivating. The Minister knows, or should know, better. He referred in one part of his speech to the very fine plantation that is to be seen in the Creswick nurseries. I will refer to that matter again. The Minister must know that when grown under proper conditions the pinus insignis is quite different from individual pinus insignis trees grown in private gardens. We are not planting the timber for present use, but for future use. I do not know whether the Minister would say to-night that there is no danger of a shortage of softwoods being brought about in other parts of the world. I have here an article which appeared in Saturday's *Age*—

It is predicted that the world's present supplies of softwoods will be exhausted in 25 years unless energetic steps are taken to meet future requirements by means of afforestation on a large scale.

The Hon. H. KECK.—Who put the report in? The New Zealand Company?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—No; it is a reprint from an English newspaper, and is headed, "Afforestation in Great Britain: An Energetic Policy." The article continues—

> Australia has been almost denuded of softwoods, and though she exports timber to the value of £1,500,000 annually, she has to import softwoods to the extent of over £4,000,000 a year. Great Britain, which has lagged behind other European countries in afforestation, imports wood and timber to the value of over £25,000,000 annually, in addition to £20,000,000 of wood pulp for making paper. But Great Britain is now carrying out an energetic policy of afforestation. . . . In 1919 an Act was passed by the British Parliament providing for the appointment of a Forestry Commission to carry out an energetic programme of afforestation by the State.

The article appealed to me because I had been to a great deal of trouble, and had spent a good deal of time, in trying to push ahead the Beech Forest scheme of migration in connexion with forestry. This is what they are doing in parts of England:—

> Part and parcel of the forestry scheme is a permanent settlement of forest workers and their families on the afforestable lands, a branch of the work in hand holding wide possibilities for good. Forest workers' holdings are being brought into being, each with 10 acres of cultivable land, a cottage, and suitable buildings. Not more than £800 may be so spent on the cottage and equipment, and nearly all are being built or adapted from existing structures, by direct labour, well within this figure. The present aim is to create five of these holdings for each 1,000 acres of plantations; they are essentially part-time holdings, and the forest workers are guaranteed not less than 150 days' work in the forest in each year, at the current wage for agricultural labour, or local piece-work rates. In suitable districts, fruit growing is encouraged, and market garden crops are valuable. The holdings are usually suited to the keeping of stock, cows, goats (under control, be it said), pigs, and sheep, although sheep are not everywhere adapted to local circumstances. The holdings are let at economic rents, based on the cost of formation, to carefully selected men, who are required to reside on their holdings, and who, with the standby of work in the forest, have every opportunity of making their standby holdings pay, and permanently improving their positions in life.

I have quoted that portion of the article, because it indicates, practically, the lines on which I was anxious that the Beech Forest scheme should be carried out. I still believe that that scheme can be made a very great success. There are other portions of the State also where suitable lands can be obtained, and settlement in connexion with forestry can be successfully carried on. I have made special reference to the New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited. I repeat that I do not think it was fair of the Minister of Forests to refer to that company as one which had obtained money by fraudulent representations.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Are you defending the Victorian companies as well?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—The honorable gentleman specially referred to the New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited as obtaining money by fraudulent representation. In my opinion, it was grossly unfair for a member of Parliament to make a statement of that kind. Such a statement was calculated to seriously damage a public company that is doing a great good. The Minister referred to the timber growing in the Creswick nursery—the pine plantation. He said the plantation had been growing from 10 to 30 years, and, to use his own words, was "one of the finest plantations of pines it would be possible to see. No miller could be found who would give £5 an acre for the timber." Such a statement was a foolish one. The Minister must know that a plantation of pines that has been growing from 10 to 30 years will be found to be worth more than £5 an acre. I am rather surprised at the Minister making such a statement. He claims to have had great experience of timber. As a boy he was employed in a timber yard. He finished up with owning a furniture business at Fitzroy. It is surely surprising that he should have made such an extraordinary statement. Why, a forest which has been growing for 30 years would be worth more than £5 an acre if sold for firewood purposes only! Mr. Brawn will bear me out when I state that the Ballarat Water Commission are selling timber at a much higher rate than that. If the plantation in the Creswick nursery were put up for sale, the case-makers would bid more for the timber than the amount mentioned by the Minister. I cannot understand how he came to make the statement that he did. I now want to refer to the appointment of the chairman of the Forests Commission. I do so with some hesitation. The present Government have appointed Mr. Galbraith as chairman of the Commission. The Minister made the statement that,

as far as the Forests Department was concerned, there might well have been put over the entrance to that Department a notice that no Australian need apply. When I was Minister of Forests, I appointed Mr. Code as chairman of the Forests Commission, and Mr. Gay as one of the members. Those were the only two appointments which I made, and both appointees were Australians. Mr. Galbraith was a personal friend of mine. I had known him when he was in the town clerk's office at Geelong. I knew him also when he was engaged on clerical work with the Country Roads Board, and as secretary of the Forests Commission. He was appointed as a Commissioner, not by the last Government, but by a previous Government. When I was approached with a view to appointing him chairman of the Forests Commission, I thought that he had not had the experience which I deemed necessary in a man who was to fill that important position. I have always made it my business in life, when dealing with any public post, not to be weighed in any way by personal feelings. I have always thought it my duty to do the very best I could to fill such positions with the very best men obtainable. When the Agent-General sent me a message to say that Professor Dawson, of the Cambridge University, was willing to come out here owing to the ill health of his wife, I was prepared to appoint him, because I felt that it would be of great assistance to the Forests Department. From the information that I obtained, Professor Dawson was a man of very wide experience. He was one of the leaders on forestry matters in Great Britain—in fact, in the world. That was the only reason why I was prepared to appoint him. Although I am pleased to see Mr. Galbraith in the position of chairman of the Forests Commission, I feel that Professor Dawson would have brought knowledge to this State that we badly need, and he would have imparted a great deal of knowledge even to the present Minister of Forests.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—How long would he have stayed here?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—There was no mention of that phase. As I have said, he was relinquishing his position at the Cambridge University owing to the ill health of his wife. The Minister of Forests went on to make the extraordinary statement that we have hundreds of draughtsmen who can tell how many trees go to an acre, and therefore there was no necessity to accept the advice of the Forests Commission and import a plans officer from overseas. The Forests Commission represented to me that there was an absolute necessity to have an experienced plans officer. I should like to draw the attention of honorable members to a statement made by Mr. Lane Poole to the effect that there is not a competent officer to fill that position. That statement was made before the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Commonwealth Constitution, and appears in one of to-day's newspapers.

The Hon. R. H. S. ABBOTT.—What is Mr. Lane Poole's standing in forestry?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—He is Inspector-General of Forestry for the Commonwealth Government. He was in Western Australia, where he was head of the Forestry Department of that State, and prior to that he was in New South Wales. He has had a good deal of experience, but I am not prepared to concur in what he said to the effect that forestry should be a Commonwealth function. I hope that Victoria at least is not going to hand over to the Commonwealth Government the control of its Forests Department. We are able to deal with that Department ourselves. I was touching upon the statement of the Minister of Forests relating to the plans officer. He said, in effect, that there were plenty of men in the Department who could do the work.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—And so you imported a man.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Yes, on the advice of the Forests Commission. After full inquiry, it was found that there were no available men in Australia competent to fill the position. Not long before I retired there was a conference of forestry officers at which was raised the question whether there was a competent plans officer available. It was acknowledged that the answer to that question must be in the negative. For the Minister of Forests to say that all a plans officer has to do is to tell how many trees go to an acre is to display gross ignorance.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Do you know the plans officer's age?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I have no idea of his age, but he has qualifications.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Is he a boy who has just left school?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—He is a competent man.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—How do you know?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—From the information that we obtained. Dealing now with the statement of the Minister of Forests that after the previous Government was defeated it appointed as officers two men from abroad, and his declaration that as the present Minister of Forests he resented that unwarrantable action, I treat this as a childish outburst. I do not understand how any man can talk such nonsense on the floor of the House. Does the Minister of Forests claim that a previous Government could not have appointed those two men? Apparently he resents their appointment a few months before the last Government went out of office.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—They were appointed a month after your Government was beaten, and a couple of weeks before they left office.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—They were appointed some time before I left the office of Minister of Forests.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—On the 6th of May.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Whenever they were appointed, there was nothing unwarrantable in the action of the Government of the day. The present Minister of Forests complains that those two officers have to be paid. All the appointments were made at the request of the Forests Commission as being necessary to properly staff the Department. There was nothing unwarrantable in those appointments as far as the last Government was concerned. Now I wish to refer to my statement that it was reported in the press that the Minister had declared that it was not his intention to renew some of the saw-millers' licences, but that he intended to start Government saw-milling. The Minister of Forests resented my statement, and told honorable members that I did not know that the State already had a saw-mill. Of course, I was aware that the State had a saw-mill at Warburton. I inspected it on more than one occasion. That mill was started long before I became Minister of Forests. I am opposed to any interference with private enterprise in the saw-milling or any other industry. I am out to champion private enterprise, not State enterprise. I recognize that the saw-milling industry is in a very bad condition, owing to the large imports of softwood timber from the Baltic. Sea freights are very low and the wages paid in the Baltic are much lower than those paid in Australia. Consequently, none of the saw-millers is accomplishing much at present. The statement that the Minister intended not to renew some of the saw-millers' licences, but to start a Government saw-mill, was reported in the press. I could say a good deal more, but I shall only say in conclusion that I always thought that the Minister of Forests was a sport. I do not think he was playing the game in making some of the statements to which I have referred during my absence from the House. I like to recognize the Minister of Forests as Mr. Beckett. We know what he was like when he sat with other Labour members on a different side of the House. The statements to which I have referred were characteristic of him. I hope that if he wants peaceful working in this House he will not repeat those foolish statements.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—I have listened with a great deal of interest to Mr. Richardson's speech and I have been endeavouring to realize what purpose could be served by the extraordinary "post-mortem" in connexion with timber. I feel that he has raised no argument to justify the Forests Commission in the method which it adopted during his term of office in growing at least 70 per cent. of pinus insignis and only about 30 per cent. of softwood timbers of a greater value. When forestry is discussed in the House I derive great pleasure, because I claim that I was the first—three years ago—to ask the House to question the wisdom of the Forests Commission in planting pinus insignis and other timber worth three or four times the value of pinus insignis in the proportions that I have

already mentioned. The other softwood timbers could be grown quite as well as the cheaper wood, without greater expense. Mr. Richardson has pointed out that one of the reasons why pinus insignis has been so largely grown in Victoria is that the land is unsuitable for anything else. That is absolutely absurd. In my district there are thousands of acres of the finest soil, belonging to the Forests Department, that could be had for growing redwood, oregon, and certain other pines, the value of which is three or four times greater than that of the timbers at present growing there. To my mind, it is pitiable that in that district they in the past should have gone on growing pinus insignis and ignoring the fact that a better class of timber can be grown there. The soil and the altitude are suitable, and the rainfall is all that is required. According to Mr. Richardson, the reason why so much of this lower value timber is grown is that the surroundings are suitable for only that class of timber. As a matter of fact, in a majority of districts where pinus insignis is grown, timber worth three times its value can be grown at the same expense.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—And it takes three times as long to grow.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—In the course of a few years timber will be growing in the Beechworth district which will be a revelation to those who understand anything about it. Mr. Richardson referred to what is going on at Ballarat. The less he says about the proceedings there, the better. A lot of pinus insignis is being grown there in country which makes its production an absolute waste. Timber equal to the best timbers imported could be grown in that locality. It was claimed that pinus insignis should be grown at Ballarat because some fruit-growers in the Mallee cannot get other timber for their requirements. But their requirements are negligible, and there is enough pinus insignis being grown in Victoria to last for a thousand years. Because a few fruit-growers have sent for a few thousand feet of timber to Ballarat is no proof of the wisdom of growing that particular kind of timber. That is no argument in favour of that policy at all. Mr. Richardson has quoted the opinion of experts in regard to the value of pinus insignis. But the obvious fact remains that the value of an article is dependent to a large extent upon the demand for it. If one goes round to the leading timber merchants who import timber, one will find that pinus insignis is not stocked.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—In 25 or 30 years there will be a great shortage of imported timbers.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—I am talking about the present time, and not about the future. Why is it that timber merchants do not stock pinus insignis? The answer is that their customers do not want it. The timber is too poor.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—They will want it in twenty years' time.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—If this timber was of the value claimed for it, why is it that out of 1,250,000 feet of timber being imported into the Commonwealth to-day there is no pinus insignis? What better argument could I use than that to show that pinus insignis is of no value? The point I wish to emphasize is that better timbers can be obtained from abroad, and that is the reason why people do not use the poorer quality. Why should we grow for the future timber that people will not use to-day?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—People will not be able to get the other timber in future.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—I should also like to point out that pinus insignis is not used for cases which have to be exported, and, as I have just indicated, it is only used in scattered districts where requirements are negligible and where hardwood, woolly-butt or stringy-bark cannot be obtained. I do not wish to repeat myself, but Mr. Richardson has made such a feature of expert opinions in regard to the value of pinus insignis that I must quote the opinion of another expert, who came from America. Seven months ago this expert visited New Zealand. He said he was astonished at the extent to which pinus insignis was being grown there. He was also surprised that so much money was being used in the growing of this timber, which was looked upon as of no value at all in Southern California from where it originally came. The only use it was put to there was to make wind-breaks for more valuable timber. The expert I refer to was Mr. Cornwall, the editor of a paper called *The Timber Man*, published in Portland, Oregon.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—You will make a different speech in twenty years' time.

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—I shall not be here then. The fact remains that practical men who have had experience with timbers have no time for this inferior kind of wood, and I cannot understand a sensible man like Mr. Richardson advocating its growth. Recently, an argument in favour of growing pinus insignis has been that it will be good for making pulp for paper. If those who put forward that argument only knew the cost of growing pinus insignis for that purpose I do not think they would use it. The cost would be so great as to make the proposal absolutely ridiculous. Paper pulp can only be profitably made from timber that nature has provided to grow under certain conditions without a penny cost of labour. If pinus insignis were used for making paper pulp, instead of paying 1½d. for a paper, we would have to pay at least 6d. The Minister has pointed out that in the Steppes in Eastern Russia there are enormous forests of the finest softwood timber grown in the world. This timber is within three weeks' run from Australia. There is enough timber grown in that part of the world to supply the paper pulp which will be necessary for centuries to come. Mr. Richardson must know in his own mind that a great mistake has been made during the past five years in devoting our energies to growing pinus insignis and ignoring the better types of timber which can be grown in the same localities. About six or seven months ago a conference was held at Ballarat that was attended by experts in commercial timber throughout the Commonwealth. I believe that every State was represented. At that conference a paper was read on commercial timbers, and the relative values of different kinds of timbers were fully set out. I believe it was one of the most instructive papers that has ever been read on the subject. When the author had finished a member of the Forests Commission moved a vote of thanks to the writer, and said that it was the most informative paper he had ever listened to. He agreed with everything the writer said, and he intimated that it was the intention of the Forests Department in future to grow timbers of greater value than pinus insignis. The statement the Commissioner made was straightforward, and it seemed to indicate that the Commission had been proceeding on wrong lines for a number of years, but was now going to alter its policy. That statement satisfies me that arguments I advanced three years ago when dealing with this subject have made some impression upon the members of the Forests Commission.

The Hon. W. TYNER.—Do you suggest that members of the Forests Commission have changed their minds on this question?

The Hon. A. M. ZWAR.—They may not have changed their mind, but that statement was an indication that their policy is to be changed. The fact remains that from now onwards, with the assistance of the present Minister of Forests, who is a practical man with a knowledge of commercial timbers, more attention is to be given to the growth of other softwoods. All I need say in conclusion is that it is a crying shame to see, in the district I represent, country being given over to the growth of useless timbers, when woods at least three times their value could be satisfactorily grown.

The Hon. H. KECK.—I wish to make a few remarks on the subject of timber. I agree with Mr. Zwar in his view that we should grow timber of a better quality. I have little faith in the growing of pinus insignis, except for the roughest of work, such as packing cases or fruit cases. It is suitable for such purposes if it is sufficiently thick. I should like the Minister of Forests to visit my property at Elmore. There I can show him mahogany gums and sugar gums, three years old, 8 inches in diameter and 20 feet high. Those trees are growing in favorable circumstances on the Campaspe River, and can be used for telegraph poles in ten years' time. They will beat pinus insignis out of sight. I have 3,000 trees planted, and we are putting in more for breakwinds. The Minister should send up officers from the Forests Department to make an inspection. There is money in timber if the right quality is grown, but I do not believe that we shall do much with pinus insignis.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Forests).—It is extremely difficult to follow the rather rambling statement made by Mr. Richardson, because, apparently, he went over the speech that I delivered on the motion for the adoption

of the Address-in-Reply, and also a subsequent one I made in connexion with the Consolidated Revenue Bill (No. 3). I anticipated that I should have had a number of important statements to reply to, but an answer is hardly necessary in the circumstances that prevail. Strange to say, Mr. Richardson himself practically answered the charges he made concerning the Forests Commission by his own statements. From my personal point of view, I should like to say that Mr. Richardson speaks, in the first place, rather sarcastically concerning my connexion as chairman of the State motor transport services committee. Possibly it is news to him that under the régime of the Government in which he was a Minister, £48,000 was spent per annum——

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—What has this to do with the matter under discussion?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I am following the remarks of the mover of the motion.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—But a Minister should not do that.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Possibly not, but I must answer the statements made. I was going to say, when I was interrupted, that the previous Administration spent about £48,000 in motor hire alone. Of that sum, £38,000 went in allowances of 10d. per mile to public servants who used their own motor cars on Government business. It does not require a keen mathematical brain to reckon what we are saving when we pay 7d. per mile; even that sum allows a fair profit. The previous Government paid between £17,000 and £18,000 on motor hire all over the country. It paid whatever the garage proprietors charged. In some cases the charges were 1s. to 1s. 3d. per mile, and in others they were higher. It may be news to Mr. Richardson that this Government has received tenders which work out at 9d. per mile at the present juncture. There will be a substantial saving effected even in that direction. In connexion with the policy of the Forests Commission, I do not propose to accept the statement of Mr. Richardson that it is the same now as it was before. As a matter of fact, a radical departure from that policy has been made. We should never have seen the Ovens and Beechworth districts being planted with such inferior timber as pinus insignis. In justice to myself and to Mr. Richardson, I should like to draw attention to something I said, in reference to the honorable member, when I was speaking of the growth of pinus insignis by the Forests Commission. I said—

> Now, each and every member of the Commission agrees with my contention that under no circumstances should pinus insignis be planted where other timbers can be grown.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—That is right.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—That has not been carried out. In the Ovens and Beechworth district it will be found that inferior timber has been planted. I also said—

> They have done an immensely useful work in planting lands worth 10s. an acre with pinus insignis. That is not a commercial enterprise, but is done in performance of a useful function so far as their Department is concerned. My two immediate predecessors in the office that I now hold were earnest and enthusiastic supporters of forest schemes. In common fairness to my immediate predecessor, I want to say that I have carefully perused the pamphlet that he submitted to honorable members, and I agree with practically all the contentions that he puts forward in that pamphlet. After all, we all know that the softwoods we have planted serve a useful purpose.

It would have been better for Mr. Richardson, when he commented on something that appeared to reflect on him, to mention that I said I wanted to be fair to him. Mr. Richardson has a happy knack of setting up a bogy of his own and knocking it down. He has no foundation for the statement he made regarding my position towards immigration. I repeat what he said—

> Mr. Jones, the Leader of the House, and Mr. Beckett, the Minister of Forests, both appear to favour the cessation of immigration.

My colleague put Mr. Richardson in his proper position in regard to that statement. I said—

> I have not yet made a statement to the press, and no statement has been published of my views regarding the cessation or otherwise of immigration.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I said it appeared in the press.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Mr. Richardson now repeats his statement. He also put up a special plea for a company that is exploiting Australia. He took exception to my statement as reported in *Hansard*—

That money is being obtained by fraudulent representation.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—Does that refer to Victoria?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I am referring to the Dartmoor scheme and to the scheme of the New Zealand Perpetual Forests Limited.

Mr. Richardson was strangely silent about the Dartmoor scheme, which comes from his district. Here is a pamphlet issued in Geelong by the Forestry Company of Australia Proprietary Limited, of Kyrie-street, Geelong. It contains the following statement:—

The British Government decides that the Dartmoor district is the best pine-growing land in the world.

The British Government has not considered the matter. The company's advertisement continues—

and through the Federal Development and Migration Commission it has made available the sum of £358,250 to grow softwoods, chiefly pinus insignis, to partially relieve the situation and encourage private enterprise to do the rest.

Is not that a fraudulent representation? Not one penny has been made available to that company by the British Government for the Dartmoor scheme. That company also stated that the State schools are guaranteed £500 an acre by the Victorian Government for 25-year-old trees planted by the various school committees for children. Is that not misrepresentation? I pause for a reply, and do not get one. I do not expect one. No one can deny the fact that ridiculous assertions have been made by companies trading on Australian money, and that their representations will never be given effect to. Mr. Richardson will never invest a copper of his own in those companies.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—If I were a younger man, I should.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—What I have read concerns a company that is in existence. It is remarkable that, since I made my first statement, every expert who has given an opinion has supported my view regarding pinus insignis.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Every expert?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—In the first place, Dr. G. Einar Dureitz, Assistant Professor of Planteology at the Royal University, Upsula, Sweden, said—

I would advise against the cultivation of softwoods on an extensive scale.

In the *Argus,* we have the opinion of Mr. A. J. Gibson, who has been for 29 years in the Indian forest service. He pointed out how misleading some of the forestry companies' pamphlets are, and said—

One New Zealand company has been flooding India with copies of its prospectus. In my opinion, they are too optimistic. Experience has shown that a recurring net annual rental return an acre of £2 10s. is very high.

Mr. Harold Burston, the financial expert of the *Herald,* makes references to "many fake companies." Mr. Gepp, the Chairman of the Development and Migration Commission, said it was estimated that the cost of growing an acre of pinus insignis would be £5 7, and that the return for 30 years' work would be £88. All these gentlemen are experts in their own particular line.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Does Mr. Gepp understand timber?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Mr. Gibson has been brought to Australia from India to advise the Commonwealth forestry authorities. I repeat that in no part of the world has pinus insignis pulp been even a commercial success. I sent the Forests Commission beautiful paper made in the laboratory from stringy-bark, but it is not at present a commercial probability. When Mr. Richardson speaks about the shortage of softwood, such conditions may prevail in certain localities, but not so far as Australia is concerned.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Not so far as Australia is concerned?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It is evident from the remarks of Mr. Zwar, which I can confirm, that in the eastern part of Russia to-day on the Amur River, timber can be felled which can be landed in Australia at two-thirds the price of Baltic timber, and there is an almost inexhaustible supply there. If Mr. Richardson knows anything of geography, he should know that Australia can be supplied from that part, though it cannot supply the markets of the Old World.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—You say there is not going to be a shortage of softwoods?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Not so far as Australia and New Zealand are concerned.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Then you are right against all the experts.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—No; I agree with them as far as Canada is concerned. There may possibly be a shortage of softwoods there. However, when

we are growing softwoods we are going to grow a timber that it is possible to use for some specified commercial purpose. In no part of the world to-day is pinus insignis used for pulping purposes, and there are many other timbers that we can grow here which are more useful for furniture or cabinet-making purposes. We have 10,500 acres already under pinus insignis. That alone, if worth £100 per acre, would bring in an enormous amount. When I was speaking about the 3,500 acres of pinus insignis at Creswick, I said that the value of the timber at the present time was about £10 per acre. I doubt if any miller would give more than £5 per acre for it, taking it as it is. I shall now come to another matter about which Mr. Richardson complained—my statement in regard to the policy of my predecessor, that the words "No Australian need apply" could well have been written over the Forests Department. As a matter of fact, it is not so long ago that Mr. Richardson brought here a young man from Edinburgh to take charge of the forestry school at Creswick. We have had pupils at that school for about fifteen years. What was the good of the Government carrying on a school of forestry if it could not train an Australian boy of 24 to do all that an imported boy of 24 could do? I referred to another matter. Mr. Richardson made the statement to the House that some months before he left office the Forests Commission asked him to bring out a draughtsman, and said that he had done so on their recommendation. As a matter of fact, he made the appointment only fourteen days before the present Government was called upon to form an Administration. Two boys were appointed by Mr. Richardson from abroad on the 6th of May, 1927, about four weeks after his Government was defeated. The cablegram was sent on the 6th of May. One of these boys is 21 years of age, and the other is 23 or 24 years.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—We were making inquiries for months.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—These are the two experts whom the honorable member says we cannot replace in Australia. He says that our own young men are not sufficiently qualified to perform the duties that these boys will perform. As a matter of fact, the senior of the two boys finished his forestry course only in June last. He landed here only three or four weeks ago. What I did resent was the fact that two weeks before he left office with the sure knowledge that his reign was ended, Mr. Richardson cabled abroad for two boys to come here to take jobs that good Australians could have taken. That was my contention, which is amply borne out by the facts.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Do you say youths or men here could have taken the places that the two young men from abroad were to take?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Yes. One of these boys was 21 years of age, and was a fourth-year student at the Edinburgh University. Does the honorable member mean to say that that boy is an expert, and that we have no men who could take his place?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—He is a trained man.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—This boy is not. The honorable member is referring to another boy whom he imported from abroad, probably to the detriment of an Australian who could have taken the position. The boy whom the honorable member appointed to be assistant master at the forestry school at Creswick completed his forestry course only in June last, a couple of months after the honorable member cabled for him to come out here. It was on account of these facts that I said I resented such actions as these being taken by Mr. Richardson to prejudice his successor in the position he occupied. I think it was an improper thing for any Minister, knowing full well his days were numbered, to send abroad for boys to come here to the detriment of Australian students whom we have trained in our own school of forestry.

The motion for the adjournment of the House was negatived.

ARCHITECTS REGISTRATION BILL.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This is a very short measure, and, as a matter of fact, it was passed by this House in 1925, but it was not dealt with by another place. It is designed to amend section 7 of the Architects Registration Act, which was passed in 1922,

and its object is to lengthen the time stipulated in that Act within which certain persons might make application for registration as architects. The Act provided that such applications must be made within six months of the 1st of January, 1923, and it is proposed to extend that time to the 30th of September, 1924. Amongst the qualifications for registration set out in section 7 of the principal Act are—

> (1) Any of the following persons who applies in a prescribed form to be registered under this Act may, on payment of the prescribed fee, be so registered if the Board is satisfied that such person has attained the age of 21 years and is of good character, namely:—Any person who . . . (*c*) has for a period of at least one year before the first day of January, One thousand nine hundred and twenty-three, been bona fide engaged in Victoria in the practice of the profession of an architect, and has made application for registration within six months after that date.

That, of course, would have made the time for registration the 30th of June, 1923. It appears that under the Act there was unavoidable delay in framing the necessary regulations, which prescribed the form of application for registration. These regulations were not submitted for approval by the Architects Registration Board until the 14th of June, 1923. The regulations were approved by the Governor in Council on the 19th of June, and gazetted on the 20th of June, 1923, but it will be seen that the time allowed under the Act for the receipt of applications for registration was only ten days after the gazettal of the prescribed form of application. In consequence of the short time allowed for lodging applications, several persons made application for registration subsequent to the 30th of June, 1923 (the last day allowed by the Act), but, of course, too late to allow of their applications being considered by the Board. The Architects Registration Board applied for an amendment of the Act to enable the Board to deal with all applications received up to the 30th of September, 1924, and to register those persons who are eligible in all other respects with the requirements of the Act. In anticipation of the proposed amendment, the Board published a notice in August, 1924, inviting applications for registration to be lodged by the 30th of September, 1924, and, acting thereon, the Board inquired into and approved of fourteen applications. It will, therefore, be seen that no further applications, other than those received and approved, will be entertained by the Board. The object of the Bill is to so amend the law as to enable those fourteen persons who applied for registration, and who were duly qualified, to be legally registered. There can be no further applications dealt with. The gate will have been closed, as it were, from the 30th of September, 1924. As I have said, the Bill was passed by this House in 1925, and by a mere accident it was not dealt with by another place. The question of the registration of architects generally is not involved, the House having discussed that question very fully and dealt with it in 1922.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—The House may remember that I was not very much enamoured of the original Architects Registration Act of 1922, many of the features of which made no appeal to me. That measure aroused considerable debate in the House from myself and other honorable members. However, the Act was passed, and effect ought fairly to be given to it. As the Minister has pointed out, the time left for applications from persons entitled to be registered under the Act certainly was not sufficient to enable them all to come in. Therefore, I think it is proper to open the door up to a certain point. The Bill has on a previous occasion received the blessing of this Chamber, and there is no reason whatever why we should alter our minds in regard to it. Therefore, I commend the measure to the House.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—I should like to ask the Minister whether there might not possibly be one or two more applications than those to which he referred.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—I am told not.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—If there are any persons who have been unjustly omitted, it would be a pity in making this amendment to the Act not to include them. I think the Minister should inform the House whether the Architects Registration Board is satisfied that the Bill will cover the whole of the people in the State who are entitled to be registered under the provision of the Act which is being amended.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—I am advised that that is so.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

POUNDS BILL.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The introduction of this measure has been sought by the Municipal Association of Victoria for some years. It is a Bill to amend the Pounds Act 1915, and it provides for three distinct amendments which are considered essential for its proper administration. The first amendment is provided for under clause 2. It amends section 9 and the second schedule of the Act by substituting for the word "threepence" the following words, "Two shillings (where the land trespassed on is in a city, town, or borough), or Threepence (where the land trespassed on is not in a city, town, or borough)." The effect of this amendment is to provide power to increase the trespass rates for cattle so that the rate for trespass on land not being tillage land enclosed with a substantial fence does not exceed 2s. where the land trespassed on is in a city, town, or borough, in lieu of 3d. as at present in the Act. The trespass rate for cattle outside cities, towns, and boroughs remains at 3d. as now provided in the Act. The trespass rate for sheep is not in any way affected by the amendment. It is contended that the amount of 3d. per head does not cover the loss or damage caused by trespass of cattle. Moreover, the trespass rate is so small that people let their cattle wander in cities and populous places because of the small trespass rate provided in the Act, a practice which can only be discouraged by an increased rate, as proposed. The second amendment is contained in clause 3. Sub-clause (1) empowers the poundkeeper, on the authority in writing of a justice, to destroy any animal which is impounded and is found to have been abandoned, or to be decrepit, diseased, seriously injured, or disabled. The remaining portions of the clause are merely machinery provisions to give effect thereto. The reason for this amendment is that the class of animals referred to are turned loose upon public highways, and there is no power to destroy them until after they have been offered for sale, which cannot be done for a period of 21 days, as required by section 22 of the Act. During that period the council is put to the expense of providing sustenance while the animals are impounded. The third amendment is provided under clause 4. It amends section 22 of the principal Act by substituting "fourteen days" for the words "twenty-one days" wherever they occur. Under this section of the Act, it is necessary to retain cattle in the pound for 21 days before they can be offered for sale. It has been represented that, in many cases, animals fail to realize the amounts spent on their maintenance while impounded. Moreover, fourteen days is considered a long enough period for an owner to release any animal from the pound. No possible hardship or injustice would ensue as the result of the amendment, as the poundkeeper is required, under the provisions of section 21 of the Act, to send a notice of the impounding of cattle to the person who has had brands and marks of such impounded cattle registered by the poundkeeper, and in the case where cattle have not been branded or marked, to notify the impounding of cattle by notice in the *Government Gazette*, and in a newspaper published, or generally circulating, in the district in the form provided in the fifth schedule to the Act. This appears to me to be a very desirable Bill. Its introduction has been sought by the municipal councils, who understand the position. I therefore ask the House to pass the measure, and to give the municipalities the relief which they have been seeking for some years.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—This Bill is one which I can safely commend to the House. I have had the privilege of studying the Minister's notes on the measure. That privilege has been granted me in connexion with other Bills which Ministers have introduced, and I thank them for the courtesy which they have extended to me in this respect. At the same time there are two inaccuracies in the Minister's notes. The third paragraph states that the trespass rate for cattle will remain at 3d. outside cities, towns, or boroughs, as provided in the principal Act. The rate is not 3d., but 3d. is the maximum rate. It is well to remember that, in all cases in this measure and in the principal Act, the rates stated are the maximum rates. The rate which is to be charged is determined when the matter comes up for consideration, but the rate charged must not exceed

the amount stated in the Act. In the fourth paragraph of the notes, it is stated that the amount of 3d. does not cover the expense of keeping such animals. It should have added the words "on land not being tillage land enclosed with a substantial fence." One anomaly occurs to me in studying this Bill. Clause 3, which has relation to the authority to destroy certain animals impounded, takes as a precedent section 67 of the Police Offences Act 1915 in its relation to the destruction of any animal "found abandoned or diseased injured or disabled to such an extent that its existence involves continued suffering." Under that Act such an animal as that may be destroyed on an authority in writing signed by two justices of the peace. I notice that clause 3 of this Bill provides that the authority of only one justice of the peace is necessary for the destruction of an animal. I do not say that the order of one justice is not sufficient, but it does appear to be anomalous to me that, in the case of one Act, the authority of two justices is necessary, and in the other case, which is almost similar to the first, the authority of only one justice will be required. I do not intend to suggest that this Bill should be amended to provide that the order of two justices must be obtained because the order of one justice may be sufficient, and it may be found difficult to obtain the order of more than one justice in some of the sparsely settled portions of the State. However, the Police Offences Act will probably be under review in this House in the near future, and I should like the Minister to take a note of the anomaly to which I have referred. I consider that the Police Offences Act, and the Pounds Act, as it will be amended by this measure, dealing with this matter should be brought into line. I do not think this House would have any objection to uniformity in that respect.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—Does the justice who gives the order have to see the animal?

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—A justice would not be doing his duty if he gave his order for the destruction of an animal solely on the *ipse dixit* of the poundkeeper. I hope that the Minister will consider this matter in view of the fact that the Police Offences Act will probably be under review this session.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—I think that honorable members who represent country districts should give some consideration to this measure. Different classes of persons make up the poundkeepers. They may not have a wide knowledge of stock. They are mostly persons who take the position because they want to earn a little money. I do not know if it is safe to give such persons authority to destroy animals. Fancy the Honorary Minister (Mr. Disney) being asked by a poundkeeper to give an order for the destruction of an impounded animal. I suppose the usual procedure is for the poundkeeper to say to the justice, "This is an old animal, and should be destroyed," and the justice takes his word for it, and gives the order.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—If Mr. Disney did not give the order, the poundkeeper might go to the next justice, who might be the other Honorary Minister (Mr. Williams).

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—He might try the unofficial Leader.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I know more about asses than horses.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—The unofficial Leader knows something about donkeys. If poundkeepers are allowed to apply to a justice for an order for the destruction of animals, a valuable animal which has happened to get into the pound may be destroyed.

The Hon. F. W. BRAWN.—But clause 3 states that the animal must be found to be decrepit or diseased, or to be seriously injured or disabled.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—That predicates a knowledge of the animal on the part of the poundkeeper. The poundkeeper may wish to get rid of an animal, and he will go to the justice and say that the animal is diseased or decrepit. I think that a provision should be inserted so that an authority with some knowledge of stock, such as a police sergeant, police constable, or stock inspector, should inspect the animal before it is allowed to be destroyed. I am not making this suggestion in any captious spirit. I am simply pointing out that we should not open the door for the destruction of valuable animals which may be impounded.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Do you suggest that the authority of two justices for

the destruction of the animal should be obtained?

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—No; the justices may not know any more about the animal than the poundkeeper. I suggest that the animal should be inspected by some person who has a knowledge of stock before an order for its destruction is given. I think that the further consideration of this measure might well be postponed until my suggestion has been considered by the Minister.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I consider this a very useful measure. It has been sought by the various municipalities for many years. The practice of grazing stock on roads appears to have grown up with the State itself; and, to an extent, the trouble arising therefrom has been provided against. There are still many people, however, who turn out old and decrepit stock, which poundkeepers are required to keep for weeks, feeding them, of course, all the time. These animals are put up for auction eventually, but frequently no offer is made for them, and they have to be destroyed. I consider that there is ample protection in the Bill in this matter of the destruction of stock, seeing that animals may not be destroyed without the authority of a justice of the peace.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—Do you suggest that a justice of the peace should inspect every animal proposed to be condemned and destroyed?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—At any rate, provision is being made, and should be retained, in the Bill for a justice of the peace to give the necessary authority.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—How many would go to a pound and inspect an animal? How many of our women justices of the peace would care to take on that part of their responsibilities?

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Justices of the peace do that kind of thing now. Why should they accept the honour of being appointed justices unless they are prepared to stand up to all their responsibilities? Clause 2 proposes to amend the trespass rates for cattle, and to substitute for the word "threepence" in the Act the words "two shillings (where the land trespassed on is in a city, town, or borough), or threepence (where the land trespassed on is not in a city, town, or borough)." The Municipal Association has asked that provision should be made for the inclusion within the scope of the higher rate of populated districts that are not part of a "city, town, or borough." I may cite, as an example, the Shire of Colac. There is the considerable town of Colac, but there are such other towns as Camperdown and Terang. Similiarly, there are other towns, in addition to Bairnsdale, within the area of the Shire of Bairnsdale, and many other similar instances could be mentioned. These populated districts, or places, require protection under this Bill just as do cities, towns, and boroughs.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—But the places that you have mentioned are towns or boroughs.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—No, they are parts of shires, but they are not towns or boroughs, although they are populated districts.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—The only difficulty I see is to define what is a populated district.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—That could be pretty well understood.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—You cannot leave anything to be understood in the law. You have to define it.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Well, there could be suggested a limit of population. Wandering cattle are a greater curse in some of these populated districts which are excluded from the Act and from the Bill than in some of the recognized country towns. I hope that an opportunity will be afforded me to have a suitable amendment prepared for presentation in Committee.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and committed.

Clause 1 was agreed to.

Clause 2—(Trespass rates for cattle).

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I hope that the Minister in charge of the measure will agree to report progress at this stage. Apparently there will be amendments moved both to clause 2 and clause 3. We should not deal with this amending legislation hurriedly.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—Mr. Richardson's request is reasonable. Before progress is reported, however, I should like to learn the views of honorable members more generally. The difficulty I see is that

which has been pointed out by the unofficial Leader—that is, to define what is a populated district. It might be necessary to specify the populated areas in question individually, and to state their boundaries.

The Hon. M. McGREGOR.—Nearly all of these populated areas are called townships. They are portions of boroughs within shires generally. I should like the Minister to inquire whether the inclusion of the word "township" would meet requirements. Places such as those which have been indicated are not towns under the Local Government Act; yet they are townships, and they have specified boundaries.

The Hon. W. TYNER.—I concur in the remarks of Mr. McGregor. This trouble arising from wandering cattle in townships is particularly marked where such places are marketing centres. Clause 2 should be amended in the manner sought by Mr. Richardson. With respect to Dr. Harris's remarks on clause 3, there is required also an amendment, to which I hope to refer when a specific proposal is before the Committee. If the Bill is improved in the directions I have indicated it will have my approval.

The Hon. F. W. BRAWN.—There are many small places of population in which people are in the habit of turning out their cattle at night, allowing them to roam at will, to the peril of all traffic. I may mention such populated districts or areas as Kingston, Smeaton, and Learmonth. These places have somewhat large populations, but they have no defined areas as townships. It would be difficult to draw the line of demarcation.

The Hon. M. McGregor.—I do not think that there is any place, including the small towns, in respect of which there is not a Government plan setting out the boundaries.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—I am inclined to agree with the views expressed by Mr. Richardson. There are many shires that contain little towns which cannot come within the description, "city, town, or borough." They are not boroughs, though they could be. For example, in the Shire of Chiltern there are such places as Chiltern and Barnawartha. And in the Shire of Rutherglen there are Rutherglen, Springhurst, and Wahgunyah. These populated places, unless the clause were amended to embrace them, would be excluded from the scope of the new trespass rates proposed in the Bill. Rutherglen was once a borough, but it amalgamated with the shire, and is now the central riding of that shire. It would not come within the scope of clause 2, yet stock is continuously turned out on to the roads, so that damage is done frequently to gardens. I have read letters in the local press complaining of the menace of wandering stock at night. The cattle are often impounded, although I do not know whether there is power to do that.

The Hon. H. I. Cohen.—Curiously enough, not one of the expressions contained in the clause is defined in the Bill or in the principal Act, although one supposes that they have the same meaning as under the Local Government Act.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—The Minister has suggested that the Committee should take this opportunity to make known its mind respecting clause 3 also. A poundkeeper naturally wants to be able to recover his fees. He does not wish to keep a beast in the pound. The Bill proposes to give him power, under the authority of a justice of the peace, to kill an impounded beast. But the poundkeeper could go to the justice and say, "I have an abandoned beast." I agree, generally, with the measure, but I think we ought to define "township," and prevent a poundkeeper from being able, with practically no authority, to destroy a beast, and to sell the carcass to obtain his fees.

The Hon. M. McGREGOR.—I think Dr. Harris is a little astray. The poundkeeper has nothing to do with the impounding of the beast. The animal would have to be impounded by the herdsman, or, if an owner of land abutting felt that it was a nuisance, he might himself impound it. All that the poundkeeper has to do is to receive the beast from the person impounding it. The reference is to a beast found to be abandoned. Municipal councils and the Municipal Association have advocated this provision because there are certain stock-owners or landowners who, when a beast gets into a low condition, put in out on to the road instead of destroying it. The herdsman, or a humane land-holder in the vicinity, may take the beast to a pound. The idea of the councils was that such a beast would be destroyed. The procedure would

be the same with a decrepit, or diseased, or disabled animal. The municipalities want that control in order that the beasts may be destroyed, and destroyed by the authority of a justice of the peace. A justice of the peace generally sees the beast before giving authority for its destruction. Heretofore, a police officer, and not the poundkeeper, has approached the justice in the matter. I think that the clause as it stands is fairly right, but I have no objection to the inclusion of the words that Dr. Harris wants to be included, that a justice of the peace should examine the beast before giving his authority.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—That could be done by adding at the end of sub-clause (1) the words "after inspection by him of the animal."

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—Dr. Harris asked that there shall be two justices.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—One justice will be sufficient provided that he inspects the beast.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—I will take into consideration the statements that have been made by honorable members on this question, and will submit the matter to Cabinet. The Government may agree to the drafting of an amendment that will meet the wishes of honorable members. In view of the expressions of opinion by honorable members, I propose to report progress.

Progress was reported.

CHARLTON LAND BILL.

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS (Honorary Minister).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This is a Bill of purely local interest. There is a race-course of 186 acres 2 roods 17 perches. This area was reserved for recreative purposes in 1895. The Bill provides for the ratification of the sale of 102 acres of that area, the balance to be retained as a coursing plumpton, coursing being a sport that is conducted in that district. An area of 6 acres was reserved some years ago as a show-yard. Two extensions were made subsequently, one of an acre, and one of 2 acres approximately, and there was a street that has been closed for many years, being no longer required for public traffic. The Bill also provides for the sale of that area. The area to be surrendered by the racing club consists of 102 acres 2 roods 10 perches. It is estimated that it will realize £18 per acre, or a total of £1,845. The show grounds will be sold in town lots, and are expected to realize £840, bringing the total up to £2,685. The Bill provides that £1,000 of the total amount realized shall be allowed to the agricultural society and the racing club, that are surrendering land, towards the cost of their removal to, and the re-erection of buildings and other improvements on, the new central reserve. The whole of the sporting activities of Charlton will be concentrated in a more central position. The land in that central position was granted in 1876. An area of 86 acres was reserved for park and recreation purposes, and the local authorities say that it is ample for the conduct of sports such as cricket, golf, tennis, bowls, and races. The race-course is 3 or 4 miles from the town. The Charlton Shire Council and the Charlton Progress Association are desirous that the Bill shall pass, and last year a meeting of ratepapers, held in Charlton, unanimously carried a motion that the present race-course be abolished, that the Government be approached to ask for a Bill of this description, and that all the sporting activities of the district be concentrated in one central area.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I should like the Honorary Minister to tell me whether I appreciate properly the purposes of the Bill. As I understand it, an area of 186 acres 2 roods 17 perches was originally reserved for the purposes of sport. A further area of about 9 acres was reserved as show-yards. Of the original area of 186 acres some 102 acres are no longer required.

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS.—That is the position.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I understand that the show-yards are to be abolished, and that coursing, racing, and kindred sports are to be carried on on the one area of some 84 acres.

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS.—The 84 acres will not be a portion of the reservation that has been reserved as a race-course.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Where are the 84 acres?

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS.—The 84 acres will be reserved for coursing purposes only. There was another grant of 86

acres, almost in the heart of Charlton. It is proposed to conduct all the sporting activities, racing included, on that area.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—What is to become of the balance of the race-course?

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS.—It will be retained as a coursing plumpton.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Where is that?

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS.—On the present race-course.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—It is rather puzzling. There were 186 acres reserved for a race-course, a coursing plumpton, and various other sports. Is that correct?

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS.—Yes.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Was other land reserved for that purpose?

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS.—Yes, 86 acres.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—In other words, 200 odd acres were reserved for sporting purposes, quite apart from the area reserved for show-yards.

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS.—That is correct.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—It only shows the lavish way in which the land of the State was in the past ladled out for purposes of this kind, without any regard for the possibility of it being used. Now we find a sporting body coming along, and saying, "We have 180 acres," or "we have 102 acres"—I can hardly follow the statements that have been made—"for which we have no purpose at all. It is vested in us. We claim the right to sell it, and to use the proceeds for bettering some other portion of our lands."

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS.—We propose, under this Bill, that £1,000 of the total sum realized shall be used by certain bodies in connexion with their removal to another site. The balance, £2,000, will go into the Consolidated Revenue.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Yes. In other words, a body that has no use whatever for this land, could never have had any use for this land, because it is impossible to use such an amount of land for the sporting purposes mentioned, now finds itself in a position where it can say, "We have made improvements on this land; we are moving to a site which suits us better, and we claim £1,000 of the sale money for the purpose of removing our improvements." Of course, no one can blame the present Government. I suppose that they are doing the right thing.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—When the land was given it was of no value, I suppose.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—It is obvious that no body could use such a tremendous area as a race-course. We have experts in this House who will tell us that 186 acres is far too large an area for a race-course, a coursing plumpton, or even for tin hares.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—Squatters in the early days got land for next to nothing.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—It does not matter what they got it for. Later we shall have other Bills in connexion with the exchange of land on which I shall comment to show the loose way in which these matters have been conducted in the past. I hope that this will be an object lesson for the future, so that in those cases in which persons are desirous of having reservations of a similar kind made, proper investigation will be conducted regarding the use that they desire to make of the land. No more land than is absolutely necessary should be allocated. No one desires more than I do to encourage healthy sport, but I contend that it must be done in a reasonable fashion.

The Hon. R. H. S. ABBOTT.—The honorable members who represent the province in which Charlton is situated are not present in the chamber, but the honorable member who represents Charlton in another place asked me to explain that the proposal to which the Bill is designed to give effect meets with the approval of the people of Charlton. While the unofficial Leader is quite right in his contention that too large an area of land ought not to be reserved, as in the case in point, we must remember that the reservation was made many years ago, when the land was of little value. Probably the people in authority at Charlton in those days were unable to foresee that the district would progress as it has done. However, the Government have inquired into the proposal and sanctioned it, and the representative of the Charlton people in another place has assured me that they welcome the change.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Clause 3 provides for the sale of certain land, and clause 5 states that the committee of management shall receive £1,000 to defray the cost of removing improvements from the present area to the

new. That clause also provides that any surplus remaining from the proceeds of the sale shall be paid into the Consolidated Revenue. Who has valued the land? What is the estimated sum to be paid into the Consolidated Revenue?

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS.—I will answer that when the Bill is taken into Committee.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I do not quite agree with the unofficial Leader. It might be that a very large area was reserved at Charlton, but it is a matter of regret that, generally speaking, larger areas have not been reserved throughout the State for public purposes.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—The Charlton people have voluntarily given up 100 acres.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I remember attending meetings of the Municipal Association years ago, and being ruled out of order when I suggested that reservations should be made as endowments for school-building purposes. I deeply regret that such a step was not taken. The suggestion should have been followed all over the State. Now, however, we continually have to buy blocks on which to erect schools. The same remarks apply to reserves for recreation purposes—reserves which are very necessary.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—The Charlton people complain that they received too much land.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—That is a most unusual experience. I suppose that the Bill is necessary. Idle land should be made useful for some purpose, and I suppose that that principle will be given effect to by the measure. I cannot agree with the unofficial Leader that we have been reckless——

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I did not say that we had generally been reckless.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—If adequate provision had been made in the metropolitan area 50 years ago there would now be reserves available for school grounds throughout that area. Instead, great difficulty is found in providing the children with playgrounds. The same situation obtains in some of the large country centres.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to.

Clause 3 — (Revocation of certain Orders in Council).

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—There is one question that I should like to ask the Honorary Minister. We want to ensure that provision is made for everybody, and that the Government will not be approached at a later stage with a request for more land. Can the Honorary Minister tell the House precisely where the golf links are situated in Charlton?

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS (Honorary Minister).—The links are not on the land at present in use. They are on that area to which it is proposed to transfer the race-course.

The clause was agreed to, as was clause 4.

Clause 5—(Application of purchase money, &c.).

The Hon. W. TYNER.—Sub-clause (1) of this clause provides—

> The Board of Land and Works shall receive the purchase money of the lands described in the Second and Third Schedules (together with such improvements thereon as are not removable) and may pay out of such purchase money (after deducting all costs and expenses of such sale) an amount not exceeding One thousand pounds to such persons as are appointed under the Land Acts by the Governor in Council to be a committee of management of the whole of the land described in the Fourth Schedule upon trust to use such amount for the purpose of defraying the cost of the removal to and re-erection on the land described in the Fourth Schedule of any improvements fit to be removed from the lands described in the Second and Third Schedules, and for no other purpose whatsoever.

I should like some information regarding the value of the improvements. It is rather unfortunate that the members for the province are not present to assist us.

The Hon. R. WILLIAMS (Honorary Minister).—I do not think that we need feel concerned about the improvements, because of the fact that under the Bill all removable improvements will be taken to the area which is nearer Charlton. The land itself is valued at £18 an acre, and is estimated to yield £1,845. The show grounds and a small street that has been closed, totalling 10 acres, are expected to realize £840, if sold in town lots. Of the estimated total proceeds of £2,685, £1,000 is, so to speak, earmarked to hand back to the authorities to expend on the removal of buildings and other property from the old to the new area. At a rough estimate, £1,685 will go into Consolidated Revenue. The

sports conducted in the district will be centralized, and the Charlton people have pointed out that it will be possible to employ a curator and properly look after the area. Another point of view is that the present race-course is 3½ to 4 miles away from the town. I take it that there is a grandstand on that race-course, and that can be removed to the new ground. The golf links will be located on the proposed new sports area. On the 27th of February, 1926, the Charlton ratepayers held a meeting, and decided unanimously that there was ample scope on the new area for all the sports, except coursing. The shire council and Charlton Progress Association take a similar attitude, and I feel sure that the honorable members representing the province would also express their approval if they were present.

The clause was agreed to, as were the remaining clauses and the schedules.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and the report was adopted.

On the motion of the Hon. R. WILLIAMS (Honorary Minister), the Bill was read a third time.

DEATH OF SIR JOHN McWHAE.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

> That this House records its sorrow at the death of the Honorable Sir John McWhae and its appreciation of his services to the Parliament and people of this State, as a member of this House, a Minister of the Crown, and as Agent-General for Victoria, which caused him to be regarded by all with respect and affection.

Honorable members know that since we last met news has been received of the death of Sir John McWhae, who for many years was a member of this House. He was a Minister of the Crown for some years, and later discharged the duties of Agent-General for this State. Sir John McWhae was elected a member of this House at the same time as I was, and probably because of that fact a close friendship grew up between us. That friendship increased with the passing of the years. He was a man for whom I had the highest respect. He was of a sterling character, and always appeared to me to have strong humanitarian instincts. Those honorable members who had the pleasure of knowing him as a member of this House, are aware that he took considerable interest in all that we did here, not only when he was filling Ministerial office, but when he was a private member. Sir John McWhae was a member of this House for the Melbourne Province from the 2nd of June, 1910, until he resigned on the 22nd of November, 1921, when he was appointed Agent-General of Victoria. He was Minister of Public Works in the Bowser Ministry from the 29th of November, 1917, to the 21st of March, 1918, and was Honorary Minister in the Lawson Government from the 21st of March, 1918, until the 22nd of November, 1921. He was Agent-General for Victoria from 1921 until 1924. I am sure that I am expressing the general feeling of members when I express my own sorrow at his death and appreciation of the services which he rendered to the people of this State as member, as Minister of the Crown, and as Agent-General for Victoria. He was regarded by all who knew him with respect and affection. We may also express our deep sympathy with Lady McWhae and the members of the family. Honorable members may know that Sir John McWhae grieved greatly over the loss of his son during the Great War. He was very much attached to that son, and I have no doubt that the grief caused thereby left a wound of heart that he never recovered from. It is with much regret that I submit this motion.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—The occasion for this motion causes me the utmost regret. When I first entered this House it was as a colleague of the late Sir John McWhae, and as a recruit in politics I found in him, both inside and outside the House, a "guide, philosopher, and friend," and no one could have been a better mentor. Sir John McWhae was steeped in the best traditions of this House, and had the very highest conception of his public duties. His geniality, his courtesy, and his kindliness endeared him to all, and on many occasions, when trouble appeared to be brewing in this House, it was Sir John's kindly offices which caused the course of business to run smoothly. As Agent-General, Sir John rendered most valuable services to this State—services which would have been more valuable still, if his ideas and labours in regard to immigration had been permitted to reach fruition. It was a sad

blow to him that they were not. His other public services were many and varied, and the community has suffered a great loss in his untimely end. In private life Sir John was a lovable character—an ideal husband and father—and our hearts go out to his widow and family in their sad and irreparable loss. I second the motion.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—As an old friend of Sir John McWhae I join in supporting the motion. I sat in this House a number of years with him, and I was in the Bowser Government of which he was a member. There is no doubt that he was of a very lovable character and kindly disposition. He was a man in whose company one was always pleased to be. As Minister of Public Health he did splendid work during the influenza epidemic which broke out in this State some years ago. He arranged for the Exhibition building to be used as a special hospital for the treatment of patients. I am sure no man filled the position of Agent-General better than he did. I join with the members who have preceded me in expressing deep regret at his death, and sincere sympathy with the widow and family. I know the sad blow which was occasioned by the death of his son during the war. When he came to reside in the Geelong district, after his return from England, I met him on many occasions, and we renewed our acquaintanceship very pleasantly. Sir John McWhae was a man who made his mark in this State, and he will always be remembered for the excellent work he did.

The Hon. W. ANGLISS.—I join with those who have preceded me in expressing sorrow at the death of Sir John McWhae. I was a close friend of his for nearly 30 years. I have travelled with him on more than one occasion in various parts of the world, and I suppose I was one of the members of this House who was the last to see him before he left on what proved to be his fatal trip. I do not suppose any one outside of his own family feels his loss as much as I do. He was more like an elder brother to me than anything else. During the time he was a member of this House he did probably more than any one to make our proceedings move smoothly and pleasantly, and when there was a possibility of some feeling being aroused, he was always able to exercise a wise and genial influence. I wish to add my tribute to one on account of whose death Australia is the poorer. Apart from his services to this State, he was at all times willing to lend a friendly hand to those whom he was interested in, and I therefore join in expressing my deepest sympathy with the widow and his family.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—The late Sir John McWhae was my predecessor in this House. Although I never served with him here as a colleague, I knew him well. He was a friend of mine for many years. As a representative of the Melbourne Province and during the term I served in the Melbourne City Council, I came into contact with Sir John McWhae on many occasions. He was a wonderful and straightforward business man and a very honorable gentleman. He took great interest in religious and civil matters. His death will affect, not only this House, but also the general public. Victoria has lost a splendid citizen. During my last visit to England I met many parliamentary and commercial gentlemen who had had relations with Sir John McWhae when he occupied the post of Agent-General for Victoria, and they all spoke of his untiring efforts to advance the interests of the State. He was a very active worker, and made many friends. Victoria will long benefit from the services he gave to this State as Agent-General. I join with other honorable members in expressing sympathy with Lady McWhae and the family.

The Hon. R. H. S. ABBOTT.—I also join with other honorable members in regretting the loss of such a useful man as Sir John McWhae. He was a typical Ballarat mining man who faced vicissitudes with great tenacity of purpose. To slightly alter Shakespeare—"Out of the nettle, danger, he plucked the flower, safety", and in connexion with the principal industry of this State—wool-growing—he achieved a position of fortune. He was a man of great resource, and was honorable in every sense of the word. He was a friend to any one who was a friend to him. His untimely death came as a shock not only to the members of this House, but also to people associated with the exchanges in Melbourne and elsewhere. The late Sir John

McWhae's services to the State were of immeasurable value. To quote again from Shakespeare—

> He was a man, take him for all in all,
> I shall not look upon his like again.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (the **Hon. W. H. Edgar**).—Before putting the motion, I should like to add my testimony to what has been said by honorable members regarding one of our great citizens. Sir John McWhae possessed all the best characteristics of the Scotchman. The manner in which he won his way to the highest position has set an admirable example to young Australia. He gained a leading position in public life by dogged perseverance. His influence strengthened all that was best in our social, political, and national life. I think that it is a fitting act for us to place on record the motion that has been moved by the Minister of Public Works. It is a grand thing that men earn such praise as Sir John McWhae has deservedly received. He left an example that the young men of our land may well follow. He was a man of strong principles and of great personality. He stood loyally at all times for noble conceptions of character that made for the advancement of the State. I found him always a true friend. We know the wonderful work that he did during the war, and how liberally he stood by the broken boys from the front. He has left a record that will be preserved not only in the archives of Victoria, but also in the hearts and memories of numberless families. It is a profound sorrow that Sir John McWhae should have died away from home. It is also sad that Lady McWhae had to undertake the long return journey to Victoria without her husband's companionship. There is a conviction that he has passed to a higher service, but his ideals and influence must live and encourage the young manhood of the State to catch his spirit and to emulate his high sense of duty. When I was in London I had an opportunity of witnessing his work and of learning the power he exercised as Agent-General for this State. I learnt how men listened to his advice regarding Australian affairs, and how he endeavoured to induce the right class of migrant to come to this land. He has left an example that will remain and will influence a large section of the community. I join in the sincere regrets expressed by honorable members, and pray that God may comfort Lady McWhae and the family in their great sorrow. I trust that they will experience a sympathy that will comfort them in their hours of trial.

The motion was agreed to in silence, honorable members standing in their places.

The House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, September 27, 1927.

The SPEAKER (**the Hon. O. R. Snowball**) took the chair at 4.38 p.m.

BURWOOD SANITARY DEPOT.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX (*Upper Yarra*) asked the Honorary Minister (Mr. Webber) for the Minister of Public Works—

1. If a date has been definitely fixed for the closing of the Burwood night-soil depot; if so, when; if not, why are the provisions of the Health Act 1926 in this regard not being carried out?

2. If the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works paid compensation to the dairy-farmers adjacent to the Burwood night-soil depot who have had their licences cancelled in consequence of seepage; if so, what was the amount; if not, does it propose to do so?

3. If the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works has purchased, or does it propose to purchase, any land adjoining the Burwood night-soil depot; if so, for what purpose?

Mr. WEBBER (Honorary Minister).—I must ask the honorable member to repeat his question on Tuesday next. In view of the fact that he asked the same question last week, and that I requested him to place it on the notice-paper for to-day, and that a further postponement is now necessary, I think that some explanation is due to him. As the honorable member is aware, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works is not a Government department, and we are dependent on it for any information of this kind which may be sought. The chairman of the Board was requested to supply the particulars, and he stated that he did not care to furnish them until he had had an opportunity to submit them to the Sewerage Committee. I believe that a long reply has been prepared, covering about six pages of foolscap.

Mr. GREENWOOD.—The Honorary Minister's explanation does not apply to the first of the series of three questions of the honorable member for Upper Yarra, does it?

Mr. WEBBER. — The three questions amount, really, to one whole question.

Mr. GREENWOOD. — But has not the first portion to do with the matter of a Cabinet decision?

Mr. WEBBER.—Not exactly. However, it is the honorable member for Upper Yarra who has asked this question, and not the honorable member for Nunawading. I might have asked the honorable member for Upper Yarra to postpone his question again, and have left my request at that, without elaboration or explanation. But I thought that there was due from me the courtesy of making known the reason for this delay.

LANDS FOR PUBLIC PURPOSES.

BASIS OF COMPENSATION.

Mr. WALTER (*Gippsland West*) asked the Minister of Lands—

If he will introduce this session a Bill to provide that owners of land resumed or taken for public purposes under the Lands Compensation Act or any other Act shall be paid as compensation the full capital or market value of such land, the amount so paid to be part of the capital cost of the scheme or schemes for which such land is required?

Mr. BAILEY (Minister of Lands).—The question is a very far-reaching one. It affects the operation of the Lands Compensation Act 2678, the Country Roads Act 2635, the Local Government Act 2686, the Railway Lands Acquisition Act 2715, and the Water Act 2747, and, if dealt with in the way suggested, there would be involved fundamental amendments of these Acts. For this reason, it would appear to be essential that there should be a conference of all the authorities concerned with a view to considering the question in all its bearings, so that a report may be submitted to the Government.

BETTING ON ELECTRICAL HARE COURSES.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON (*Hawthorn*) asked the Premier—

If, in view of the public investing money in companies being formed to promote "tin hare" coursing, he will inform the House if he is prepared to bring in legislation (if necessary) to prevent betting on such courses?

Mr. HOGAN (Premier).—The answer is—

Yes, the Government will introduce legislation to deal with this matter, if necessary.

MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN BOARD OF WORKS.

WAGES AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYEES.

Mr. SOLLY (*Carlton*).—I move—

That there be laid before the House a return showing—

1. All the classifications of indoor and outdoor employees, including the chairman down to the lowest-paid class of employee, of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works.

2. The number of employees in each class.

3. The period of engagement of each class of employee, whether yearly, weekly, daily, or hourly.

4. The salary or wage paid to each class of employee.

5. The present standard hours of labour of each class of employee—(*a*) per day; and (*b*) per week.

6. The present standard overtime rates paid to each class of employee, including Sunday and public holiday rates.

7. The total number of hours lost by each outdoor employee through wet weather, and the nature of the work such employee was performing at the time occasioning such loss, during the years 1924, 1925, 1926, and 1927.

8. The standard rates of payment to each class of employee in case of—(*a*) accidents; and (*b*) sickness; with minimum and maximum periods of such payments.

9. The number of public holidays on full pay granted by the Board to each class of employee in each year when the employee did not work on such holidays.

10. The period of annual leave—exclusive of public holidays on full pay—granted by the Board to each class of employee during each year.

11. The requisite period of service with the Board before each class of employee is deemed eligible for payment of salary or wages for—(*a*) public holidays not worked; and (*b*) annual leave.

12. The provision made by the Board in the matter of retiring allowance or superannuation, and requisite period of service with the Board to enable each class of employee to participate in such allowance or superannuation.

13. A copy of the rules or regulations governing each class of employee in the Board's employment.

14. The provision made by the Board in the matter of supplying each class of employee with living accommodation, such as tents, flys, beds, camping-out allowance, cooking utensils, cooks, food, dining and cooking accommodation, fuel and water outside a radius of 10 miles from the post office at the intersection of Elizabeth and Bourke streets, Melbourne.

15. The fares of each class of employee paid by the Board in connexion with such employee's work.

16. The payment for travelling time allowed by the Board to each class of employee in connexion with such employee's work; and when and where does such payment commence and finish.

I understand that this motion is not opposed by the Government. The information is required by a certain organization.

The motion was agreed to.

MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN TRAMWAYS BILL (No. 2).

Mr. WEBBER (Honorary Minister) by leave, moved for leave to bring in a Bill relating to the conversion by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board of cable tramways under its management into electric tramways, and to the making and levying of tramway betterment rates.

The motion was agreed to.

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

IMPORTED GOODS FOR STATE DEPARTMENTS.

Mr. HOGAN (Premier), in compliance with an order of the House, (dated October 17, 1905), presented a return of machinery, goods, and material manufactured or produced outside the Commonwealth, and purchased for the use of the Public Works Department during the year 1926-27.

STATE SAVINGS BANK BILL.

Mr. HOGAN (Treasurer) presented a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending that an appropriation be made from the Consolidated Revenue for the purposes of a Bill "to amend the State Savings Bank Acts and to further amend Part I. of the Housing and Reclamation Act 1920, and to approve and ratify and provide for carrying into effect an agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Commissioners of the State Savings Bank of Victoria, and for other purposes."

A resolution in accordance with the recommendation was passed in Committee and adopted by the House.

On the motion of Mr. HOGAN (Treasurer), the Bill was brought in, and read a first time.

REAL ESTATE AND BUSINESS AGENTS BILL.

Mr. SLATER (Attorney-General).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This is a Bill to amend the Real Estate Agents Act 1922. Under the principal Act there was effected, for the first time, a system of registration of real estate agents carrying on business in Victoria. Through registration it was possible to exercise a measure of control over persons engaged in that occupation. The wise provision of a fidelity bond to some extent afforded the community a security and protection without which, to-day, a number of people would have been in a serious plight indeed. A table which I have had prepared shows that the deficiencies of a number of estate agents who have been carrying on their businesses since 1923 until the present time have amounted to no less a sum than £7,445. Fortunately for the people who had placed their business in the hands of those agents, Parliament had, in its wisdom, agreed to a measure that made provision for fidelity bonds, and, therefore, £6,174 of that total deficiency was returned to claimants out of the proceeds of the bonds, so that a very real measure of security and protection was afforded to the community by the registration of the agents and by compelling them to lodge fidelity bonds with the Treasurer. It was felt, at the time that the principal Act was adopted, that it did not go far enough: that the scope of the measure should have been widened to include other classes of agents who were allowed, and have been allowed up to the present time, to carry on their businesses untrammelled. Very strong representations were made, Mr. Speaker, as you will recollect, because you participated in the debate, by members on both sides of the House. Those members urged that the scope of the measure should have been enlarged to provide for the registration and licensing of all other business agents. However, from that time up till the present there has been no registration and no licensing of other business agents in the community. Owing to scandals that have arisen as a result of the malpractices of a number of business agents in Melbourne and in other parts of the

State, there has been a public demand, as well as a demand from bona fide business agents, to have the law amended to provide for the licensing and registration of all classes of agents.

Mr. FROST.—It is nearly time.

Mr. SLATER.—It is more than time that this was done.

Mr. FROST.—There have been cases where agents have sold land, obtained the purchase money, and have failed to deliver a title.

Mr. SLATER.—The object of this Bill is to so tighten up the law that we may reasonably hope that these malpractices will all disappear. The principal Act established a new principle, namely, the separation of trust moneys from the personal and private moneys of the agent. That, and the provision of a fidelity bond, were as far as the principal Act went. I submit that it did not go nearly far enough. It is because the Act did not go far enough, and because the need for the tightening up of the law has been so well recognized by all sections of the community, that this measure to provide for the licensing of real estate and business agents and their sub-agents is brought down. Time and experience have shown us in what way the existing law, so far as the real estate agents themselves are concerned, might reasonably be tightened up and amended. Some business agents—I refer particularly to crooked agents—have been in the habit of changing their names and addresses as frequently as the chameleon changes its colour. An illustration of the frequency with which names and addresses are changed was supplied to me by a prominent journalist to-day. According to the journalist, one agent has changed his name and address no fewer than 30 times within the last two years. At Easter time this man was trading in the name of an individual who was a brother-in-law of a notorious criminal.

Mr. LINTON.—Will you mention the names in which the man traded?

Mr. SLATER.—I will do so if the House desires me to. This individual changed his name to that of another prominent person. Since then he has been trading in the name of a company carrying on business in Temple Court.

Mr. LINTON.—Would it not be for the public protection that you should mention the trading name, or names, of that individual?

Mr. SLATER.—Inasmuch as I have not had an opportunity of verifying the facts, I do not care to do so. Had I verified the facts, I would have done so without hesitation. Forcible attention was directed to a scandal of this nature by His Honour Judge Foster in a County Court action heard by him this year. I propose to read the report of the case which appeared in the *Morning Post*. The report states—

BUSINESS MORALITY ASTOUNDS JUDGE OF COUNTY COURT.

DUMMY WHO HAD SIX APARTMENT HOUSES.

"These business methods are not within the widest bounds of business morality," declared Judge Foster in the County Court yesterday, regarding the business transactions of Claude Symons and Company, of Capitol House, city.

He awarded Mrs. Margaret Evans, a widow, of Gordon-street, Elsternwick, £190 of her claim for £499 against Percival Claude Symons and Stanley Edwards (trading as Claude Symons and Company), and Mrs. Marian McFarlan, Park-road, Richmond.

A stay of seven days was granted.

Mrs. Evans said, after seeing an advertisement in the papers, she had called at the office of Symons and Company to see about purchasing a confectionery business at Gordon-street, Elsternwick. She was told the takings ranged between £25 and £30 weekly.

After visiting the shop Symons told her two other prospective buyers were after it, and that if she did not purchase it then the others would.

£10 A WEEK.

She bought it for £250, and took possession on 1st March. On taking over she found that the takings had been greatly exaggerated. After she complained about this two men called on her and induced her to sign a document to the effect that she was taking between £20 and £25 weekly. She had told them she was taking only £10 a week.

The day following she telephoned her brother (Detective Gooden), who persuaded her to withdraw the business from sale. She acted on this advice and withdrew it.

BOUGHT SAME SHOP.

Mrs. McFarlan said she bought the same business on 21st February for £50 from a Mrs. Stevenson, who had purchased it two days before for £200.

Percival Claude Dean Symons said when he had sold the business to Mrs. McFarlan, who was his sister-in-law, he acted for the purchaser as well as the vendor.

He admitted that he had four partners in his own business this year.

A necessary amendment of the law is to require each partner to be licensed, and to lodge a fidelity bond—

The first paid £200 to come in, and received £130 when he went out. The second paid £250, and received nothing on going out, and a third paid £100 and stayed only a day. He was paid £50 to get out.

He denied that any money was paid back because of misrepresentation.

DUMMY.

Mrs. McFarlan had acted as his dummy in the sale of the confectionery business now before the Court. Three other dummies had acted for him in apartment houses. After the dummies had been in for a few weeks, the places were sold as going concerns.

One woman as a dummy was in six apartment houses in a year, and all had been sold for a total of £2,010. He admitted that he made two or three times ordinary commission out of these sales. He could not see anything wrong in such business dealings.

Well, we can see something wrong, and it is to deal with that class of individual that this Bill is necessary. The facts I have stated are abundant reasons for reinforcing the arguments that we might advance for the amendment and tightening of the law relating to real estate and business agents in the way proposed by this Bill. The principal features of the amending law are for the purpose of compelling the licensing of every business agent. Whether that agent is acting as the agent for the sale of hotel businesses, or of manufacturing or trading businesses, he will have to be licensed under this Bill, and he will be obliged to take out a fidelity bond. There was carried at the instance of another place an amendment in the principal Act which has resulted in a lot of abuse. The existing law makes it unnecessary for auctioneers to take out a licence, and there have been constantly brought to the knowledge of the Department cases of firms, in which there was a licensed auctioneer, escaping the obligation of taking out a licence or registering, as well as the obligation of lodging a fidelity bond. The Bill provides that auctioneers who are engaged in the sale of real estate or businesses shall be licensed, and take out the necessary fidelity bond.

AN HONORABLE MEMBER.—Does the Bill affect company promoters?

Mr. SLATER.—That is a matter that can be dealt with only by a separate measure—an amending Companies Bill. The Bill which we are now considering covers a class of people who too long have preyed upon the community.

Mr. LINTON.—Does the Bill affect only the principals of a company?

Mr. SLATER.—The principals of a company are, of course, subject to all obligations outlined in the Bill. A corporation will have to take out a fidelity bond of £500. In addition, it will have to pay a higher fee for registration.

Mr. LINTON.—Would you extend the scope of the Bill to include salesmen?

Mr. SLATER.—The Bill does do that. It provides for the licensing and registration of salesmen, or sub-agents, and I think that that is a very necessary and desirable feature of the Bill. That licensing will be subject to scrutiny, because the applicant for a licence as sub-agent has to be recommended by his principal. His application will have to be submitted to the Registrar created under this Bill. This creation, by the way, is a new feature. That official will have the right to object to the court of petty sessions against the granting of an application for licence. The Bill provides that each partner in a firm must be licensed, and take out a fidelity bond. Consequently, this will provide a means to meet the deficiencies of partnerships whose transactions are indicated in the return to which I have referred. Another diffculty that has been experienced under the existing Act has been that, in some cases, companies have refused to pay losses or claims in respect to their fidelity bonds for any previous years. We propose to amend the law, so that a fidelity bond will cover all losses sustained during the currency of the licence. It will be possible, therefore, for a bond to be sued on even after the period of the licence has expired. Now I come to the principle of the registration of sub-agents. Every sub-agent or salesman of a real estate agent is, under the Bill, obliged to be licensed. His application must, in the first place, be supported by the recommendation of the principal who employs him, or is about to employ him. A copy of that application has to be furnished to the Registrar. The duties of

that official will be very important indeed. It has been felt by the reputable real estate agents of Melbourne that they have had insufficient means of disciplining those undesirable agents who have been carrying on business here. The desirable agents will have an opportunity now, through the Registrar, of ensuring that the disreputable agents are made the subject of complaint, and the Registrar can then lodge a complaint to the court of petty sessions. That court—after the grounds of the complaint have been established—can suspend or cancel the licence.

Mr. ALLAN.—Who makes the inquiry?

Mr. SLATER.—The court.

Mr. ALLAN.—Application has to be made to the court?

Mr. SLATER.—Yes. Individuals have been loath to make complaints about the conduct of real estate agents, and have been disinclined to go into court. They have rather suffered the loss of considerable sums of money than be placed in the position of taking court proceedings against defaulting agents. It is competent under the Bill for the Registrar himself to move the court, and urge—supporting it, of course, by legal evidence—an application for the cancellation of the licence granted to a real estate agent. That will apply similarly to business agents. They also can be deprived of their licence for misconduct, or on any grounds that, in the opinion of the court, entitles it to say that the person concerned is not qualified, and not fit to carry a licence as a business agent.

Mr. LINTON.—What are the qualifications of a land salesman?

Mr. SLATER.—There are no qualifications at all, but the protection of the community is afforded in the Bill in this way: In the first place the application must be supported by the recommendation of an employer or a prospective employer. That application has to be lodged with the clerk of the court where the application is to be heard, and also with the Registrar appointed under the measure. The application has to be lodged with the clerk of the court of petty sessions nearest to the principal place of business of the applicant. So the applicant will be subjected, as it were, to two classes of inquiry. The Registrar, I take it, will pursue inquiries as to the conduct of the applicant, and his fitness to hold a licence. I suppose that the Registrar will conduct those inquiries through police channels. The clerk of courts will also make inquiries, and then the matter will go to the court. In these respects, there is the protection that the community is not given at the present time. A very nominal licensing fee of 2s. 6d. will be charged each applicant for a licence as sub-agent.

Mr. FROST.—Will the licence be granted annually?

Mr. SLATER.—Yes. That obtains also in regard to the real estate and business agent himself. Annual application for licences will have to be made—there will be no issue of "renewal" licences. Now I come to a very important provision, and that is the prohibition of certain classes of persons from engaging indirectly in the business of either a real estate agent or a business agent. There have been many cases in recent years in which persons have been disqualified from holding licences, or in which licences have been cancelled, or of persons whose fidelity bonds have been either sued upon or had claims made against them. Immediately after such disqualification, the persons concerned have re-entered the business, under the names of their wives, or have, so to speak, sheltered behind their aunts, other relations, or male friends. In this way there has been a perpetuation of those frauds for which the persons concerned were deprived of their licences, or in respect of which their bond had been sued on or claimed against. Under the Bill, we say that none of the agents who have been disqualified under the principal Act from holding a licence, or whose licence has been cancelled, or whose licence has been refused by a court of petty sessions, or whose fidelity bond has been claimed against or sued upon, shall participate, or be in any way concerned, in the business of a licensed real estate agent or business agent. We say, and believe, that the person whose conduct has been proved to be crooked shall not be allowed to participate in an occupation that involves so much trustworthiness.

Mr. JACKSON.—Do you give them more than one chance?

Mr. SLATER.—No. They are definitely disqualified, and they are so disqualified because of the happening of one of the three events—either that the court has refused to grant their licences, and that cannot be done capriciously, or that their licences have been cancelled—that must have been for a good cause; or that their bonds have been sued on—in other words, they have defaulted. Any one of those grounds, if substantiated, would be effectual in preventing the granting of a licence at the present time, but we say that crooked persons should be deprived of being directly or indirectly associated with a business which involves so much trust.

Mr. JACKSON.—How is the person who has not been employed by any real estate or business agent, and begins for himself, treated?

Mr. SLATER.—He has to lodge his application with the Registrar, and a copy with the clerk of courts within a specified period. It will be the duty of the Registrar to police the measure. If the Registrar, after having made discreet inquiries through police channels, receives information that the applicant is a convicted person, or is otherwise of undesirable character, it will be his duty to oppose the granting of the application when that application becomes returnable in the court of petty sessions. He will have to support by evidence his objection to the granting of the licence.

Mr. MORLEY.—Suppose an employee leaves one firm and goes to another, will he have to be registered again?

Mr. SLATER.—A sub-agent will, but he is distinguished from a mere employee of a real estate agent. Employees are specifically exempted from the operations of this particular Bill. If a sub-agent goes from one employer to another, he will have to take out a fresh licence. There may be substantial reasons for a sub-agent leaving his employ, and in the interests of the community he should not be granted a fresh licence.

Mr. MORLEY.—Suppose an employer does not want an employee to get another job?

Mr. SLATER.—That point was raised by a deputation which waited upon me. It may be that by a close combination of a number of agents an employee might be victimized. It was thought, however, that there were so many abuses under the present system that the possibility of victimization in that direction was a minor consideration compared with the larger questions involved.

Mr. LINTON.—A man might still be an employee, but not a sub-agent.

Mr. SLATER.—There is no prohibition against an employee changing his employment, but the position will be different if a man ceases to be an employee and becomes a sub-agent. It must be realized that the agent is responsible for the acts of his sub-agent. The obligation is on the employer to account for any trust funds which may be received by the sub-agent, who is not under any obligation under this Bill to provide a trust account, and to pay moneys he receives into that account. Of course he is responsible to pay any money he receives to the agent who employs him, and the agent is responsible for the paying of money so received to the client.

Mr. JACKSON.—This Bill protects the agent.

Mr. SLATER.—I should say that it protects the community against fraud on the part of a sub-agent, but of course at the expense of the agent.

Mr. JACKSON.—Will those who are now engaged in the business have to apply for a licence, although they may be already licensed?

Mr. SLATER.—All licences will expire on the 31st of December next.

Mr. JACKSON.—Do you expect any rush of persons to get into the business before then?

Mr. SLATER.—It does not matter if there is. Every person engaged in this business will have to apply for a licence after the 31st of December.

Mr. JACKSON.—If persons are already in the business, will not that be a qualification?

Mr. SLATER.—All applicants will be dealt with on their reputation. If they have a reputation of being crooked, the possibilities of obtaining a fresh licence to carry on business next year will be slender.

Mr. CUTHBERTSON.—Will there be any limit to the number of licences issued?

Mr. SLATER.—Not the slightest. It will be possible for 100,000 persons to

get a licence. I may point out that every person in a partnership has to be separately licensed, and to obtain a fidelity bond before he can carry on this business.

Mr. JACKSON.—Who will police the Act?

Mr. SLATER.—The Registrar will do that. A substantial increase in the fees is provided under this Bill compared with those in the existing Act. It will be necessary for the business to be very closely scrutinized, and the Registrar is the authority named in the Bill to see that its provisions are observed.

Mr. MORLEY.—Will the work of policing the Act be the Registrar's sole duty?

Mr. SLATER.—It may not be, but it probably will, because we are bringing all agents under this law.

Mr. MURPHY.—Will the increase in fees bring in sufficient for the payment of the Registrar's salary.

Mr. SLATER.—Yes. I should say that the probability is that there will be attached to the office of the Registrar a plainclothes policeman, or some trusted man who may be depended upon to make discreet inquiries in the event of any complaints being made against an agent. The administration under this Bill, if it becomes law, will be entirely different from that of the present law, because of the need of preventing the many and glaring cases of fraud which have been going on during the last few years. I have had in my own practice two or three extraordinary cases of fraud. One could scarcely believe that they could take place in the circumstances in which they did. An individual who goes out in the street and robs another man might be regarded as being more generous than the culprits in the cases which have come under my notice.

Mr. JACKSON.—How will the law affect your own profession?

Mr. SLATER.—My profession is on a lofty plane, and we have most effective means of disciplining our members.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—You only relieve people of their surplus wealth.

Mr. SLATER.—We do not get many opportunities of doing even that.

Lieut.-Col. FORREST.—It is provided that applications for a licence are to be made to the court of petty sessions nearest to the applicant's place of business, or his principal place of business. Would it not be better for the application to be made to the nearest court to the applicant's residence?

Mr. SLATER.—It has been thought better to provide for the application to be made in the manner suggested in the clause. A man might be carrying on his business in Fitzroy, and put his place of residence in Mildura. He may apply for a licence at Mildura where nobody would know anything about him.

Lieut.-Col. FORREST.—If the application had to be made to the court nearest to where the man resided there would be a better opportunity of obtaining information about his character.

Mr. SLATER.—That is a point we may consider when the Bill is in Committee. The Bill makes an important advance on the present position. Individuals will not be under the obligation of taking proceedings against an agent. If a man has a complaint to make he will see the Registrar who, if a prima facie case is made out against an agent, will move the court to cancel the licence.

Lieut.-Col. FORREST.—That will be done without any liability on the part of the informant.

Mr. SLATER.—I do not think there is any provision for costs to be ordered against an informant, but it is a matter for consideration whether we should not provide for reasonable costs in the event of the information being frivolous. On a previous occasion the honorable member for Lowan made a suggestion that there should be some provision to protect a reputable agent against ill-founded complaints. There is power under the Law Institute Act to order costs against an informant who vexatiously or for some trivial cause makes a complaint against a solicitor. I do not see why we should not protect reputable estate agents in similar circumstances, and make persons responsible for unnecessary or groundless charges pay costs of the proceedings. That is a matter we can consider when the Bill is in Committee. I have now given a general outline of the provisions of the Bill, and the reasons I am asking the House to pass it into law. I do not think it can be disputed by any section of the community that the amendment of the present law is desirable.

Mr. FROST.—I suppose we cannot make this law retrospective.

Mr. SLATER.—I do not think so; but it is in the interests of members of the

community who have been defrauded of considerable sums of money that the alterations in the law now proposed should be made. The honorable member for Boroondara, by his association with the New Settlers League, has knowledge of many cases of new settlers being ruthlessly robbed by "crook" agents.

Mr. MORLEY.—You don't want to limit the cases of fraud to new settlers.

Mr. SLATER.—I am satisfied that almost every member of this House knows of numbers of cases of fraud by bogus agents.

Mr. MORLEY.—A couple of members of this House were taken in last year, and I was one of them.

Mr. SLATER.—That feeling which makes us wondrous kind will, I am sure, enable the honorable member for Barwon to give his full support to this particular Bill. Many of the clauses are merely machinery, and I will go hurriedly through them. Clause 1 makes the ordinary provision regarding the title, and clause 2 provides for the amendments made by this Bill to be amendments of the principal Act. Clause 3 is important because it defines what is a "business agent." It is set out that a "business agent" means any person selling, buying, or exchanging or otherwise dealing with or disposing of or negotiating for the sale, purchase or exchange, or any dealing with or disposition of hotel businesses, boardinghouse businesses, storekeeping businesses, manufacturing businesses, or any trading business whatever, or any share or interest in or the good-will of or any stock connected with any of such businesses on behalf of any other person, or for or in consideration of any payment or any remuneration, whether monetary or otherwise.

Mr. FROST.—You have not included land selling.

Mr. SLATER. — Land selling is already provided for in the principal Act. The clause also includes a definition of "letting," and removes difficulties which have been experienced in the administration of the principal Act in this respect. We have not hitherto been able to deal with persons collecting rent. They are under no obligation to be licensed. This Bill will compel them to be licensed, and to enter into the necessary fidelity bond.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Will that include every person who collects rents?

Mr. SLATER.—A man who collects rents comes within the definition of a real estate agent, and he will be obliged to be licensed, and to provide a fidelity bond.

Mr. LINTON.—Could you not make provision for dealing with the travelling auctioneer who goes round the country selling goods?

Mr. SLATER.—I do not think that would be within the ambit of this Bill at all. They are not selling a business or anything of that sort. They are simply hawking goods. If an auctioneer sells real estate he would come under the provisions of this law. Clause 4 provides that the employee of a licensed agent will not be required to take out a licence. An employee is distinguished from a sub-agent or salesman. Clause 4 removes the exemption of auctioneers to be licensed under the Real Estate and Business Agents Act. Those auctioneers who are now carrying on a real estate agency and are selling land by auction will be required to obtain a licence under this measure. Clause 5 sets out that every member of a partnership shall be licensed, and shall enter into a fidelity bond.

Mr. FROST.—Even if it is a sleeping partnership?

Mr. SLATER.—Yes. Clause 6 is a machinery provision. Clause 7 repeals sub-section (1) of section 5 of the Real Estate Agents Act, a provision which has led to a lot of abuse. That section provides that only one person carrying on an auctioneering business in a partnership under a registered firm name shall be licensed. Clause 8 provides that an applicant for a licence shall make application to the Court nearest to his principal place of business, and that the licence shall not be effective prior to the date on which the fee is paid. The licence becomes effective only as from the date of the payment of the necessary fee. Clause 9 is another machinery provision. Clause 10 directs that the guarantors shall be liable for the full amount of the fidelity bond in respect of each year that the agent defaults.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—Can the State Accident Insurance Office do business in fidelity bonds?

Mr. SLATER.—No. We shall have to amend the law if we wish to allow that. We cannot include such a suggestion within the compass of this Bill. The difficulty is that in some cases claims made against the fidelity bond guarantors have been resisted. Claims have also been made in respect of another year than that for which the agent's licence was in existence. Under clause 10 the fidelity bond can be sued on at any time, even after the expiry of the agent's licence.

Mr. JACKSON.—Will this Bill affect the building department of the State Savings Bank?

Mr. SLATER.—The measure cannot affect that department, because it is not an agent in any sense.

Mr. MORLEY.—How will the Bill affect a solicitor who collects rents?

Mr. SLATER.—It will not affect him. He can be disciplined if necessary under the provisions of the amending Law Institute Bill.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX.—What about a contractor who sells his own property?

Mr. SLATER.—He is not an agent; he is a principal. Clause 11 contains machinery provisions that will make for convenience in the administration of the law. It provides for the monthly gazettal of licences issued during the preceding month. Clause 12 is important. It provides, subject to the Public Service Act, for the appointment of a Registrar. I have indicated that he will be the officer responsible for the administration of the Bill.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—Will that be a new office?

Mr. SLATER.—A new office will be created. Clause 13 provides for a real estate and business agent being responsible for the acts of his employees or sub-agents. That is an important clause; but I feel that it is right that the responsibility for the acts of employees shall fall on the principal. Of course, there is some protection in the fact that the principal will ascertain the class of men he is employing. Under clause 14 an agent must keep a complete record of his employees and sub-agents, and produce it on an order of an officer of police. The agent has to keep a record setting out the different services or work and remuneration of his employees, and also whether they are paid by commission or by salary. Clause 15 provides that the Registrar or the Treasurer may in any particular case direct an agent to produce his books for inspection. This provision is being sought in order that the books of an agent who the Treasurer has reason to believe is not carrying out the provisions of the Act regarding trust moneys may be inspected.

Mr. FROST.—The Bill says, "any other person" authorized by the Treasurer.

Mr. SLATER.—That is, any other person whom the Treasurer nominates.

Mr. FROST.—Do you not think the Registrar will be able to do the job?

Mr. SLATER.—There may be some reason for engaging another person. It may be necessary to have an accountant or some other expert to aid the Registrar in carrying out his duty. Under clause 16 heavy punishment may be inflicted on agents who fraudulently convert trust moneys to their own benefit, or who fraudulently omit to account for or deliver or pay over such moneys. Imprisonment may be ordered for a term not exceeding ten years in the case of any person guilty of an offence under this measure.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—You have hardened your hearts since you occupied the Treasury bench.

Mr. SLATER.—Bad cases of fraud have occurred.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—Do you know of many cases?

Mr. SLATER.—I have recited cases which have come within my own knowledge. Two cases of which I know occurred within the last few months. One involved an hotel in the Western District. A deposit of £200 was paid to the brokers by a client. Their commission was £50, and they collared both the £50 and the £200.

Mr. BAILEY.—They might have taken the hotel.

Mr. SLATER.—If they could they would have done so. In another case a married couple gave the same firm a deposit of £100 on an hotel in Ballarat. The agents were to have done the financing, though as a matter of fact they could not finance the purchase of a dozen mouse traps, and the contract fell through. Clause 17 is important. It

imposes on a licensed real estate and business agent an obligation not to employ either persons who have been disqualified from holding a real estate and business agent's licence or those whose fidelity bonds have been sued on.

Mr. FROST.—What is the penalty?

Mr. SLATER.—An agent who employs a disqualified person is liable to a penalty of from £5 to £100.

Lieut.-Col. FORREST.—Does that apply to an agent who unknowingly or inadvertently employs such a person?

Mr. SLATER.—I take it that it might be desirable to make provision for the case of an agent who unknowingly employs such a person. This clause is to meet the case of a man who has been disqualified and yet gets somebody to act as a dummy for him. The disqualified man might get somebody else to secure a licence, and he would then carry on the business.

Sir WILLIAM MCPHERSON.—An honest agent might unknowingly employ a disqualified person.

Mr. SLATER.—It is easy to imagine that a perfectly honest agent might do that. Clause 18 is a machinery provision. Clause 19 deals with sub-agents who have to take out licences. Clauses 20 to 24 set out the methods to be adopted by sub-agents, salesmen, &c., to obtain licences. Every person who desires to obtain a sub-agent's licence has to lodge a copy of his application with a clerk of courts and the Registrar. That application has to be accompanied by a recommendation from the licensed agent who is to employ him. Clause 21 sets out that there is no obligation on the part of a licensed sub-agent as such to hold a real estate and business agent's licence. Clauses 25 and 26 are machinery provisions. Clause 27 sets out the fees payable under the law. A corporation will have to pay £15 per annum for a licence instead of £5. In the case of a partnership, every individual member will have to pay £5 per annum for his licence. He has to be separately licensed, and to take out a separate fidelity bond. The old system of renewing licences and paying £3 3s. annually will disappear. Every agent will have to apply for his licence every year.

Mr. FROST.—It will be a fresh application.

Mr. SLATER.—Yes.

Mr. MORLEY.—An auctioneer has to do that now.

Mr. SLATER.—The fee for each sub-agent's licence will be 2s. 6d.

Mr. GRAY.—What about a proprietary company?

Mr. SLATER.—That is a corporation.

Mr. LINTON.—You will be responsible for sending a lot of people to Sydney.

Mr. SLATER.—If they go there, they will probably meet even tighter laws than ours. This measure is based, to some extent, on Queensland legislation. For the reasons that I have submitted, I trust that the Bill will receive the serious and earnest consideration of the House. I hope that the measure that aims at tightening up the law against a particular class of agent will have a speedy passage.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON (*Hawthorn*).—The Bill is undoubtedly very important. I fancy that it will be a useful measure, but I ask the Attorney-General to agree to a postponement of the debate. I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, October 4.

APPRENTICESHIP BILL.

The debate (adjourned from September 21) on the motion of Mr. Lemmon (Minister of Labour) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—In view of the very sincere and sanguine speeches that have been delivered on this Bill, I am very sorry to have to adopt to some extent the attitude of a Jeremiah, but my convictions lead me to do so. I see no reason whatever to have altered my opinion from that which I held regarding a similar measure that was presented to us in 1925. While I hold that opinion regarding the Bill, I should, of course, be only too happy if the desires of the Minister and those who have supported him were fully achieved. I feel that our position in regard to the measure is somewhat the same as that of the Frenchman with his horse. He set out to train his horse to live on one straw a day, but just as he got the

horse trained to live on one straw a day the horse died. The Bill has very desirable provisions, no doubt, and had it been brought into force ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago it would in all likelihood have carried out its purpose to a very great extent, but, as has been ably demonstrated by the honorable member for Clifton Hill, certain things have taken place since then, which in a very great degree have minimized the necessity for the Bill. In fact, as a result of the changed situation, the passing of the measure might confuse matters, and, instead of being advantageous, might have the very opposite effect. In looking over the debates on the previous measure, I could not help being struck with the very great similarity between that measure and the one now before us. There have been only some very slight alterations which, I admit, from the point of view of those who regard the Bill favorably, are improvements. We shall concede that, but, to my mind, the Bill as a whole is too late to be of any practical use to the community. The present Leader of the Opposition, in speaking on the 1925 measure, cited a definite case of a large engineering firm which absolutely declined to have anything to do with apprentices on account of the terms and conditions imposed in connexion with the utilization of their services. That firm said that it could not be bothered with apprentices. The honorable member also pointed out at that time that the very basis of a successful apprenticeship measure must be the wholehearted co-operation of the firms that would employ apprentices. If the terms are made irksome or vexatious to any extent, it is very likely that the position will be reached that the people on whom we shall be dependent for the training of apprentices will have nothing to do with them.

Mr. LEMMON.—The first objective of this Bill is to obtain the co-operation of both the employers and the employees.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—I say that that is fundamental to the success of the measure, but the point is that if new and irksome conditions are imposed on industry the very opposite effect will be obtained. I am hopeful that if the measure does pass it will not have that opposite effect. I am as anxious as anybody else that the measure should be successful, but I very greatly fear that what I have indicated will take place. One concern with which I am associated has to comply with no fewer than seventeen awards. If certain apprenticeship conditions are going to be imposed, we would rather be without apprentices.

Mr. MCKENZIE.—That is the nigger in the wood pile.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—There is no nigger in the wood pile; he is right out on top. My niggers are all out in the open; the honorable member need never have any fear of my keeping them under the wood pile. The honorable member for Clifton Hill rather anticipated my remarks in one respect, and he dealt with that aspect of the matter very ably. He is an authority on the legal position. The Commonwealth Arbitration Court has stepped into the arena of industrial activity to such an extent that it has practically made full provision for the requirements with regard to apprentices.

Mr. LEMMON.—The same situation prevails in regard to the whole of our Wages Board system.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—In any industry for which the Commonwealth Arbitration Court has made an award, the State industrial law is inoperative if it is inconsistent with that award. If the State industrial law is consistent with the Commonwealth award, there is no necessity for the State law, and if it is inconsistent with the Commonwealth award it will not operate—so where are we? The four big industries in which apprenticeship is desirable, and to which it is applicable, are the metal trades, the woodworking trades, the printing trade, and the clothing trade. The Commonwealth Arbitration Court has made awards for the whole of the metal trades, with the exception of the sheet metal trade. I understand that that trade is at present before the Court, and that an award in respect of it will be made within a few weeks. The awards of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court make provision, not only for the wages of the apprentices, but for the time they shall have off for technical education. So far as that is concerned, anything that we put in the Bill will be *ultra vires* in regard to the metal trades.

Mr. LEMMON.—The provision in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court's award with regard to the training of apprentices in the printing trade is a dead letter. It is provided that they shall get time off to attend technical schools. The

Commonwealth has no control over our schools, and therefore cannot provide technical education.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—The State owns the schools, but the Commonwealth Arbitration Court provides whether apprentices shall have time off to attend them or not. Where the provisions of a State tribunal with regard to the wages of apprentices disagree with those in an award of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, the former will not operate. The Minister cannot get away from that position. As I have said, we are late in the day in bringing this legislation about. Had we done something ten years ago with regard to apprenticeship, the Commonwealth Arbitration Court would not have interfered, but the opportunity was neglected, whoever was to blame, and we cannot get away from the position that exists. The awards of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in regard to apprentices have been most complete. They have made provision for time off, fees to be paid, and everything else that is sought to be done under the Bill. The Court has regulated the conditions with regard to apprenticeship in the wood-working trades, with the exception of the furniture trade. That trade is in practically the same position as the sheet-metal trade. Its case will be heard by the Court, I understand, within the next few weeks. If we pass the Bill, and under it conditions are laid down in regard to the wages to be paid to apprentices, the time they shall be allowed off to attend technical schools, and all the rest of it, great confusion may result. The employers will, first of all, have to see whether or not the State provisions are consistent with those of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. There is considerable apprehension among the larger firms as to what will be the result. When the Bill was before us on a previous occasion, the Minister now in charge of the measure maintained that at that time awards of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court did not cover workers who were not members of a union. Since then, however, the High Court has laid it down that the Commonwealth Arbitration Court's awards apply, not only to those workers who are members of unions, but to all workers in the industries concerned. Therefore, the position has been altered in that respect since we last discussed an apprenticeship Bill. Another serious feature that has to be considered is the cost of administering the measure. We have not been informed what that cost will be. I agree that the president of the Apprenticeship Commission will have to be a man in sympathy with the ideals of apprenticeship, and a man of very high character, who is personally interested in the success of the measure. We shall not get such a man for a paltry sum. We shall have to pay him a pretty high salary. Furthermore, the passing of the Bill will mean the setting up of another Department. We have had experience of how Commissions grow. They start off with a secretary. The secretary must have a typist, the typist must have something else, and before you know where you are there is a big Department. One of the objections I have to the Bill is that we have no idea what the cost of administration will be. As I have said, the measure is too late to be of any service.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—Don't say that.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—That is my honest conviction. I am as keen as anybody else in encouraging technical education, and in seeing that it is used in the best interests of the community, but it is quite a wrong idea to set up a Commission to try to force students into the technical schools. You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink. The fundamental reason why boys are not going to technical schools, or are not finishing their courses there, is that the rates paid for unskilled labour are too near the rates paid for skilled labour. That is the whole trouble with apprenticeship schemes. Another reason why boys do not attend technical schools is the fact that in the case of reasonably-sized families, where there are boys, the high cost of living forces the boys to go out and earn something towards the upkeep of the home as soon as they can. As the wages for unskilled youths are so attractive, you cannot get them to pass by the immediate advantage for some prospective gain in the future. I believe that that is really the reason why boys leave technical schools after attending only for a year or two. They find that they can get £3 or £4 a week in an unskilled calling, and they cannot resist the temptation. I believe that that is the whole trouble. If we desire not only our technical education but our higher education to be the success it should be in this country, some means will have to be found of paying

the skilled worker a commensurately higher rate than that paid the unskilled worker, and of reducing the extraordinarily high wages paid to unskilled youths. If the measure passes, I wish it the very best success, but, frankly, I am quite confident that it will not be a success.

Mr. LINTON (*Boroondara*). — This Bill, I think, is of interest to every honorable member. The question of technical education is outside party politics. It is of such great importance that the future prosperity of our country depends largely on a well-organized and scientific system of technical education combined with apprenticeship. I have given a good deal of thought to this subject during my travels in many parts of the world. One result of my travels has been the appreciation of the fact that we in Australia have not advanced so far in technical education as have other countries. To that fact must be ascribed largely the reason for that large army of unskilled workers of which we have evidence in all parts of Australia. The subject-matter of this measure has received the serious consideration of this Parliament during the last 20 years or more. The honorable member for Lowan stated that if we had achieved something concrete in our apprenticeship system fifteen years ago we would have achieved a great deal. I agree with him. I have before me certain facts which demonstrate that during the last 20 odd years the statesmen of Victoria have been anxious to extend our system of technical education. In 1906 a report was submitted to the then Chief Secretary (Sir Alexander Peacock) by the Apprenticeship Conference. The chairman of that conference was the Honorable Theodore Fink, and the report is a most illuminating document. I shall not weary honorable members by reading the whole report, but I should like to refer to certain aspects of it which prove conclusively that the conditions existing then in Victoria were the same as exist unfortunately to-day. The opening paragraph of the report stated—

> This Conference was convened by the Honorable the Chief Secretary, Sir Samuel Gillott, as the result of a deputation from the Chamber of Manufactures which waited on him on the 19th of September, 1906, calling attention of the Government to the urgent necessity of organizing a sound and effective system of apprenticeship, and suggesting that the Government should call a conference of employers and employees to consider and report on the subject.

In another portion of the report the following statement was made:—

> That the progress of industry in this State is seriously threatened by the defective system of industrial training, and, as part of the remedy therefor, it is essential that the apprenticeship system should be placed on a sound basis.

Our Victorian legislators have had these facts before them for many years. This Bill, I consider, is much overdue. I hope that it will have a very speedy passage through both Houses, and that the Minister in charge of the Bill will achieve his ambition. Another Apprenticeship Conference was convened in 1913 by the then Acting Premier (the Hon. John Murray). The Hon. Theodore Fink was chairman of that conference. The report is also of a most illuminating nature, and one paragraph dealt with the paramount claims of youth to efficient training. That paragraph was—

> *The Paramount Claims of Youth to Efficient Training.*—In this question, as in all others relating to the apprenticeship question, and apart from the warring claims of employers and employed, the claim and right of the youth to receive a training that will develop all his faculties, and give him sufficient mobility of mind, body, and such manual skill as will enable him to pass readily from the ranks of the unskilled or automatic labourer to the individual or skilled one, is paramount. Not less is the right of the State to have all its children fully developed in mind, character, and faculty, including manual skill, based upon a sound training of hand and eye.

Dealing with unemployment, the report set out—

> *Unemployed Problem Largely a Problem of Unskilled Labour.*—It must not be forgotten that the unemployed problem is very largely a question of unskilled labour; and this community, according to testimony on all sides, is suffering from a shortage of skilled labour in very many departments, whereas periodically we see evidence of a plethora of unskilled workmen.

The same conditions exist to-day. We have too many unskilled workers. Certain factors have contributed to that unfortunate state of affairs. One of them is the lack of parental control. The honorable member for Flemington, who made a valuable contribution to this debate last week, stated that when he was a boy the apprentice was regarded as an interloper in industry. Unfortunately for the State, and the youth of the State, that feeling remains in many quarters to-day. Too little encouragement has been given to our boys to assist them to prepare themselves for the battle

of life. I do not know how many honorable members took the opportunity of visiting the Royal Agricultural Show at Flemington last week. I did so, and I spent most of my time in the section devoted to technical education. It was a wonderful demonstration of the enthusiasm, efficiency, and technical skill displayed by the students in the technical schools. There were certain aspects, however, which, while creditable to the Education Department, proved to me conclusively that the time has arrived when we must introduce a more efficient and a better organized system of technical education in Victoria. I saw evidence of articles of furniture of a similar nature having been manufactured by technical school students in no less than three different technical schools. I maintain that if we are to make a success of our system of technical education we must follow the policy that has been adopted in other countries. We should apply the group system in technical education. Our aim should be to establish in the metropolitan area technical schools which will concentrate on training in particular trades. For instance, one school would concentrate on training in woodwork and allied trades, another on engineering and allied trades, another on printing and allied trades, another on metal work and allied trades. I have quoted only four instances, but I could extend the list. Under this system a boy will not be able to go, say, to the Caulfield Technical School, as he can now, and choose the trade in which he desires training, although only a portion of that training is given at that school. If he chose printing and its allied trades, for example, he would have to go to the Working Men's College, because that institution would concentrate, let us suppose, on that trade, while Caulfield, let us say, would concentrate on woodwork and its allied trades. This system of grouping of trades would not only prove economical for the State so far as its expenditure on technical education was concerned; it would increase the efficiency of our system of technical education. Under the conditions existing to-day it is necessary that teachers to give instruction in one particular trade should be appointed in practically every one of our 27 technical schools. I do not think it is possible to find in this city 27 teachers who are fully qualified to train boys in one particular trade. Under the group system, a small number of expert teachers would be able to concentrate on imparting training in their particular subjects in one school. The result, I am confident, would be more beneficial than the existing system, because the group system would increase the efficiency of technical education and encourage enthusiasm in the students, their parents, and employers.

Mr. LEMMON.—The honorable member's views are very sound.

Mr. LINTON.—There is another direction in which a big saving in expenditure on technical education can be obtained. I refer to the obtaining of supplies for the technical schools. The different classes in the 27 technical schools have now the privilege of purchasing the materials, tools, instruments, and other requisites required. If the group system were introduced, the purchases of the whole of the requisites for the schools could be made by one authority. I have definite knowledge that at the present time second-hand dealers purchase waste material from the Newport Workshops, such as small ends of timber and metal and other waste, and in many instances they sell that waste to the technical schools in small parcels. I believe that the Government could obtain the whole of the waste material from the Newport Workshops for the technical schools by merely asking for it. If that were done, a considerable amount of money would be saved every year. The group system might, of course, entail a little inconvenience to some students, but that inconvenience could be lessened to a considerable extent. Students who would have to travel some distance in order to attend the technical school in which training was given in the particular subject they had chosen could be granted the privilege of scholars' concession tickets which is given to scholars who attend the various State and private schools. The value of the goods manufactured in Victoria in the year 1916-17 was £60,000,000. The value of the goods manufactured in 1925-26 was £119,000,000. Between 1916-17 and 1925-26, the number of apprentices in Victoria had not increased in the same ratio. It is somewhat difficult

to obtain definite information on this matter, because the *Victorian Year-Book* gives only the number of boys and girls under sixteen years of age employed in certain industries. The Minister mentioned in his second-reading speech that the boy in industry should be regarded as a student rather than as a producer. If we could get employers generally to appreciate the importance of that view, and if the journeymen employed in the various workshops would also recognize it and assist the apprentices, we would achieve a great deal in developing our apprenticeship system. I was interested in many industries during my commercial career. During that time the employers I was associated with encouraged technical education as much as they could. They assisted apprentices to attend the Working Men's College. Apprentices were given every encouragement in nearly every case to obtain a thorough technical training. The boys were given time off during working hours to attend the Working Men's College; in many cases the employers paid their fees and offered prizes to encourage the lads to do their best. Unfortunately, as the Minister rightly said in his second-reading speech, the boys attended the school regularly for, perhaps, a period of twelve months or two years, and then became slack in their attendance. We discovered that very often they did not attend their technical schools during the business hours when they were allowed off duty, and that very often, also, they failed to attend during the evenings. Many of the employers became discouraged and withdrew these privileges. The great difficulty has been the lack of parental control. We must seek the co-operation of the parents. We must get them to become enthusiastic regarding the future of their sons in the event of the latter being given opportunities to become educated at the technical schools. We shall achieve very little unless technical education is made not only free, but compulsory, as it is in other countries. When I was in Germany some years ago I gave a good deal of thought and study to technical education. I presume that honorable members are aware that not only in Germany, but in Switzerland, and in other countries of Europe, technical education is both free and compulsory. There are comparatively few unskilled workers in Germany. I have before me a publication of a well-known authority, Professor G. Stanley Hall, who made a study of technical education in America and throughout Europe. There is one chapter of this book, *Educational Problems,* in particular, which I should like to read to the House, but from which I shall make a brief extract. It deals with a phase of technical education in Munich:—

> One of the boldest, most comprehensive, and interesting of all the new departures in this field is the now famous Munich system, which has transformed its continuation schools into elementary technical schools for apprentices. In 1900 schools were opened for butchers, bakers, shoemakers, chimney sweeps, and barbers. In 1901 followed schools for wood turners, glaziers, gardeners, confectioners, wagon-makers, blacksmiths, tailors, photographers, interior decoration, painters' material. In 1902 came schools for waiters, coachmen, painters, paperhangers, bookbinders, potters, stove-setters, watchmakers, clockmakers, jewellers, gold and silversmiths. In 1903 schools were opened for foundrymen, pewterers, coppersmiths, tinsmiths, plumbers, stucco workers, marble cutters, wood carvers, coopers, leather workers, and saddlers. In 1905 came schools for business apprentices, typesetters, lithographers, engravers, building iron and ornamental iron workers, machine makers, mechanics, cabinetmakers, masons, stonecutters, carpenters. There are now over 40 of these, besides three facultative continuation schools for masters and helpers. The former are compulsory, and must be held some time between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. The latter may be either day or evening. In Germany great economic and even moral advantage is claimed by utilizing Sunday afternoon for such and other school work. P. Kreuzenpointer says that if Pennsylvania had as many trade schools in proportion she would now have 1,000, and this country at large about 30,000.

That country last referred to is the United States of America. I recommend the Minister of Labour to peruse this and certain other chapters of the book.

Mr. LEMMON.—I shall be glad to do so.

Mr. LINTON.—The writer emphasizes the advisability of grouping technical education on the same lines as I have suggested. In this State during 1920-21 there were employed in our factories numbers of boys and girls under the age of sixteen years. These are classified in the *Official Year-Book of the Commonwealth of Australia,* under the term "child labour." During that period there were employed 3,715 males and 2,798 females, a total of 6,513. In 1924-25 there were 4,027 males and 3,223 females, or a total of 7,250 in the factories of this State. That is to say, there were

approximately 750 more of these children —classified as "child labour"—employed in 1924-25 than in 1920-21. It is of interest to read the particulars of the industries in which the majority of these boys and girls were engaged. At joinery and woodwork there were 150 males; in engineering, iron works and foundries, there were 506 males; and in railway carriage and railway and tramway workshops there were 173 males. I have always thought it a great pity that our railway service does not provide greater opportunities for apprentices. I think that the branches are confining themselves largely to the unskilled side of labour. In the railway and tramway workshops, however, the Government should actively encourage apprenticeship.

Mr. LEMMON.—The Railway Department has a scheme of apprenticeship in operation at Newport.

Mr. LINTON.—But, generally, the railways do not very greatly encourage the apprenticeship system. Reverting to the types of trades and industries in which the greater portion of our child labour is engaged, the official Commonwealth publication gives the following additional particulars:—

Woollen and tweed mills, 200; boots and shoes, 319; printing and binding, 331; cycles and motors, 211; billiard tables, cabinet-making, and furniture, 166.

There is no possibility of ascertaining the number of apprentices, but I know, from inquiries, that most of those individuals to whom I have referred are being brought up as unskilled workers. There is no phase of technical education that has given people more thought than this, and it is one of the reasons why our technical schools in many instances are deserted by our youths. A lad makes inquiries regarding the wages and conditions ruling in a particular trade to which he has a leaning. He has a liking for the wood-working trade, for example, and he ascertains that the wages for the first year are 10s. a week. His parents, too, have been making inquiries, and they inform him that if he goes in for some other occupation he can begin at 17s. 6d. a week. That family is influenced, unfortunately, by the higher wage immediately offering for unskilled labour. I have ascertained the following particulars of the weekly wages ruling for the first year for an apprentice:—In engraving, 9s.; engineering and brass workers, 11s.; brass workers' section, engineering industry, 8s.; clothing industry, 5s. a week. There is no inducement for any parent to allow his or her son to start, at the age or fourteen or fifteen years, at so low a rate of wage. If boys could be given a good grounding in technical schools, however, they would be more profitable to industry, and industry would be only too glad to pay them an adequate wage for their services. I have made inquiries from the Young Men's Christian Association, which handles a large number of young men in our cities. Officials of that association have compiled figures for me in connexion with the activities of their employment department covering the last three years. These show that they have been successful in placing all the young men who sought engagements through them, and who were tradesmen. That proportion, however, represented only 5 per cent. of the whole. In other words, 95 per cent. of the young men whom the Young Men's Christian Association placed in employment during the last three years were unskilled workers.

(*At 6.27 p.m. the sitting was suspended until 7.43 p.m.*)

Mr. LINTON.—Under the Bill, the advisory committees to be established are given certain powers. In my opinion, a definite and permanent arrangement should be made for the committees to have the active co-operation of the head-masters of our State schools. The head-masters should report upon their boys when the boys are about to enter technical schools. The reports would be based on personal observation, and would indicate the most suitable trade or calling that particular boys were fitted for. This is a procedure that has been adopted in some of the countries that I referred to this afternoon. By the adoption of such a procedure we should, I believe, avoid many of the misfits that we have had experience of in this State in the past.

Mr. LEMMON.—Do you refer to the head-masters of our junior technical schools?

Mr. LINTON.—No; I refer more particularly to the head-masters of our primary schools. They have boys under ob-

servation for many years, and have means of ascertaining what particular trade or calling the boys are best fitted for.

Mr. LEMMON.—We propose, under the Bill, to obtain the services of any officer of the Department.

Mr. LINTON.—But I should like a permanent arrangement, to ensure co-operation between the Apprenticeship Commission and our education authorities.

Mr. JACKSON.—You would not make that arrangement binding, would you? Suppose the head-master of a primary school recommended a boy for a particular trade, would you necessarily place the boy in that trade?

Mr. LINTON.—I am merely throwing out a suggestion. Another aspect of the matter is this: There is a possibility of a large number of boys applying for technical instruction to fit them for a particular industry which cannot absorb them in this State. I think that the contingency is more or less provided for in the Bill. But there is always the danger of giving technical education to more boys than a particular industry can absorb. It is a possibility that we should, if possible, avoid. There is one particular class of boy in our community to which I consider we should give a lot of consideration. I refer now to the orphans in our orphanage institutions. There are ten such institutions in Victoria, having 1,690 beds. For 1923-24—the last official figures available—the daily average number of inmates was 1,645. Expenditure in the same year was £48,596. In the institutions, boarded out or on probation, there were 3,554 males and 2,934 females; a total of 6,488. The children in our orphanage institutions are brought up in a very close atmosphere. They are given the ordinary elementary education, and when they reach a certain age they are practically turned adrift, and have to support themselves. The boys have not an opportunity of learning any particular trade, and they have to take advantage of the highest wage that is offering. They finish up in the army of unskilled workers. I consider that the time has arrived when we, as a Parliament, should give the boys in the orphanage institutions an opportunity, while they are at those institutions, to attend our technical schools. This should be done not necessarily for six or twelve hours a week; let us give them the opportunity of attending the technical schools for 24 hours a week. Let us prepare them and give them a chance of becoming useful citizens—a chance that has been denied them up to the present. I think that honorable members will agree that the time has arrived when all the orphans in our institutions should be given every facility for learning useful trades. There are girls to be considered—unfortunately there are many. I would strongly urge that we give them an opportunity to learn domestic science, and, if they prefer it, to learn certain sections of trade that would be useful and enable them at least to earn a decent living when they are compelled by age to leave our institutions. Failing that, my idea has always been that the orphanage institutions in the metropolitan area generally occupy most valuable sites. The orphans are brought up with very little outlook and very little enjoyment. Their principal pastime is their ordinary education. I have felt for a long while that it would be beneficial to the State, and particularly to the boys and girls in those institutions, if those institutions could be established in a country area suitable for farming purposes, where we could bring the boys up on training farms. They could receive farm training in addition to ordinary education. They could be taught to produce, and by that method make the institutions more or less self-supporting. They could be taught to milk cows, make butter, and grow fruit and vegetables. All of these commodities, as well as meat, the institutions have now to purchase. If the system that I suggest were adopted we should be encouraging in the orphans' minds a love for country life—outdoor life—and when they had completed their training they would be able to earn a very good living, and, as a matter of course, assist to increase the primary products of the State. At the same time the girls could be taught the ordinary female domestic duties attached to a farm, and that would be very beneficial in country districts. I believe that the Government has land suitable for such purposes, and I am sure that if such a change could be made, thus giving the boys and girls that opportunity for which so many of them crave, the State would be very much richer for it. I am certainly in favour of the Bill, and I should like to say that I

am more in favour of free and compulsory education up to the age of eighteen years.

Mr. KENT HUGHES (*Kew*).—I was very much interested—and I think many other honorable members were—in the speech of the honorable member for Boroondara, particularly that part of it dealing with technical education, and the grouping scheme which he outlined and elaborated with examples from other countries. I think that the Bill is a very excellent one, and—honour to whom honour is due—I would congratulate Ministers in previous Governments and the members of past Parliaments, as well as the present Ministry. They have all put their hands to the growing of what might be termed a hardy perennial. I hope that the forcing of the Government, aided with a bit of sunshine from the Opposition, will result in the growth of a hardier plant that will be able to weather the storm that it may meet later. Speaking as one who has had experience of the industrial side more than other phases of the question, I have no doubt that the overhauling of our apprenticeship system has long been overdue. There is a serious shortage of skilled labour in many trades, and that situation has existed for many years. In the printing trade—in which I am interested—it is exceedingly difficult to get a skilled machinist, or a skilled compositor, and that can be viewed not from the point of view of the shortage of apprentices alone. If passed, the Bill will rectify an evil that has existed for many years in certain trades. In others there has been a measure of relief already. From the evidence that has been produced, both by the Minister who introduced the Bill, and by other speakers, it seems that practically all the authorities, as well as the conferences that have been held, are in agreement as to which system should be introduced. The 1922 Conference was enamoured of the system working in Queensland. But if the Conference had gone to Western Australia, I think that it would have been just as enthusiastic concerning the system there. I should like at this stage to ask the Minister of Labour if he will take note of certain remarks that I shall make later in reference to Queensland and Western Australia. In his speech on the second reading of the Bill, the Minister referred to a communication that he had received from Mr. Forgan Smith, the Acting Premier of Queensland, with regard to an article that appeared in the *Master Printers' Journal* of that State. I was specially interested, because I belong to the Master Printers' Association in Melbourne. In the extract that he quoted there appears the following:—

> If evidence were needed as to the benefits of the trade classes, it would be supplied by this brochure. The success of the present effort raises the question: Could not the other two branches—lithography and bookbinding—produce something at the end of next year to accompany the efforts of the compositors and machinists?

This shows that they were also awake to the fact that the spirit of competition amongst the younger apprentices with regard to examinations is rather a good factor in the system that they have working there. The Minister also quoted Vardon Brothers, of South Australia, and the Superintendent of Technical Education in South Australia, and, I think, Mr. Cheary, the Secretary of the Printing Industry Employees Union of Australia, who warmly supports the scheme which is in operation in that State. Evidence from other countries leads us to the same conclusion. I note also that the first thing for the Apprenticeship Commission to do will be to define "skilled industries." I do not think that it will have very much difficulty in that respect, nor do I foresee much difficulty in the establishment of either the commission itself or the trade committees, which to my mind will be akin to the Whitley Councils and committees established in England to do what we have done in Victoria with the Wages Board and arbitration systems. I have no quarrel with that aspect of the Bill at all. But I do agree with the honorable members who have stated that, although the Bill is an excellent one, it is, in a certain measure, too late. State legislatures have been dallying with the question while the unions and the employers and the Arbitration Court have acted. The great majority of our skilled trades now are undoubtedly acting under awards of the Arbitration Court, which has in most instances laid down special regulations with regard to apprentices. At the end of next year many more skilled trades will be under the Arbitration Court, and probably each succeeding year, as long as the Ar-

bitration Court continues, more and more of the skilled trades will be brought under its jurisdiction. So, although the Minister stated that, generally speaking, the sole authority to-day is the Factories and Shops Act with the Wages Board system, practically and actually I think that a great many skilled trades apprentices are now under the jurisdiction of the Arbitration Court. Vardon Brothers, who wrote the letter dated the 22nd of June, 1927, which the Minister quoted, evidently do not know the terms of the award under which they are working. That award was made on the 26th of August, 1926, and the apprenticeship system in South Australia, or the major portion of it, was based on the awards of their Industrial Arbitration Court. Before leaving that aspect of the case I should like to refer to more of the Minister's remarks. On pages 1076 and 1077 of *Hansard* is given his opinion with reference to the working of the measure, if it is passed, in conjunction with the Arbitration Court awards. Without quoting his actual remarks, he said, in general, that he did not think there would be any difficulty from that aspect. One passage which supports the case that he made out was that the Western Australian Government says, in effect, that "the Federal law has nothing to do with our law here." I have not gone deeply enough into the matter to know whether that is true in every case, but I think that it will be found that in 99 per cent. of the cases it is true. Western Australian unions thought that they were getting a better deal from their own State tribunals, and, therefore, do not desire to come under Commonwealth industrial arbitration awards.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—They were exempt by special request of the employers and employees.

Mr. KENT HUGHES (*Kew*).—They have not come under the Commonwealth awards in the printing industry. I think the Minister will find that that applies also to the other skilled trades. The Minister will find much the same state of affairs existing in Queensland; therefore the evidence we have had from Queensland and Western Australia is not of very much value. From my own experience of conflicting State Wages Boards determinations and Arbitration Court awards, I am satisfied we must be careful that anything we do will not set up another expensive authority which will provide further conflicting awards. These conflicting awards already cause confusion to both employers and employees. A more pious hope was expressed by the Minister when he expressed the opinion that it would be a good thing for this House to pass laws which will bring representatives of employers and employees together. Unfortunately, the Arbitration Court has had practically the opposite effect. It has, more or less, set employers and employees at one another's throats, because each one has a fear of giving way on points which might be brought against them at some later date. The industrial wing of the Labour movement has been largely responsible for most of the industries being dragged before the Arbitration Court. When I say the industrial wing I must include the political wing, because the former exists by an autocratic levy on the latter; therefore the two cannot be taken individually or separately; they are really one on questions of policy. It may be that before very long industrialists in Western Australia and Queensland will be forced to go to the Arbitration Court, as a result of the action of the employers and not of the employees. Be that as it may, we have the Arbitration Court laying down rules and regulations for apprentices, which cannot be overridden by any State authority. When the Bill is in Committee, I hope to submit an amendment to meet the position, because I do not think industrial awards go far enough in regard to the apprenticeship system. The great trouble is that we cannot force apprentices to attend a technical school. That aspect of the matter was clearly stressed by the honorable member for Boroondara. I should like to point out how closely some of the first awards of the Arbitration Court in regard to apprentices coincide with this Bill. I have before me details of an Arbitration Court award regarding the printing industry, and I propose to read four or five of the main provisions regarding apprentices. Paragraph (*a*) provides that—

> An apprentice shall be apprenticed to learn and shall be fully and thoroughly taught and instructed by the employer in one, at least, of

the following branches of the printing industry—

Then follows a number of branches of the industry, which I need not detail. It is further provided that—

An apprentice shall be indentured for a period of six years. Provided that when a boy is more than sixteen years of age at the date of the indenture the period may be for five years, but such apprentice shall, for the purposes of calculating his wages, be deemed to have already served a period of one year.

The duties of an apprentice shall be so arranged by the employer that, as he progresses in his knowledge and skill in his apprenticeship, his duties shall be varied accordingly, and he shall be placed on higher or more skilful work from time to time.

There may be a difficulty in carrying out the directions in the last paragraph I have just quoted. There are occasions when there is a rush of work and the foreman cannot always give the necessary time for the instruction of the apprentices, or it may be that in certain cases a foreman may find great difficulty in putting an apprentice on a higher branch of work. In this and in other ways an apprentice may lose a certain amount of training not through any laxity on the part of the employer or the foreman, but as the result of circumstances which may suddenly have developed in a printing office. Another condition is as follows:—

Each apprentice shall, after the completion of the first year of apprenticeship, be permitted by his employer to absent himself during ordinary working hours for the purpose of attending for four hours every week a suitable technical school or other school for the period of three years, or for the period of any prescribed course approved by the union or by the appropriate Board of Reference if such school is available.

I agree with the honorable member for Boroondara that the period of four hours during a week is not sufficiently long. The next provision is as follows:—

If the apprentice produce a certificate from the school showing that he has given satisfactory attention to the work of the school for a quarter or other term, then for that term there shall be no deduction from his pay for the time of absence, and the school fees shall be paid by the employer (unless paid by the State Government).

We have endeavoured to get apprentices to attend technical schools, and they have started off very well, but the attendance soon fell away, and was altogether unsatisfactory, the money paid for fees being practically wasted. I should like to see legislation providing that when a boy has been indentured to learn a trade, attendance at a technical college should be compulsory. In our State schools we provide for compulsory attendance, and I think it would be right for us to provide for compulsory attendance at a technical college. Further provisions are—

Should the apprentice attain a standard to be set out by the appropriate Board of Reference, he shall for the first annual examination he passes receive the sum of 2s. 6d. per week in addition to the prescribed weekly wage; for the second annual examination he passes he shall receive an additional sum of 2s. 6d. per week, or 5s. in addition to the prescribed weekly wage; for the third annual examination he passes he shall receive a further sum of 2s. 6d. per week, or 7s. 6d. in addition to the prescribed weekly wage. He shall receive such additional amounts from the date on which the employer is notified of such pass.

The time, during working hours, occupied by an apprentice in attending a technical or other school or class (including the time occupied by him going from his work to such school or class and returning to his work) shall be reckoned as part of the time served under his indenture of apprenticeship, and shall not delay the completion of his indenture or interfere with the periodical increase of his wages.

The Board of Reference for the printing industry consist of representatives of employers and employees, and is practically composed in the way the Commission to be appointed under this Bill will be. I suggest therefore that the Minister in charge of the measure should look at this aspect of the matter more from the aspect of technical education which Arbitration Court awards do not cover. If the Commission is to deal with wages and hours it will cause further conflict and confusion. The Commission, however, could do a great work with regard to technical education. I am as keen as any member of this House in seeing that apprentices get the full value of technical education, but I am not at all keen in bringing about further conflicting awards which lead to endless friction between employers and employees. The friction which has already been brought about has caused antagonism between employers and employees, which is entirely unnecessary. Arbitration Court awards have in one sense made slaves of employees to a greater extent than they ever were before. They have not the same freedom of movement from one factory to another, and in that respect they are as great slaves as labour was in England after the scourge of the Black Death

in early times. They are also not allowed to join in certain schemes which employers desire to bring about to establish better relationship between themselves and employees. I know of one trade union secretary who was entirely against a scheme in the direction I have indicated. I do not think the view he took is general amongst trade union secretaries, and I hope this particular one will soon get the sentence he rightly deserves. There is an honest endeavour between employers and employees generally to harmonize their relationships. This harmonious relationship is fostered in the proceedings of Wages Boards, but it is not so noticeable in the litigious atmosphere set up in the Arbitration Court. At the present time employers are faced with the great difficulty in saying what is inconsistent in State awards with respect to awards given by the Arbitration Court. As I have previously suggested, our great aim should be to secure greater advantage from technical education than we do at the present time. The honorable member for Boroondara has referred to the fact that apprentices, after serving three or four years, abandon their occupation. In nearly every case that action is due to relatives of apprentices themselves. I know of a case where an apprentice had only one year to serve to complete his indenture, and he indicated his intention to leave his employer. On the matter being investigated it was found that relatives in Sydney wanted him to drive a cart. They offered him better wages than he was getting at the time. The employer tried to persuade this young fellow to complete his apprenticeship, and eventually did so. The employer pointed out that if after he had been driving a cart for some years he wanted to change his occupation he would not have a trade to follow. If greater attention is given to the question of technical education, as I have suggested, I think we shall be able to improve greatly the present state of affairs.

Mr. GLOWREY (*Ouyen*).—I am pleased to see that this measure has been brought forward. Although it will not directly benefit folk in the country, it will benefit the nation. It has been long overdue. It is to be deplored that past Governments have permitted the unsatisfactory methods to continue in regard to the education and training of the young men of the State. I fear that the measure may not achieve all those things that honorable members say it is essential to bring about. It is necessary to raise the standard of training. It is to be hoped that the Minister, who has studied the question of apprenticeship, has found a solution for the difficulties surrounding it. The fact cannot be denied that in recent years a wonderful advancement has been made in machinery and other labour-saving devices. Our Australian youths are of a calibre that will compare more than favorably with that of the young people of other countries. They need only the opportunity, and they will excel. This measure will lay an important foundation for the future of our young men. We shall find that they will hold their places in this city and throughout the world. As the Bill is based on the technical education imparted in the schools, I hope that the Minister will do justice to the children in the country. I trust that he will see that facilities for technical education will be taken to the very doors of the country children. Many country children would prove as efficient as those in the city. I hope that the Minister will see that the technical education which is available to the children in the city will also be provided for the country children.

Mr. McADAM (*Ballarat*).—I am pleased to be able to support this measure. I realize that it has been awaited for some time by all sections of the community, who desire to see the lads brought up to useful trades. In the past the employing section has sadly neglected to do justice to the young lads and to teach them trades. The selfish aspect has sometimes prevailed. In some cases where lads have applied to be apprenticed, employers have refused to accept them. It may have been through lack of foresight that they have refused to do their duty to the State and to the industries they control. There have been cases where lads, through their parents, have sought indentures, but the employers have refused to teach them the trades. This Bill will go a long way to relieve that position. It is a measure that will appeal successfully to honorable members on both sides of the House. There are matters of importance that we have to consider. One clause, I notice, gives permission to the Minister to bring the Act into operation

in certain parts of the State by proclamation. I am sorry that the honorable gentleman has not seen fit to include the whole of the State in the measure at once. I do not see why the country lads should not have the same opportunities of becoming artisans as those in the city. I hope that the Bill will be made to apply to all Government enterprises. Where industries are lacking in some provincial towns, I hope that the Government will establish enterprises, so as to give the local lads an opportunity of learning trades that are necessary for the nation. One objectionable clause has been mentioned by the honorable member for Flemington—the one referring to improvers. The measure contains the same definition of "improver" as appears in the Factories and Shops Act. The Apprenticeship Bill has been brought in to defeat what is known as "the improver section" of the trades. The system of improvers has been the curse of young fellows who have been engaged in various industries. When a young lad is taken on as an improver, his parents often think that he is engaged as an apprentice. They do not know the difference between the two terms. An unscrupulous employer will take his full limit of improvers, but will have no apprentices. We also know that there are employers who do not trouble about the welfare of the improvers. Instances have, however, been brought under my notice of employers who have desired to do a fair thing to improvers. I knew an employer to take an interest in a certain lad. He went to trouble to give the boy as much experience as possible, but after two or three years an unscrupulous rival offered the young advanced worker 5s. or 10s. a week extra, so as to induce him to leave. Such a man had a double-barrelled object. He took advantage of the instruction given to the improver by another employer without himself having to teach the boy. Then he used the improver to do work that should have been undertaken by a tradesman. That created cheap labour, and did an injustice to the lad by not affording him opportunities of learning the other divisions of the trade he was engaged in. I have heard of several instances of that kind. It is a most unfair thing for one man to take a lad from an employer who has an interest in his staff. Such an action robs the boy of his chances of learning his trade properly. I should like to bring under the notice of the Minister the sad experiences of the improvers under the Factories and Shops Act. I believe that at least 85 per cent. of the boys and girls in the woollen trade have been improvers. There has not been one apprentice in that trade, I understand. The parents of those young people thought that their children were to learn a trade. Lads were kept on in mills until they were eighteen or nineteen years of age, and then they were dismissed, when other boys of fourteen or fifteen years were taken on. What was the result? During the war period, we had to get other people from abroad to do work that should have been done by our own workers. That state of affairs was brought about, either by the lack of foresight, or the greed of those who directed the woollen trade. Through the lack of apprentices, many positions that should have been filled by Australians have been given to people from abroad. I should like to ask the Minister to amend the clause dealing with improvers. We wish to defeat the present system.

Mr. LEMMON.—It is necessary to define what "an improver" is, because improvers exist in skilled trades that may come under the provisions of this Bill. The clause relating to improvers was a compromise agreed upon at a conference between the manufactuers and the last Apprenticeship Conference.

Mr. McADAM.—Unless we have a better definition of "improver" under this measure we shall have all the trouble that now exists under the Factories and Shops Act. We know that every employer will not take kindly to the Bill. I hope that before the Bill leaves this Chamber the word "improver" will be defined more clearly. The honorable member for Clifton Hill has dealt with the serious position in connexion with the Arbitration Court of the Commonwealth, whose awards override the State legislation. According to the High Court ruling, the Federal law is superior to the State law, but I hope that that fact will not deter us from passing this Bill. While we have to submit to the ruling of the High Court concerning the jurisdiction of the Arbitration Court over State legislation, we should make some provision for representation in the Arbitration Court and for having our apprenticeship system protected, so that it will become part and parcel of any award made by that tribunal. I feel that the Ministry

should bring Government enterprises under the scope of the Bill. I hope that the Bill will be passed by this House and will have a speedy passage in another place and that consideration of it will not be postponed for six months as was done in regard to a similar measure last session. This Bill will prove to the young people of the State that Parliament desires to do something to benefit the future artisans of Victoria.

Mr. **BROWNBILL** (*Geelong*). — I think that a measure dealing with apprenticeship is one of the most important measures that could be placed upon the statute-book in the interests of the rising generation. I remember when a similar measure to that now before us was placed before Parliament by the last Ministry. I was very sorry indeed that that measure, after having passed all stages in this House, was not passed by another place. I really do not know the reasons that were given in that House for what was practically the rejection of that very important Bill. In this State we spend a great amount of money on technical education. Children go from the primary schools to the junior technical schools, and then they may go on to the senior technical schools. After the passage of the Bill, under a proper system of apprenticeship, they will have the opportunity of being trained so that they may become good craftsmen. If we have technically trained young men and young women, not only will they make good craftsmen, but they will make good citizens, and I think that that is what every one of us desires to see brought about. In the interests of the State it is desirable that we should have fully trained artisans. At the great railway workshops at Newport some of the finest rolling stock to be found in the world is manufactured. Visitors to the State, after having travelled on our railways, are always prepared to say that our rolling stock is the best that they have seen anywhere. Our artisans, even at the present time, can hold their own with any artisans throughout the length and breadth of the Commonwealth. For a long time, in the absence of such an Act as I hope this Bill will become, we have been getting along in connexion with apprenticeship in a very slipshod way. I know perfectly well that what the honorable member for Ballarat has stated in regard to the woollen industries is quite true. I can safely claim that a great number of the woollen industries are carried on in my electorate, and, as the honorable member has said, when youths, who have been employed in those industries for several years, reach the age of 20 or 21 years, they have to leave them, other youths being taken on in their places. If there were a proper system of apprenticeship, the youths engaged in the business could be trained, and they would be able to remain in it. As the honorable member for Lowan has said, the Bill is long overdue.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—So long that it is too late.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—Though we may have been contemplating this measure for a considerable time, I believe that even now it will be of great advantage to the young people of this State. After they have been through the technical schools and have been apprenticed, having learned their trades thoroughly, they will make better artisans than we have had in the past. One or two honorable members have referred to the conferences that have been convened from time to time in connexion with the apprenticeship question. I wish to take this opportunity of congratulating the *Age* newspaper on the stand that it has taken in connexion with this very important question. In season and out of season it has been hammering away at the subject, and trying to get this Legislature to pass a Bill such as that which we have before us to-night. At all times that newspaper has urged Parliament to pass a Bill similar to this for the benefit of the young people of the State. In 1907 the Australian Natives Association made a very vital question of apprenticeship. That association, the Trades Hall Council, the Victorian Employers Federation, and other bodies were very keen on getting an Apprenticeship Bill passed by Parliament. The Government of the day convened a Conference to consider the subject of apprenticeship. The Hon. T. Fink was chairman of that Conference, and the other members were Messrs. D. Fallshaw, J. Fisher, junr., W. McNeilage, R. A. Pryor, F. Trellaven, A. Dobson, F. Gibney, C. Harris, A. Long, and J. Munn. The Conference submitted its report on the 17th of July, 1907. The report was unanimous, and it gave satisfaction both to the employers and the employees. The Government of

the day thought such a lot of the report that it carefully tied it up with red tape, put it away in a pigeon-hole, and never looked at it again, with the result that the deliberations of the Conference went by the board. In 1913 there was another agitation in connexion with apprenticeship. The Government of the day found that the Australian Natives Association, the Trades Hall Council, and the Victorian Employers Federation were anxious to have the apprenticeship question settled. As the honorable member for Lowan has stated, if this Bill had been passed in 1913 it would have been of great advantage to the people of Victoria. In view of the agitation on the apprenticeship question, the Government thought it was about time to appoint another Conference. They did so, and the members of that Conference were the Honorable T. Fink (chairman), Messrs. G. Swinburne, M.L.A., M. Hannah, M.L.A., J. Lemmon, M.L.A., R. G. McCutcheon, M.L.A., W McNeilage, R. A. Pryor, A. Dobson, A. Long. W. S. Bushby, and T. J. Harkness. The report of the Conference was dated the 12th of August, 1913. Again, it was a unanimous report. One would think that on getting such a report the Government of the day would at once have prepared a Bill and submitted it to Parliament, but the Government of 1913 followed exactly the same course as the Government of 1907. It carefully put away the report of the Conference and did not look at it again, with the result that nothing came of the deliberations of the Conference. There was still another Conference in 1922. Again the Australian Natives Association, the Trades Hall Council, the Victorian Employers Federation, and many other bodies had been agitating in connexion with the apprenticeship question, so the Government of the day thought it was about time to convene another Conference to do practically the same work as the two previous Conferences had done. The Conference of 1922 was presided over by Mr. D. Avery, and the other members were Messrs. J. Lemmon, M.L.A., F. Groves, M.L.A., G. McKay, R. A. Pryor (succeeded by Mr. J. Martyn), E. J. Holloway, A. Dobson, C. A. Hoadley, F. Tate, D. Clark, and H. M. Murphy. The reports of the Conference were signed on the 28th of April, 1923. There was not a unanimous report, three of the members of the Conference signing a minority report. As I have said, amongst the members of the Conference was the late Mr. A. Dobson, who was secretary of the furniture trade union. I do not think that there was any trade that wanted apprentices more than the furniture trade at that time. The members of the Conference understood the question of apprenticeship from A to Z. As we have been told, the Conference travelled as far as Queensland to take evidence, and went into the whole question in a thorough manner. After the Conference had reported it was three years before the Government of the day brought in a Bill dealing with the subject. That Bill was passed by this House about two years ago. During the debate, many honorable members have commended the Minister of Labour for the great amount of work and study that he has put in in connexion with this measure in order that we may be able to pass legislation that will be of great benefit to the State. I trust that after the Bill goes through this House it will not meet with the same fate as the Bill of two years ago met with in another place. I hope that if it does meet with the same fate as that measure, the present Government will show their mettle, and say to the other House, "We want this Apprenticeship Bill passed. This Bill must go through." I do not think that there will be the same amount of opposition in another place to the Bill now under consideration as there was to the measure of 1925. In the interests of the young people of Victoria, whom it should assist in becoming good citizens, I hope that the Bill will become law. The sooner it is put into operation the better it will be for the benefit of the whole of the State.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time and committed.

Clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to.

Progress was reported.

WAGES ATTACHMENT BILL.

The debate (adjourned from September 15) on the motion of Mr. Slater (Attorney-General) for the second reading of this Bill was resumed.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON (*Hawthorn*).—The Opposition does not offer any objection to the provisions of this measure.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

Mr. SLATER (Attorney-General).—I desire to thank the House for the expeditious manner in which it has passed this measure. Though it is only a small Bill, it will be of much importance to a great many people in the State.

FORESTS BILL.

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

Clause 2, providing, *inter alia*—

(1) Notwithstanding anything in the Land Acts or the Forests Acts, on the joint application of the Minister of Forests and the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Survey after consultation with the Minister or Ministers of the Crown for the time being administering the Mines Department and the Water Supply Department and any other Department or Departments concerned, the Governor in Council by Order made without the special authority of an Act of Parliament other than this Act may within three years after the passing of this Act authorize, in exchange for any unoccupied Crown land described in the Order, the excision of any area of land described in the Order permanently from any reserved forest.

Mr. CAIN (Honorary Minister).—Certain negotiations have been proceeding amongst honorable members with a view to meeting the wishes of some of them in relation to the contentious clauses of this measure. I do not ask the Committee to deal to-night with any clauses which may be regarded as contentious. The honorable member for Gippsland East, who is keenly interested in this measure, because of the enormous forest areas in his electorate, is absent from Melbourne at present with the Railways Standing Committee, and he will not return to the city until to-morrow. I think that honorable members are in accord as to the necessity for clause 2. It provides power for the exchange of forest land for unoccupied Crown lands. It must be recognized that some of the areas vested in the Forests Commission are more suitable for agriculture than for forestry. On the other hand, some of the land which is now under the control of the Lands Department is adapted for forestry purposes. This clause will give power for the Departments to exchange land when it is considered that such exchange will enable the land to be put to better use than at present.

Mr. WETTENHALL (*Lowan*).—I endorse the Honorary Minister's remarks regarding the advisability of facilitating exchanges of land between the Forests Commission and other Departments. I think it is generally recognized that we must retain the whole of our forest areas when such areas are adapted for forestry. In my electorate is an area which is reserved for forest purposes. It is altogether unsuitable for that purpose, but it could be used profitably for wheat-growing. The land has not been divested from the control of the Forests Commission with that object, because an Act of Parliament would be required to sanction the transfer. While there is no desire to reduce our forest areas, there are cases in which advantage will accrue to the State if the public Departments are given power to exchange land on the lines laid down in clause 2.

Mr. FROST (*Maryborough and Daylesford*).—I am in agreement with the clause, but I think the time has arrived when the Mines Department should not be consulted in matters relating to land. As soon as the community awakens to the fact that mining is a thing of the past, the better it will be for the State. Within the last five years the Mines Department has been far more reasonable in its attitude respecting applications for land. For years it was a block to forest and agricultural development. Now, however, it is waiving its objections, in many instances, to applications for land selection. I cannot understand the three-year limitation in this clause.

Mr. CAIN.—In effect, this particular phase of our forests legislation is to be given a three-year trial.

Mr. FROST. — There was a similar limitation in the principal Act, and all the trouble has arisen since that period expired. The two Departments concerned have not been able to exchange land.

Mr. EVERARD. — They have been at daggers drawn.

Mr. FROST.—They have. In three years there may be another amending Bill before the Legislature of the day, and there may be another Government. We do not know what views future Governments and Parliaments may hold. We do not know that there may not be another lapse, after the three-year period has ended, during which the Departments will be at a deadlock again. I see no practical need for this limitation. It

has been said that there is forest land which is fit for agriculture, and that there is Crown land which is fit only for forest purposes. Why must these lands remain unutilized for their best purposes? Should we do anything by Act of Parliament that will tend to prolong the unsatisfactory state of affairs? In the course of my second-reading speech I maintained that there should be a scientific classification of the whole of the land in the State to decide once and for all what should be kept for forest purposes and what should be made available for agriculture. I trust that the Government will proceed with that suggestion. I have pointed out that every acre of land in Denmark is scientifically classified, and that every acre is devoted to the purpose for which nature intended it to be used.

Mr. EVERARD.—But that country is not much bigger than your electorate.

Mr. FROST.—The value of the produce raised from that country per acre is the highest in the world. I move—

That the words "within three years" be omitted.

Mr. CAIN (Honorary Minister).—I hope that the honorable member will not persist with his amendment. There is no legal power at present to warrant the transfer of land. The Forests Commission, after consulting the Lands Department, has decided that there are certain lands under its control which might be utilized successfully for agricultural purposes.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—The Commission has not been always of that opinion.

Mr. CAIN.—I trust that honorable members will concur in that opinion now. There has been great difficulty in the past in getting the community to fall into line sympathetically with the establishment of forestry work generally in this State. A report in to-day's newspapers of a sitting of the Commonwealth Constitution Commission at Canberra quotes extracts from the evidence of Mr. Lane Poole, who is advocating that the whole of the forestry systems of the Commonwealth should be taken out of the hands of the States. The reasons behind this advocacy I leave honorable members to judge. I am not so much concerned with his suggestion, or with his motives, as I am with the reasons that he openly advances. They are to the effect that there is too much local influence on State Parliaments, which has, to a very large extent, retarded the work of the Forests Departments in all the States. In the past there has been, just as there may be in the future, an effort to obtain more than a reasonable proportion of the available land for agricultural purposes. While agriculture is the most important industry of the State, we must not forget the serious outcome of the destruction of our forest areas in the past. During the next three years the two Departments will be prepared to negotiate for the exchange of their lands. This clause does not say that all the forest land may be taken away for agricultural purposes.

Mr. FROST.—That could not be done, because there must be an absolutely equal exchange.

Mr. CAIN.—By no means. The Forests Department may have more land that is capable of cultivation than the Lands Department has land which is most suitable for afforestation, and vice versa. It is not wise that we should legislate in this regard for the future. Parliament can review the matter a few years hence. Our forefathers did not legislate for us in the matter of afforestation. Perhaps it is as well for us that they did not do so. We are entitled to give the two Departments a period of three years in which to make a fair trial of this proposed arrangement for exchange. We are in a much better position to-day to arrive at a judgment concerning forestry matters than was the Parliament that authorized the establishment of the Forests Commission. The Parliament of three years hence may be in a much better position than we are to-day to say whether the power of exchange should be continued or revoked.

Mr. GRAY (*St. Kilda*).—I am totally opposed to this clause. I think it a very dangerous provision, and quite unnecessary in a Forests Bill. It practically revokes the principle of dedicated forests as laid down in the Forests Act of 1915, and it gives Ministers power to excise any land from forest reserves provided that Crown lands are given in exchange. The clause keeps alive the very bad principle of bargaining. In a matter of vital importance to the State, such as the preservation of our forests, we should eliminate the principle of bargaining altogether. We have an example to-day of how not to do things in the bargaining that is going

on between the Lands Department on behalf of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works and the Forests Department, or, at all events, between the Ministers in charge of those two Departments. The clause strikes at the root principle of the permanency of forest areas. If the clause is agreed to, we shall eventually have agitations for the excision of valuable forest areas all over the State. I call to mind the red-gum and box bearing lands of the northern plains, lands which should be dedicated for all time as forest reserves.

Mr. FROST.—The Forests Commission will not part with those lands.

Mr. GRAY.—It is a matter of bargaining—of playing off one area against another.

Mr. FROST.—You are fighting shadows.

Mr. GRAY.—Not at all. If the clause is adopted, my words will prove true, if not in regard to that particular area, at least in regard to many areas of the State. The carbonaceous sandstone areas in the Otway district will be in danger, as will also the valley lands of Gippsland and the valley lands in the North-Eastern district. Wherever good timber grows, the land is of great agricultural value. In my opinion, Commissions and State officials are governed by Ministries. Whatever the policy of the Ministry is, that policy must be carried out. The officials are swayed by Ministerial policies.

Mr. FROST.—You are wrong.

Mr. GRAY.—Well, that is my opinion, and it has been proved to be correct many times in the past. The certificate of the Commission and of the Board of Land and Works is, to my mind, of very doubtful value. It is illusory. As I said before, officials are governed by Ministerial policies. That has been proved effectively in the past, and will be proved effectively on many occasions in the future. The clause is a dangerous one. If forest land is required in the public interests for agricultural purposes, or if agricultural land is required for forest purposes, there is a proper course to pursue, that is, to proceed by a Bill with a schedule attached. The tendency should be not to bargain away, but to increase the forest areas of the State.

Mr. ANGUS.—This provision will not have the effect of decreasing forest areas.

Mr. GRAY.—It may do so to a considerable extent. If it is a matter of bargaining between two Departments, the effect may very well be to decrease the forest areas. The Honorary Minister (Mr. Cain) stated that this was a non-contentious clause. I regard it as a very contentious clause. The honorable gentleman referred to Mr. Lane-Poole, who is a great forester, and who recognizes the fact that there should be no bargaining between two Government Departments.

Mr. EVERARD.—Have you heard Mr. Martin Hannah on the subject?

Mr. GRAY.—I have not heard him.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—You should have been here a few years ago.

Mr. GRAY.—Mr. Lane-Poole states that "forestry and water supply should go hand in hand; both should be controlled by the Forestry Branch." I am very glad that the Honorary Minister referred to Mr. Lane-Poole, because that gentleman is very emphatic in regard to this matter. I oppose the clause because I do not think it is in the interests of the State and the people that we should adopt it.

Mr. FROST.—You will be in a minority.

Mr. GRAY.—I do not care even if I am a minority of one. I oppose the clause because I think it absolutely unnecessary in a Forests Bill.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (*Allandale*).—I am sorry that the Bill was called on in my absence, because, when speaking on the motion for the second reading, I touched upon a matter that was subsequently debated generally by honorable members. I want to let the Committee know that a matter we were unfortunately unable to discuss, a matter that is disturbing the minds of the municipalities throughout the State, the control of timber on roads, has been the subject of a discussion between the Minister in charge of the Bill and a number of honorable members. It is no breach of confidence to say that the meeting which has been held to discuss this very important question has been adjourned until to-morrow, at 7 p.m. After that meeting the Minister will, I think, be able to make an announcement on behalf of his colleagues that will satisfy honorable members in regard to this very debatable question. If we debated that matter now we should be ruled out of order. I am merely conveying information to the Committee. Coming more immediately to the clause that is before the Chair, a

clause on which the honorable member for Maryborough and Daylesford has moved an amendment to strike out the words "within three years," I hope the Committee will support the Government's proposal. I was surprised to hear the honorable member for St. Kilda say that Ministers are dominated entirely by permanent heads. Ministers are not dominated by permanent heads generally, though it is only wise that permanent heads should give advice.

Mr. GRAY.—I did not say that Ministers were dominated by departmental heads. My statement was the other way about.

The CHAIRMAN (**Mr. Solly**).—I quite agree as to the statement that the honorable member for St. Kilda did make. He said that the heads of the Departments were controlled by Ministers of the day, and that was the reason he gave for opposing the clause.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The honorable member for Maryborough and Daylesford suggests that the words "within three years" be struck out. The effect would be to make the provision permanent for all time. The honorable member for St. Kilda goes one better. He says, strike out the whole clause. The effect of that would be to allow matters to remain as they are. I know something of the history of our forest reservations in days gone by. As I tried to explain when speaking on the second reading of the Bill, the Forests Department was really a branch of the Lands Department. It was controlled by the Minister of Lands and his officers. There were certain lands officers who were called forest officers. There was political control. Pressure was brought to bear by members on the Government of the day to throw open for selection areas that were supposed to be reserved as forest areas. What happened was this: Many persons stated that they wanted to select areas—forest areas. They got the areas. They cleared the timber off as quickly as possible and disposed of it to neighbouring towns and, particularly, to neighbouring mines. Then they did not keep their holdings. Those holdings were lost to the Forests Department.

Mr. CAIN.—And they were no use for settlement.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—That is so. The people awakened to the fact that the forests were being denuded. Pressure was then brought to bear on the Government of the day. Forest officers and lands officers made investigations throughout the State. Their investigations occupied three or four years. A Royal Commission, consisting of members of both Houses and both parties, was appointed. They reported to Parliament and recommended that areas suitable for forests should be taken and scheduled. A Bill was brought down to give effect to the recommendation. On the advice of responsible officers, certain areas were scheduled and reserved for forest purposes. They were locked up and tied up. One can readily understand that in work of that kind errors may have been made, that areas suited for forest purposes were set aside for agricultural purposes and vice versa. Ever since there has been an agitation on the part of certain people that areas shut up for forest purposes shall be excised. But there is no power to do that except by an amending Act of Parliament with a schedule. The clause is to overcome that difficulty. The proposal made in the clause offers plenty of protection, because the Ministers of the Departments interested have to concur. The Cabinet as a whole has to concur, and there must be certificates from two permanent bodies before an order for exchange of land can be issued. Sub-clause (2) of clause 2 provides—

> No such Order shall be made unless the Board of Land and Works and the Commission certify that the proposed exchange is desirable in the public interest.

Any one who knows anything of forestry is aware that there are some parts used for forest cultivation that would be better used for agricultural purposes, and vice versa. The responsibility regarding exchange of lands would be placed upon the Ministers directly affected. The Ministers of other Departments, such as the Water Supply Department, will have to be consulted. It is admitted generally that the Forests Commission retains what it has got. I have been present at conferences at which I have heard Mr. McIver, of the Closer Settlement Board, and Mr. Owen Jones, the ex-chairman of the Forests Commission, admit that in their opinion there were areas which could very well be ex-

changed, but that there was a great danger of indiscriminate exchanging. The proposal now, however, is that the Ministers on the advice of two responsible bodies will have to give certificates, and after the matter has been discussed by Cabinet an Order in Council providing for the exchange must be executed within three years of the passing of the measure. Parliament, to which the Ministers are responsible, can criticize, and if there should arise anything in the nature of what has been suggested by the honorable member for St. Kilda, steps could be taken accordingly. My opinion is that the Forests League is not familiar with the workings of Parliament or of the two bodies that are responsible. I appeal to the honorable member for Maryborough and Daylesford to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. FROST (*Maryborough and Daylesford*).—I am sorry that the Minister will not accept the reasonable amendment which I wish to make. The Minister says that the experiment will be for three years, but he knows that that will not be the case. Such a provision was in a previous measure, so by no stretch of imagination can this be called an experiment. The provision operated previously very well until it disappeared by effluxion of time. I hope my amendment will be carried, and then at the end of three, four or five years, if it was found that it was operating harshly, Parliament could pass an amending measure to remedy the defect. I am sorry to oppose the Minister, but I shall insist upon a division being taken upon the amendment.

Mr. ANGUS (*Gunbower*).—I quite approve of the clause, but I think that it would be improved by the amendment. In the company—for a good deal of the time—of the chairman of the Forests Commission and the Director of Land Settlement, I have travelled through the forests of Victoria. I have come to the conclusion that an exchange of land would be in the best interests of both Departments, and if that will hold good for three years it will hold good for all time. If it will prove of advantage to the Forests Department to obtain areas that are needed, particularly areas in the northern country, it might even pay the Lands Department to purchase land and exchange it, so as to make available other land that is suitable for agriculture. There are great areas in Gippsland, as well as in other parts of the State, where railway facilities are not available, and where the timber resources cannot be utilized unless continuous haulage is provided. It is not possible to construct a railway line for timber purposes alone, nor can we get people to go into the forests as workmen without there being reasonable settlement in those areas. Consequently, it would be, in some instances, to the interests of the Forests Department that exchanges should be made. There is at Murrangowar a piece of land that is suitable for agricultural purposes. It is almost adjacent to other land suitable for forests. The same conditions obtain at Tolmie, where there is rich agricultural land which could be utilized if a railway were constructed. At the same time, a great forest would be made available for supplying Melbourne with suitable timber for many years. If a railway were run to the foot of the mountain at Tolmie, the produce from that area on the tableland could be brought down with ease to the railway, and suitable timber in the valley and on the hillside could be hauled to the railway station. Thus there would be a useful combination of developments. We should open up the country for agricultural purposes and at the same time make provision for obtaining timber supplies. There is a vast area of timber that is running to decay every year. We need certain areas planted with suitable softwoods and other timbers. I do not quite agree with the Minister that we should have regard only for the present. We have to provide for posterity if our duty to the State is to be properly carried out. I also regretted to hear him quote from a newspaper report of a statement by Mr. Lane-Poole, an egotist who had the audacity to attempt to dictate to the States what they should do. Mr. Lane-Poole was acting as the schoolmaster, and he would be better advised if he attended to Federal matters.

Mr. CAIN.—The trouble is that he has not any Federal matter to which to attend.

Mr. ANGUS.—Then he should be placed where he would be of use. Returning to the clause and the amendment, I fail to see anything in the contention that the provision would be all right in the hands of the present Government, or any other Government that might be in power

in the next few years, and yet be unsafe for later Governments. I trust that the Minister will reconsider the matter and accept the amendment. As has already been pointed out, necessary steps can be taken to remedy any detrimental effect that might result. I desire to see the State developed by a proper system of forestry, and also from an agricultural stand-point. It would be better in the interests of the State if the Departments could have greater freedom to exchange, not only lands, but ideas if they were to enter into closer co-operation. I would welcome the passing of this Bill with a few amendments. It might, perhaps, be out of order to refer to roads, but I should like to point out that we are dealing particularly with exchanges of land, and the Forests, Lands, and the Water Supply Departments have been mentioned. It would be greatly to the advantage of both the Lands Department and the Forests Department if they worked more in co-operation with the shires.

Mr. FROST.—Instead of bullying them!

Mr. ANGUS.—Instead of working in an antagonistic way. The Departments concerned require the shires to work in co-operation. Better roads are needed for the haulage of timber to the railway stations. If the shires are to work in co-operation with the Departments I cannot see why we should not discuss the advantages that may arise from the Forests Department co-operating with the shires. A reasonable attitude should be adopted so that the views of the Shire Councils can be met. I trust that before the Bill is passed, the Minister will give members an opportunity to fully discuss the clause relating to municipalities.

Mr. HJORTH (*Grant*).—I hope the Minister will not accept the amendment moved by the honorable member for Maryborough and Daylesford. It seems to me that the fact that the Government has included a time limit indicates that there is a doubt in his mind as to what the ultimate result will be. I agree with the honorable member for Gunbower, that it is not the duty of Parliament to pass legislation merely for the present generation. In the matter of forests, at least we should legislate, or attempt to do so, for generations to come. But we are now talking of something the result of which is doubtful, and it would be very foolish for the Government not to place a time limit on the operation of this particular clause.

Mr. FROST.—A time limit has been in operation for some years.

Mr. HJORTH.—If that is so, the experience of the law has not satisfied the Minister that it has been in the best interests of the people of this State to abolish the limit. I hope the honorable member will not persist in this amendment, but will leave the clause as it stands, and will allow the Bill to be passed as speedily as possible.

Mr. McDONALD (*Polwarth*).—I support the clause as it stands. I think it is absolutely necessary to leave it as it is to prevent a deadlock such as has occurred in my district. I represent the greater portion of the Otway forest. I have spoken on this question before, and do not wish to repeat myself unnecessarily, but I want to draw attention to the fact that there is land in my district eminently suitable for cultivation, but the Forests Department will not give it up. As the clause is drafted at present, provision is made for the settlement of the dispute which took place between the Forests Department and the Lands Department in regard to the area I referred to. If the Ministers concerned cannot agree, the matter will be made the subject of Cabinet decision. Sub-clause (2) of clause 2 gives sufficient protection. That sub-clause reads as follows—

> No such orders shall be made unless the Board of Land and Works and the Commissions certify that the proposed exchange is desirable in the public interests.

The land I have been referring to lies between Apollo Bay and Hawdon Vale. The fact that it is not available for settlement is retarding progress in that district. There are a number of returned soldiers who are anxious to settle in that particular locality. They were born in the district and know what the land is capable of producing. The ex-Minister of Lands and the ex-Minister of Forests inspected the area I am alluding to, but owing to the jealousy of the Forests Department, no arrangements could be made for an exchange to enable the particular area to be made available for settlement. The Lands Department has been far more liberal in this respect than the Forests Department. Some time ago the Lands Department

handed over to the Forests Department about 30,000 acres of land in the Anglesea district, where pine trees are growing very well. This land was not suitable for closer settlement. The Forests Department wished to purchase it, but the Lands Department was willing to hand it over free of charge. At the same time the Lands Department wanted to get a similar area of land under the control of the Forests Department which was eminently suitable for settlement, but the Forests Department would not agree to part with it. It is not a matter of bargaining, as the honorable member for St. Kilda suggested. I am rather surprised at the statement that honorable member made. He does not know what took place when Ministers visited the district and attempted to come to an amicable arrangement for the exchange of certain areas. The Lands Department was prepared to hand over three times the area of land it wanted from the Forests Department, but no arrangement has yet been made. The land now controlled by the Forests Department, which is suitable for closer settlement, is timbered with overmatured trees and white ants have got into them. Some time ago millers went into this particular forest, but they soon had to get out, because the timber was of little use. The land is capable of growing root-crops, and is also suitable for the fattening of sheep, and it should be made available for settlement. I do not wish to delay the passage of this Bill, but I agree with the Minister that the clause as it is printed is absolutely necessary. We should retain the three years' limit, and if at the expiration of that period it is found to have worked well, Parliament can extend the time. I understand that that was the idea in putting in the three years' limit.

Mr. BODMAN (*Gippsland South*).—I am in hearty accord with this Bill and with the clause under notice up to a certain point. This Bill is one of the things the State has been requiring for many years. We have the anomalous position of land being reserved for forest purposes which is suitable for agriculture and land which is suitable for agriculture being reserved for forest purposes. All we require is some medium of exchange which will benefit both Departments. The clause now under consideration provides a simple method of exchange. It is hedged round with so many securities that I do not think there is the slightest danger of any harm being done. The Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill has made out a splendid case for retaining the clause as it is printed, and I think he has proved beyond any question that all legislation should be limited to three years.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Would you not extend the life of Parliament beyond that time?

Mr. BODMAN. — That would be a good idea. If we could only extend the life of those who constitute this Parliament it would be better still, but, unfortunately, there is a little cherub who sits up aloft who will not allow that to be done. I want to compliment the Minister on proving that all legislation should be restricted to three years. I think the clause will be improved by the amendment, and I intend to support it.

Mr. McLACHLAN (*Gippsland North*).—I think that the clause is all right, provided that the Minister of Water Supply will be guided by the Forests Commission. That Commission is in a better position to determine what areas should be set aside for forests and what area should be set aside for agricultural purposes than any other authority. Civilization could not be carried on without forests or without some deforestation. It has been the practice for other countries to give more consideration than we have to the need for preserving and extending our forest areas, and areas have even been purchased for that purpose. The Water Supply Department is concerned probably more than any other Department in the activities of our Forests Department. On the preservation of our forests depends our water supply. This State has spent a large amount of money for irrigation, and unless our rivers are properly controlled by preserving the forest layer and the forest floor they will soon disappear. Some have practically disappeared already, through silting up. New South Wales stands out conspicuously as the State which in past years has neglected its forests. In Victoria we have large areas which have no forest cover. The same thing is happening in other parts of the world. We may deal with important subjects in this House, but they are insignificant when compared with the importance of preserving our great natural reserves in forests. I have no objection to giving the Government the power which has now

been asked for. It is a matter of opinion whether it will work out successfully or not. In the north-east part of this State there is a large area of forest country, but about three-quarters of it is under the control of the Lands Department. I would give a large portion of this area to the Forests Department. I would go beyond what is proposed in this Bill, and would say that the whole of the mountain area in the district I refer to should come under the control of the Forests Department. Members of the Forests Commission should know more about forestry than other people, because they have made a study of the matter, and forestry is guided by experts in other parts of the world. We have a striking instance of the neglect in the control of our rivers. A few years ago a flood in the Koo-wee-rup district would take 72 hours before reaching a certain point; now it will take only 22 or 23 hours. While I do not think the Bill goes far enough, it is a step in advance, and I am prepared to stand behind it. I am willing to allow this clause to stand as it is printed, but I am not quite satisfied that it will work as satisfactorily as some anticipate.

Mr. EVERARD (*Evelyn*). — This matter was discussed when a Forests Bill was previously before the House. A conference was held between officers of the Lands Department and of the Forests Department, together with several members, in regard to this particular question. There is no doubt that the clause is necessary because, as the honorable member for Gippsland South has pointed out, there are lands which are not fit for forests which are held by the Forests Commission, and there are lands not fit for settlement under the control of the Lands Department. There are lands held by the Lands Department that should be held by the Forests Department, and should be resumed as forest areas. In regard to the proposed omission of the term of three years, I say that once a matter is agreed to by the officers of the Departments, it should be settled for all time. I believe that the clause will make for an amicable settlement between the Lands Department and the Forests Department. They have been quarrelling in regard to land held by one another, and this clause will help them to agree. If they do not, then the Minister will decide the matter. I agree with the honorable member for Maryborough and Daylesford that the Governor in Council may—

> after the passing of this Act authorize in exchange for any unoccupied Crown land described in the Order, the excision of any area of land described in the Order permanently from any reserved forest.

The honorable member for Gippsland North says that those in charge of the Forests Department are skilled officers. I agree largely with what the honorable member has said. No man is more experienced than he is. Those officers will not allow forest areas to get into the possession of the Lands Department. Once amicable arrangements have been arrived at by these two bodies there should be finality. The officers of these two Departments have not been very friendly, and they nearly wrecked the last Government.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—This does not limit the arrangement to three years. Any arrangements made during three years will not be terminated at the end of that period.

Mr. EVERARD.—We want the thing to be settled. We do not want any dispute between the two Departments. Did we not have this trouble last year? Did we not have a conference night after night to bring two Departments together? When they were about to settle their differences, the Allan-Peacock Government let the Forests Bill drop. I am pleased that the present Government has put in a clause that we wanted. When forest areas are resumed, we want reafforestation. Forest areas should not be neglected after the saw-miller has gone through them. The Forests Department should take up the areas and reafforest properly. It should not try to grow trees on plains that are suitable for cultivation. The Department should replant in forest areas. I congratulate the Honorary Minister on bringing in this provision. We want the thing settled. The matter should not be brought up again in three years' time. The Honorary Minister, who assists the Minister of Forests, considered on behalf of the then Opposition the Forests Bill that was brought in last year by the honorable member for Upper Goulburn. I gave that honorable member credit for persevering with a very bad Bill. Now that the Honorary Minister is really in charge of the measure, he has knocked out many obnoxious

clauses, though he has retained some. I am glad to hear from the honorable member for Allandale that he has made an amicable arrangement with the Honorary Minister under which we shall have an opportunity of voting on the question of the control of timber on roads. Those of us who sit in the corner knew nothing of that arrangement. I am glad that the honorable member for Allandale has caused the Honorary Minister to see the light, and let the House decide this important matter. I trust that once the dispute between the Lands Department and the Forests Department is settled it will be settled for all time. Surely capable officers can determine what purposes certain land is suitable for. I trust that the Ministers concerned will give the departmental officers a chance to settle the matters in dispute between the two branches of the Service.

Progress was reported.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE BUDGET: COMMONWEALTH FINANCIAL AGREEMENT—AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT—DROUGHT CONDITIONS: RELIEF FOR SETTLERS—CHARITY CARNIVALS AND GAMING PROSECUTIONS—SHEEP DIPPING ACT: STOCK-OWNERS PROSECUTED.

Mr. HOGAN (Premier).—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON (*Hawthorn*).—After the dinner adjournment I indicated to the Premier that I should like to ask him a question before the House adjourned. I desire to inquire whether the Government will afford the House an opportunity of discussing the proposed financial agreement with the Commonwealth before it is asked to deal with the Budget? The Budget sets out that it is framed contingent on the financial agreement being adopted by the House. It seems to me that the proper course is to make up our minds about the financial agreement before the Budget is finally dealt with. If the financial agreement is rejected by this House, it naturally follows that the Budget will be set aside. The Premier indicated in the Budget that, if the provisions in the financial agreement were not agreed to, a further sum of £600,000 would be required. The Premier might indicate what is in the minds of the Government if the agreement is set aside. I should also like to ask the Premier whether the Auditor-General's report will be submitted to the House before the Budget is dealt with. When the members of the present Government were on the Opposition side of the House, they were very insistent that they should have the Auditor-General's report.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—But they did not always get it.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON.—I am giving honorable members a little of their own medicine.

Mr. HOGAN.—The Government does not prepare the Auditor-General's report.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON.—The Auditor-General's report has been in the House before the Budget has been discussed.

Mr. SLATER.—I have heard an honorable member say that the Auditor-General is above Parliament.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON.—He is not above answering a reasonable question.

Mr. HOGAN.—It is not our duty to prepare that report.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON.—At any rate, I feel that we should have a statement from the Premier whether he will give us an opportunity to discuss the Commonwealth financial agreement. We have our ideas about that agreement before dealing with the Budget. Otherwise, if the agreement is rejected, all our work on the Budget will go for nothing. It is proper that the House should discuss the agreement before the Budget is debated.

Mr. HOGAN (Premier).—The Leader of the Opposition spoke to me this afternoon concerning the financial agreement with the Commonwealth, and I explained then what I shall explain now. It is the wish of the Government to submit the financial agreement to the House for consideration as soon as practicable. The final consideration of the agreement by our Law Department, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Crown Law Department, is causing delay. I have done everything possible to expedite the work. I hope that it will be finalized in a few days. Until the actual drafting of the agreement is finalized——

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—By the two Governments?

Mr. HOGAN.—By the two Crown Law Departments. I hope that it will be finalized at an early date. As soon as it is, I intend to submit it to Parliament for the consideration of this House, but I am not in a position to say that it will be possible to do that next Tuesday. But before we do anything definite regarding the Budget, the financial agreement will be presented for the consideration of honorable members.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—In other words, you will not press for the first line of the Estimates to be passed until Parliament has considered the financial agreement.

Mr. HOGAN.—That is what I said, but the debate on the Budget can proceed, and in the course of that debate, if any honorable member desires to say anything about the financial agreement he can do so, because, in my Budget speech I stated the view of the Government in regard to it.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.— If we start debating the Budget on Tuesday and the financial agreement is brought on for ratification later, the same debate will take place on two occasions.

Mr. HOGAN.—They are two very big questions, and I suppose they will stand a bit of talking about. I should like to hear what the Leader of the Opposition has to say about the Budget next Tuesday. If other honorable members desire to participate in the Budget debate on that date, I shall welcome their remarks. I may be able to bring the financial agreement on next week. In any event, I promise to bring it on as soon as practicable, and before Parliament has given any decision regarding the Budget itself. I now wish to refer to the other matter that has been mentioned—the presentation of the Auditors-General's report. Honorable members are aware that that document is not prepared by the Government. It is prepared by the Auditor-General, who is independent of the Government, and who does his own work. I am at present unaware as to the stage in which the report now stands, but I shall make inquiries and ascertain whether it is ready, and, if so, whether it can be presented to the House, so that honorable members may give it consideration while they are considering the Budget itself. I should prefer that the Auditor-General's report be made available so that honorable members may consider it while they are considering the Budget. I think that that is a proper thing, and I shall do everything I can to expedite the presentation of the Auditor-General's report.

Mr. OLD (*Swan Hill*).—There is one matter to which I wish to direct the attention of the Minister of Lands. In the north of Victoria, in the western district of New South Wales, and in Queensland, unfortunately a disastrous drought is now spreading over the land. I had an invitation by wire to attend a meeting that was held at Annuello on Sunday. Unfortunately, I received the wire only on Sunday night, when I arrived at my home after the meeting had been held. Consequently, I was unable to attend the meeting, but from a statement sent to me as to what occurred at the meeting, as well as from my own practical knowledge of the conditions in the district, I wish to place the situation as it exists before the Minister. I called at his office to-day to see him, but he was away in the country, and returned only after I had called. Owing to no fault of their own, but purely through adverse weather conditions, hundreds of our settlers are in the unfortunate position of not knowing how they are going to carry on their business at all. To give an indication of the seriousness of the position, I need only state that on Sunday, after going over my own property, I turned my sheep in on 400 acres of crop—well fallowed land that a month ago gave promise of a substantial return. However, owing to adverse weather conditions, it was necessary, if I was going to get any return at all, to turn my sheep in.

Mr. HOGAN.—Where was that?

Mr. OLD.—In New South Wales, about 6 miles from Piangil.

Mr. HOGAN.—Between Piangil and Balranald?

Mr. OLD.—Yes.

Mr. HOGAN.—That is a very dry part, much drier than any part of Victoria.

Mr. OLD.—It certainly is a dry part, but its rainfall is slightly higher than that of the Annuello, Manangatang and Kooloonong districts.

Mr. HOGAN.—Not this year.

Mr. OLD.—Yes, this year. I am speaking with knowledge of the subject. When the Premier understands the seriousness of the position he must be sympathetic with the settlers. They do

not really know what they are going to do after this week. The storekeepers who have been carrying them on in the hope of a good season find themselves financially embarrassed, with the result that they have practically stopped credit. Unfortunately, in some cases, the storekeepers themselves are in serious financial difficulty, and are unable to carry the burden any longer. The settlers do not know where, after this week, they will be able to get even the necessities of life. I appeal to the Premier and the Minister of Lands with all the force I can, to see that a sustenance allowance is made to these people. Members talk about the acute distress amongst the unemployed in Melbourne, and we all know what unemployment means, but I assure the House that the distress in the district to which I have referred is far greater in many instances than it has ever been in the metropolitan area. When we were dealing with the question of fallowing advances, I stated that if the teams of some of the settlers in the north were to be kept alive so that next season the settlers would be able to carry on their work as primary producers, it would be necessary for the Government to make advances to buy fodder, irrespective of the question of security altogether. I am quite sure that fodder is going to be nearly unprocurable. If they have not already done so, I think that the Government should devote their attention to the securing of agistment for the horses of soldier settlers and of civilian settlers too. The civilian settlers are actually in a worse position than the soldier settlers—I refer to those civilian settlers who took up their land within the last five or six years—for the simple reason that the soldier settlers have been able to get advances in many cases up to £2,000, whereas, in the case of the civilian settlers, the advances are limited to £1,000. The civilian settlers are doing the self-same job alongside the soldier settlers. As a matter of fact, some of the civilian settlers are returned soldiers, who did not apply for qualification certificates within the stipulated time. As I have said, the limitation of advances to civilian settlers is £1,000, and owing to adverse circumstances and bad seasons, that limit has been reached, and no further advances can be made. I appeal to the Premier and to the Minister of Lands, who understands the position pretty well, to take immediate steps to see that some provision is made so that there will not be in this land of ours such a thing as settlers unable to procure the necessities of life. I have not had an opportunity of discussing this matter with the honorable member for Ouyen, but I am sure that some of the settlers in his district are in a similar position to those settlers in my district to whom I have referred, although there is not in the honorable member's district the same amount of new settlement as there is in my territory. The honorable member for Mildura has a number of new settlers in his district in a similar condition to those in my district. I can assure the Government that it is not a question of people being in distress in my electorate alone. A vast area of country in connexion with which the Government has big financial responsibilities, and where the settlers have done their best, is affected. The settlers are now up against it, and they are looking to the Government for some assistance. That assistance must be rendered speedily.

Mr. JACKSON (*Prahran*).—There is a matter that I wish to bring under the notice of the Attorney-General, and it is one that affects many other municipalities as well as my own municipality of Prahran. As some honorable members are aware, the mayors of certain municipalities conduct, every year, what is called a Charities Week. All the services rendered are given free. The endeavour is to raise money for local charities. The mayor of Prahran recently held a carnival week for the local charities, and the police were put on the track of some of the workers with the result that a prosecution took place. The man who was prosecuted had nothing whatever to do with the carnival, except that he was working there at the instigation of the Council and the mayor. He is the assistant Town Clerk of Prahran, and a fine was inflicted on him. Thus a stain was put on his character for the rest of his life.

Mr. MCKENZIE.—What was he charged with?

Mr. JACKSON.—Gambling, or some offence of that kind. I understand that they were running a game such as "Diggers' bagatelle," and were under the impression that if they gave chocolates or other goods as prizes they would be within the law. It turned out that that

was unlawful, but that it would have been quite lawful for them to have offered money as prizes. Because of that misunderstanding, one of our finest citizens has the brand of having been convicted of gambling placed on him for the rest of his life. I would ask the Attorney-General whether something cannot be done to remove that stain from this man's character. As I have said, he is Assistant Town Clerk of Prahran. If he applies for the position of Town Clerk of some other municipality on some future occasion, someone may be mean enough to bring up against him the fact that he has been convicted. He may be in a part of Australia where his true character is not known.

Mr. McKENZIE.—If chocolates are given as prizes, the game is unlawful, but if money is given as prizes it is lawful?

Mr. JACKSON.—Yes; because money is not regarded as property. That is the law. Men and women were working day and night in order to raise money for the relief of the various charities in my municipality. I know that the police did not want to take action. They recognized that the object was a worthy one, but some one was mean enough to come along and force them to take action, with the result that the unfortunate man to whom I have referred had a conviction recorded against him. He was doing good, honest, charitable work, but a stain has been put on his character for the rest of his life. I hope the Attorney-General will be able to find a means whereby that stain may be removed.

Mr. ANGUS (*Gunbower*).—I also wish to draw the attention of the Premier to the sad state of affairs that obtains in a great part of Victoria. I quite agree with the honorable member for Swan Hill that the position is becoming desperate amongst some of the comparatively new settlers. I draw attention to the matter, not with the object of creating funk in financial circles, but because I realize that unless something is done the position will be very serious indeed. What was in my mind when I asked that the amount available for fallowing advances should be increased to £100,000 was that it is essential to keep the horses of the settlers in good condition. It is no use allowing them, before relief is given, to get into a starved condition, so that they will be unfit for work. If the Government will wisely expend money at the present time on the construction of irrigation channels, stock and domestic channels, and other works which will increase the wealth of this State, it will enable the horses, which are a means of the farmers' livelihood, to be preserved until after the drought, and thereby much good will be done. There is no use shutting our eyes to the fact that we are in for a very bad time. At least two-thirds of Victoria, nearly the whole of New South Wales, and a great part of Queensland are in a deplorable condition, and we should take the very earliest opportunity of doing something to give relief to our settlers. It will be better to adopt a policy that will add to the wealth of this State than to dole out the necessary funds to keep these men on the land later on. The State has a valuable asset in the Mallee in the farms, but more valuable still is the asset it has in the farmers. It is the duty of any Government to do its utmost to keep those men on their holdings. If we procrastinate in giving relief to those people the good that will ultimately be done by any relief measures will be seriously restricted. I am not a pessimist, but I can foresee a lot of trouble in the near future, unless the Government adopts an energetic relief policy promptly. Even a good rainfall will relieve the position to only a slight extent. It will not bring back the crops which have been ruined. On many farms stock are being turned on to wheat paddocks. At the present time the position is so bad in the Mallee that probably one half of the farmers will not obtain a crop this season. I venture to prophesy that the wheat harvest in Victoria this season will not be anything like 20,000,000 bushels. In the Wimmera good crops will not be obtained even if good rains are obtained in the next few days.

Mr. HOGAN.—How do you know that?

Mr. ANGUS.—I have had many years' experience as a farmer and I know the conditions of farming in the Wimmera. I do not say that the Wimmera farmers will not obtain wheat crops this year, but they will not have the good crops that they have had during recent years. It is just as well to be frank in this matter. There is no chance of the State obtaining a wheat harvest of 50,000,000 bushels this

season. I do not know much about the position in the Goulburn Valley, but I have been informed to-day by farmers from there and the honorable member for Upper Goulburn, who has just returned from that district, that the Goulburn Valley is in a bad way, although the position is not so acute as in the Mallee and other northern districts. In ordinary circumstances the Mallee will withstand prolonged dry conditions with less rainfall better than any other part of the State. But we must not forget that the Mallee has had a dry spell for more than 12 months. There is no moisture in the subsoil and recent frosts have had a bad effect on crops. I stress the necessity of the Government providing relief for the settlers immediately. I believe that if the position is handled promptly and properly the State will not lose any money provided that the money is expended wisely with the object of keeping settlers on the land. The position will have to be faced by the Government in the near future, and the best policy will be to face it at once.

Mr. GLOWREY (*Ouyen*).—I desire to speak on the question that has been raised by the honorable member for Swan Hill. The position is acute in the northern portion of Victoria, and I notified the Ministry to-day of my intention to move for the adjournment of the House to-morrow to discuss this matter.

Mr. OLD.—I was not aware of that.

Mr. GLOWREY.—It is a big question, and it is essential that honorable members who represent the Mallee districts should place before the Government constructive proposals for the relief of the settlers. It is too big a question to be debated at this late hour. I intend to move the adjournment of the House to-morrow in order to enable the whole subject to be discussed.

Mr. WALTER (*Gippsland West*).—At the Newmarket sale-yards to-day stock-owners complained about the activity of the officers of the Department of Agriculture in enforcing the Sheep Dipping Act. Many thousand head of starving sheep are being sent to the sale-yards and are being sold at less than the cost of transporting them there. Nevertheless the departmental officers are prosecuting owners for not complying with the Sheep Dipping Act. The Act should not be enforced so stringently during the present dry spell. In the first place many of the sheep would die in the race after dipping. Secondly, even if they were dipped their condition is so low that they would become infested with vermin. The condition of many sheep is such at the present that they are quickly infested with lice, and dipping will not eradicate the pest. I ask the Minister for Agriculture to steady the hands of his officers while stock owners are passing through a critical period. God knows they are suffering enough at present without being prosecuted by the departmental officers for not dipping their sheep.

Mr. HOGAN (Premier).—In reply to the statements which have been made by the honorable member for Swan Hill and the honorable member for Ouyen regarding the position of wheat growers in the Mallee, I desire to say that I have given this matter some consideration already. Yesterday I received a telegram from the honorable member for Ouyen who attended a meeting of settlers held at Annuello a few days ago. I realize the critical condition of the harvest at the present time, but the whole situation depends on the rainfall during the next two weeks. I do not agree with the pessimistic conclusion that has been voiced by the honorable member for Gunbower. We do not need to make conflicting forecasts as to what will be the wheat harvest of the State this season. That is entirely in the hands of Providence during the next few weeks, and it is premature for any honorable member to forecast what will happen.

Mr. OLD.—If we have 5 inches of rain within the next six weeks over the district between Swan Hill and Ouyen the crops will not produce sufficient wheat for seed next season.

Mr. HOGAN.—I do not agree with that statement. I realize that this has been a dry year. A dry summer was followed by a dry autumn, and the ground has not received the soaking necessary to enable the subsoil to conserve adequate moisture to ensure the bringing of crops to maturity. At the same time I have noticed in past years that often essential rains for crops have been obtained in Victoria in September and October. I am hopeful that Providence will be as good to the State this year as it has been in other years. I met a number of Mallee farmers during the last few days.

I discussed crop prospects with several at Werribee last Friday. These men have large areas under wheat. One gentleman who was formerly in my district and is now farming at Underbool told me that his crop was all right even now. More rain was needed in his district, and if it were obtained he would have a good crop. On Sunday last, a man who was a neighbour of mine for many years at Ballan, and who with his brother bought a farm at Chinkapook in the Mallee, visited my home. He told me that his crop was satisfactory, and that if a reasonable rainfall was obtained in the district this week or next week he would have a good harvest. Those are the statements of men who have large areas of land under wheat, and I attach a great deal of weight to what they told me. We realize that the State is passing through a dry period, but there is no reason for anyone to assume that because it is dry now that condition is going to continue.

Mr. ANGUS.—There is no reason to behave like the ostrich and hide your head in the sand.

Mr. HOGAN.—If in consequence of a bad season farmers are reduced to necessitous circumstances the Government will investigate their position and do whatever is practicable and necessary to assist them.

Mr. MACKRELL.—The position is bad amongst sheep owners. Sheep are selling at 1s. 6d. per head at Newmarket.

Mr. HOGAN.—They probably came from New South Wales. I know that the position in the Western Riverina is bad, but I am aware that the season in the southern and western districts of Victoria is good, and that the rainfall during August over nine-tenths of the State has been up to the average for August.

Mr. ANGUS.—Nonsense.

Mr. HOGAN.—The honorable member has apparently not studied the rainfall chart for August, which was prepared by Mr. Hunt, the Commonwealth Meteorologist. I venture to say that the honorable member has not even seen that chart. It shows that the rainfall over the whole of the State was up to or above the average for August except in the Mallee and a small area near Melbourne. I do not think that any good purpose is to be served by adopting a pessimistic attitude and stating that a drought has gripped the whole of the State. I know that the position is bad in the Balranald district of the Riverina. I have a great deal of sympathy for any farmer who has tilled his farm, planted a crop and will be unable to harvest it, consequently receiving no return for his year's labour. It is a position which deserves the sympathy of everybody, and will receive the sympathy of the Government. No good purpose is served, however, by assuming a pessimistic air and saying "All is lost. There is nothing left but for the Government to save the people from starvation." I trust that Providence will come to our assistance, and that the position will be considerably alleviated. Everything will be all right in Victoria, if we get a considerable rainfall in the course of this or next week. To-night we are asked to give consideration to people in necessitous circumstances, and to see that they are not allowed to be in distress. If there is any man in this community—working man or farmer—who is in necessitous circumstances, the Government will not stand by and see him in difficulties. We will do whatever is necessary and practicable to assist those who are in need.

Mr. OLD.—But will the Government take steps to send an officer to inspect this area? If so, I shall be quite satisfied.

Mr. HOGAN.—The matter will be given consideration.

Mr. SLATER (Attorney-General).—The honorable member for Prahran has raised a question with respect to proceedings taken against the Assistant Town Clerk of Prahran. I regret to inform him that there is no means for the expunging of the conviction that has been secured against the Assistant Town Clerk, for what was, under Section 88 of the Police Offences Act 1915, clearly a breach of the law. Section 88 reads—

> Any person who—
>
> (*a*) establishes or conducts or assists in establishing or conducting or is a partner in any lottery; or
>
> (*b*) under any pretence or by means of any device sells or disposes of or endeavours to sell or dispose of any property of any kind by means of any game either of skill or of chance or of mixed skill and chance:
>
> shall be liable for a first offence to a penalty of not more than Two hundred pounds. . . .

There has arisen an anomaly, in view of the decision of Mr. Justice Mann, with respect to the problem arising out of the game known as "Diggers' bagatelle." In April of this year an order to review the whole question of "Diggers' bagatelle" was determined by Mr. Justice Mann in the Supreme Court. His Honor held that in connexion with this game, where money was given as a prize, and not goods—such as were given by the Assistant Town Clerk of Prahran, who provided chocolates or some other such goods—there was no contravention of the law. If I had the time it might be well for me to read to the House the reasons of Mr. Justice Mann for his decision.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—It seems to be absurd.

Mr. SLATER.—It may so appear, but if I could place the whole position before honorable members, they would agree that the decision was sound, under the law. His Honor was asked to determine the law, and, as the Statute spoke only of property, His Honor was bound to find as he did. The case is reported in *Victorian Law Reports* 1927 (pages 171, 172 and 173). His Honor shows that, according to the minds of the Legislature, it was not intended that "property" should include money. This has led to what everyone will agree is an anomaly as the law stands at present. That is to say, in connexion with this game, if goods are given as prizes, such as the chocolates given by the Assistant Town Clerk of Prahran, the law is contravened; whereas if money is given by way of a prize there is no contravention of the law. That is the position, and, to cure it, an amendment of the law is necessary. It is impossible in the circumstances for any relief to be granted in the case raised by the honorable member for Prahran, although I sympathetically appreciate the position. It is not only anomalous but most undesirable that a person such as the Assistant Town Clerk of one of our cities, after having done what he did in the cause of charity, should be proceeded against and convicted. I suggest that it was merely narrow-mindedness on the part of those people who were instrumental in originating the proceedings. They had no perception of their obligation to the State, or of the rendering of service to charity, when they saw fit to set in motion a proceeding that might well have been left alone in the circumstances. With respect to the question raised by the honorable member for Gippsland West, the Department of Agriculture is very sympathetically administering the Sheep Dipping Act in view of the grave conditions that have arisen. It is not taking the extreme measures that the honorable member has in mind.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.51 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, September 28, 1927.

The PRESIDENT (**Sir Frank Clarke**) took the chair at 4.53 p.m., and read the prayer.

WAGES ATTACHMENT BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly, and, on the motion of the Hon. J. H. DISNEY (Honorary Minister), was read a first time.

ALEXANDRA AVENUE.

REMOVAL OF BOTTLE-NECK.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH asked the Minister of Public Works—

If the Government intend to extend the South Yarra railway bridge southwards so as to permit Alexandra-avenue to be widened at that point, and so remove the existing bottle-neck, which is dangerous to motor traffic?

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—The answer is—

This question is one for the municipality concerned, as the Department is under no obligation to incur expense in providing additional facilities at the location referred to. The Commissioners, however, have been only too willing to co-operate with the council in bettering the conditions at the bridge in any way consistent with the position stated above, and on three occasions—in November, 1917; January, 1919; and September, 1919—the Department has, at the request of the Prahran City Council, made available at a peppercorn rental, certain small areas of railway land abutting on the roadway in order to assist the council to improve the turn under the railway bridge.

MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN BOARD OF WORKS.

WERRIBEE SEWAGE FARM: DISPOSAL OF FILTH.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—By leave, may I say that on the motion for the adjournment of the House a fortnight ago, Mr. Hitchcock debated a question relating to the Werribee sewage farm? I promised him that I would bring his speech under the notice of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, with a request that they should answer the statements that he then made. I did so, and have received the following letter:—

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 20th instant enclosing extract from *Hansard*, of the 13th idem, regarding the statement of the Hon. H. Hitchcock in reference to the Metropolitan Farm, at Werribee. I am instructed by the chairman to inform you that a reply will be sent in due course, after the matter has received consideration by the farm committee of the Board.

Yours obediently,
GEO. A. GIBBS, Secretary.

The Private Secretary to
The Hon. the Minister of Public Works
and Mines, Melbourne.

I rang them up, and told them that I should like to receive the Board's reply in time for yesterday's meeting of the Council. They repeated that they could not furnish a reply until the Farm Committee of the Board had met. I mention the matter now because Mr. Hitchcock was anxious to obtain a statement from the Board, and I hope, in due course, to make that statement available.

POISONS BILL.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Public Health).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This is a measure to amend the Poisons Acts, and for other purposes. Time and experience have proved that it is very necessary indeed that our Poisons Acts shall be drastically amended in certain directions. The Bill, which contains 45 clauses, is a measure for consideration in Committee. I shall, therefore, confine myself, in moving the second reading, to an explanation of the main principles of the Bill, which is divided into four parts. Part 1 deals with the sale and use of cyanide of potassium. The second part deals with methylated spirit. The third part relates to narcotic drugs, and the fourth contains amendments of the Poisons Acts generally. The question of restricting the sale of cyanide of potassium has been considered by various Governments from time to time, but extraordinary difficulties have been experienced in drafting provisions that will cope with the undoubted evil which does exist in the unrestricted sale and use of this particular poison. Four or five years ago a deputation was introduced to the then Government by the honorable member for Rodney. Members of the deputation protested against the unrestricted sale of potassium, and they gave instances of the losses that they were incurring. The use of cyanide of potassium not only causes losses in stock, but it destroys the fauna of this State. From that time, up till the present, newspapers have recorded many instances of valuable stock having been destroyed by the placing of baits of cyanide of potassium promiscuously in various districts. The sale of cyanide of potassium is practically unrestricted at the present time. As a matter of fact, it is just as easy to purchase cyanide of potassium at stores of various kinds, as it is to buy a pound of sugar in a grocer's shop. A little while ago the Health Department sent out an officer to buy potassium. He went to a shop in Melbourne and asked for 2 lb. of this poison. It was supplied to him without question. It was wrapped up in a piece of brown paper, and the inspector took it away with him. Members of this House, representing country districts, know that such a state of affairs should not be allowed to continue any longer. At the present time it is exceedingly difficult to deal with people who are getting opossums by the use of this poison. People visit certain localities in motor cars in the early hours of the evening, lay their baits, and at daylight the next morning follow up the tracks of the previous night. Where the baits have been successful they take the bodies of the opossums, put them into the car, and are off to another district before any warning can be given as to their pernicious practices. At the end of 1923, a deputation from the Victorian Farmers Union urged the Government to take action to restrict the sale of cyanide of potassium. Several speakers referred to the losses which had been sustained

through stock being poisoned as the result of poisoned baits laid for opossums. The following details were given:—

At Seymour land-holders throughout the district are losing a large number of horses, sheep, and cattle through being poisoned by cyanide. Parties in motor cars pay periodical visits to the farms, and lay the poison mixed with pollard at the foot of trees for the purpose of catching opossums (which are protected the whole year). Last week Mr. McNally lost a fat bullock, and previously 30 sheep. Messrs. Gerrard Brothers had a large number of sheep poisoned, and valuable horses have also met their deaths from the same source. The matter was brought before the Seymour Agricultural Society, and that body has asked the members for the district to introduce drastic legislation, making the offence punishable by imprisonment without the option of a fine.

Honorable members may recollect that Mr. Russell Clarke asked questions in this House, some years ago, regarding the sale and use of cyanide of potassium, and urged the Government to take action to stop its unrestricted sale. The Game Act was amended, and imprisonment was the penalty provided for poisoning native game by the use of this poison. That particular amendment of the law, although actively enforced wherever possible, has so far proved ineffective to stop the evil, and it is necessary that further steps should be taken to make the position more satisfactory. Ample provision is made in this Bill for the purchase of this poison for legitimate purposes, but I am sure honorable members will agree with me that not only for the protection of stock in the country, but also for the protection of native game, everything should be done to put down this illegal practice. As I have indicated, Part 1 of the Bill places further restrictions upon the purchase and use of this poison. It may be urged that the remedies are somewhat drastic, but honorable members will realize that desperate cases require desperate remedies. The police are greatly handicapped in their efforts to detect illicit poisoning, and the Pharmacy Board of Victoria has no power, under the present Acts, beyond insisting upon a proper record of sales being kept by the vendor. With so many loopholes in the law, the penal provisions are of little value in curbing the activities of those engaged in the business of opossum poisoning. Clause 5 provides that the present authorized vendors of poison may continue to sell cyanide of potassium without any further licence. It is provided that where that substance is required for mining purposes a licence will be necessary. By clause 6 wholesale dealers in poison are prohibited from selling cyanide of potassium except to authorized sellers. Under the provisions of the Bill, vermin-killers containing cyanide and cyanide for photographic purposes will only be able to be legally sold retail by authorized sellers.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—What position will electroplaters be in?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—When the Bill is being considered in Committee I shall be able to go into details, but just at the present time I am outlining the main provisions of the Bill. If members are able to point out then that the provisions are likely to have a harmful effect upon any section of the community, I will not object to any amendment, providing the intention of the Bill can be given effect to. Clause 7 follows the Queensland law on the subject, and requires the purchaser to obtain a permit from the police or some other prescribed person that he is a fit and proper person to be permitted to purchase cyanide. This is a new provision, and in the opinion of the Board will be a most valuable safeguard. Clause 8 provides for the issue of licences to persons using cyanide for mining purposes, and in the succeeding clause the penalty for certain offences under the Act is fixed as not to exceed £100 or imprisonment for not more than six months. Clause 10 gives the police power to enter premises and inspect books and stocks and detain vehicles. This is one of the most important clauses in the Bill, and without it the Act would be almost useless. When the police suspect that poison is in the possession of people for illegal purposes, they will be able—armed with a warrant, of course—to make all the inquiries that are necessary, and I think this provision will put the terror of the law into the hearts of people who are at present making such ravages amongst our fauna and domestic stock by the use of poisoned baits to catch opossums. Clause 11 deals with the improper laying of cyanide baits, and provides as a penalty imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months. By clause 13 power is given to the Governor in Council to make regulations, and it is provided that the Minister of Mines

must approve of any regulations dealing with cyanide to be used for mining purposes. The second part of this Bill refers to the sale of methylated spirit. Honorable members know that in the past the authorities have been faced with a serious problem in dealing with the methylated spirit drinker. People are in the habit of drinking methylated spirit when other drink is not available to them. A suggestion was made that methylated spirit should be included in the fourth schedule of the Poisons Act, and it was also suggested that something should be put into the spirit to make it unpalatable or unfit for drinking purposes. We propose to give the Governor in Council power to make regulations specifying the requirements to be complied with by a person selling or disposing of methylated spirit. In 1923 considerable prominence was given to the number of persons brought before the courts who habitually indulged in the drinking of methylated spirit. I do not propose to read all the reports which were obtained, but the following précis will be interesting:—

During 1924, there were several cases before the Courts, and comments appeared in the press:—

Sun, of 26th July, 1924, reported a case at Prahran Court.

Argus, of 28th and 29th July, 1924, urged that legislation should be enacted as suggested by Pharmaceutical Society.

Herald, of 29th July, 1924, also urged this course.

Herald, of 10th July, 1924, reported methyl addicts as receiving daily treatment at Melbourne Hospital.

Age, of 11th July, 1924, reported Love, secretary Charities Board, as stating that many of the inmates of the benevolent asylums were addicts to this revolting habit.

Age, of 9th August, 1924, reported a case of methylated spirits drinker making a violent assault on his wife whilst under the influence.

Age, of 7th October, 1924, reported the case of a woman habitually drunk through this cause.

Age, of 21st August, 1924.—Coroner's inquiry *re* death of woman through alcoholic coma and methylated spirits poisoning.

Sun, Argus, and *Herald,* of 17th November, 1924, report Mr. Wade, M.P., as urging the restriction of the sale of this spirit when dealing with a number of men and women suffering from the effects of drinking this spirit.

Herald, of 12th August, 1924, reports appeal by Salvation Army member at Collingwood for control to be exercised over the sale of the spirit.

There are numbers of reports of this particular nature. From my own observation and experience as a magistrate, I have found that the drinking of methylated spirit is much more common than it was formerly. The practice has been for addicts to obtain, say, sixpenny-worth of methylated spirit, which would contain sufficient alcohol, probably, to intoxicate four or five persons. This is mixed with some aerated water, such as ginger beer, to make the draught at least, to some extent, palatable. Such mixing, however, does not really have the desired effect. Yet, the victims of methylated spirit drinking are not deterred. There are numbers of derelicts that have to be protected against themselves. In many cases the police go into the parks, where they find men and women, in the winter of their lives, lying out in all weathers in a state of semi-consciousness. They cannot afford to buy ordinary alcoholic drinks, and they are the victims of methylated spirit drinking. Repeated attempts have been made to make the spirit unpalatable by mixing it with common wood spirit, such as wood naphtha, but they do not appear to have been sucessful. No matter how nauseous the spirit is made, these addicts continue to obtain and drink it. It is agreed by all those who make a study of sociology—such as welfare officers and Salvation Army people—and who are acquainted with these degraded and unfortunate people, through their philanthropic association with the police courts, that something must be done to alter the present state of affairs. There is one remarkable clause in the Bill, which says that no person shall drink methylated spirit. That sounds like the eleventh Commandment, but its form does not embody any new principle. The same phraseology is employed in connexion with the prohibition of the smoking of opium. We may lock up these down-and-outs, and we may charge them with such offences as that of vagrancy or of being drunk and disorderly, but if we remove the facilities for their obtaining the methylated spirit we do them and the State good service.

The Hon. A. E. CHANDLER.—Opium is not placed in the way of people who are addicted to it, yet they obtain supplies.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—That is true, but methylated spirit is obtainable without much difficulty when hotels are closed—or perhaps I should say, when they are supposed to be closed. It is not difficult to purchase methylated spirit on Sundays, and sometimes people will

drink this stuff, which they can procure without much trouble, when they cannot purchase ordinary alcoholic drinks. My notes on this Bill state that for several years various authorities and social workers connected with public institutions have been pressing for the enactment of restrictive legislation designed to place obstacles in the way of persons drinking methylated spirit. Endeavours were made to discover some methylating substance which, when added to spirit, would either cause persons drinking it to vomit, or would render the spirit so highly poisonous that life would be endangered. None of these efforts have been successful. Pyridine is used at present as a methylating substance, and this is a poison; but unless taken in large quantities it does not cause death. Methylated spirit drinkers generally mix the spirit with aerated waters. Supplies are obtained, after the hotels are closed, from small confectionery shops, brothels, and other surreptitious trading sources. The various clauses explain themselves. Clause 21 gives power to make regulations providing for the legitimate supply of the spirit. Sales by wholesale are exempted, and also sales by retail in quantities exceeding 1 quart. The sole intention of this portion of the Bill is to prohibit the supply of methylated spirit for illegitimate purposes. By bringing methylated spirit under the Poisons Acts the following provisions will apply to its sale:—

(1) It can only be sold by persons holding licences or authorities. Doctors, chemists, and storekeepers, grocers and ironmongers, &c., holding licences to sell phenyle, ammonia, spirits of salts, &c., may sell without any further licence or payment of any additional fees.

(2) The container must be labelled poison, together with the name and address of the seller.

(3) Special bottles or tins, as prescribed by present regulations, must be used.

Hereafter, when the police find persons in possession of this spirit they will be able to ascertain the source from which it was obtained. The third part of the Bill relates to narcotic drugs, and it is a most important part. Victoria is bound by the League of Nations Opium Convention to deal with the sale and distribution of narcotic drugs. The Poisons Act 1920 and the Dangerous Drugs Regulations made under that Act, provide the necessary machinery for regulating the sale of these habit-forming drugs. New resolutions have since been agreed upon by the International Opium Convention, and the British Parliament recently amended the original Dangerous Drugs Act. These additional requirements have been included in the present Bill, which will bring Victorian legislation into line with similar laws in operation elsewhere. As a matter of fact, at the second of the conferences held at Geneva, on the 19th of February, 1925, a protocol was signed by the representative of Australia, and the Commonwealth Government has asked all the States to bring the provisions of their Poisons Acts, dealing with narcotic drugs, into line with the international provision. Clause 23 of this Bill adopts the new definitions contained in the last League of Nations Opium Convention report. Part IV. of the Bill, containing general provisions, is very technical, but it follows established practice elsewhere. The State, in duty bound, should endeavour to keep its legislation dealing with narcotic drugs up to date. This, the Bill effectively does. Every possible obstacle that experience finds to be necessary should be placed in the way of illicit traffickers in narcotic habit-forming drugs. Clause 29 makes the exposing or offering for sale of any poison an offence under the Act. Clause 30 is a technical clause, defining "corresponding law." It is adapted from the British Dangerous Drugs Act 1925. Clause 31 takes arsenical fly papers out of the exemption clause. Dr. Robertson, permanent head of the Health Department, has on several occasions asked that these arsenical fly poisons should be brought under the general provisions of Part I. of the Poisons Act 1915. Arsenic is a very dangerous poison, and is specially dealt with in Great Britain by the Arsenic Act. We know that at times people make use of these poisonous fly papers in sufficient quantities and in such a way as to enable them to shuffle off this mortal coil. Clause 35 gives to the Pharmacy Board of Victoria power to require antidotes to be printed on labels of packages containing poison. This is a new provision, and it is one of the most important in the Bill. There are many cases, to give an example, in which a child has obtained access to a bottle of poison. The little one has taken some of the contents of the bottle, and its mother has been distracted to know what to do, under the urgent pressure of the moment, to save the life of the child. I

do not think that I need to impress on honorable members the obvious value of having the antidote actually printed on the label of the bottle of poison itself. Clause 37 is another new provision. After considerable trouble the Board has secured the general use of what are known as "regulation poison bottles" as containers of certain poisons, particularly phenyle. That was done, so that a person would recognize that a particularly shaped bottle would contain poison. We know that many lives have been lost by the promiscuous placing of dangerous poisons and drugs in ordinary medicine bottles. As I have said, in order to prevent that, the Board provided for what are known as "regulation poison bottles," but it is now found, unfortunately, that some manufacturers are using similarly shaped bottles as containers of medicines for internal use. I cannot understand their reason for doing that. It must be recognized by every honorable member that that is a practice that will have to be stopped at once, because if it is continued, the protection of the provision requiring a specially shaped container for poisons will be entirely done away with. This practice is likely to lead to serious accidents, and should be prohibited. The clause is designed to prevent this improper practice before it becomes too extended. Clause 38 is in the direction of tightening up the principal Act by making it an offence for persons to leave poisons and poisonous substances about unlabelled. We have known many cases where people have gone to cupboards or other domestic receptacles, and have taken out a powder or something else that they expected to be innocuous, but which was poisonous. There are a number of careless people in the world, and in some cases poisons have been placed promiscuously with food substances, for which they could easily be mistaken. It will be an offence to indulge in this practice.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—The clause provides that the vendor has to put a label on a poisonous substances.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The clause goes further than that. It provides that a person in possession of poison must not allow it to remain about unlabelled. He must not shift it from one package to another, or from one container to another, without putting a poison label on the substance.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Would that apply to a householder?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I should say so. The clause refers to "every person." I think it should apply to every householder, but that is a point that we can look into when the Bill is in Committee.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—If a label were washed off a bottle, there would be an offence.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The mere washing of a poison label off a bottle would not be an offence, but it would be an offence not to replace that label or re-label the bottle. Surely in the interests of the lives of innocent people any one who washes a poison label off a bottle containing poison should at least put on another label marked "Poison." Clause 41 rectifies an accidental omission in the Poisons Act 1925 with respect to the extension of the sections relating to opium. The remaining clauses are all machinery clauses, which can be explained in Committee. I can commend this measure to the House with every degree of confidence. Honorable members representing country interests will recognize the necessity for the provisions so far as cyanide of potassium is concerned. We have in this chamber experts in the subject with which the measure deals. For instance, there is Dr. Harris, upon whom, no doubt, I shall be able to call for any little assistance I require in the way of a technical explanation when the measure is in Committee. I have much pleasure in submitting the Bill to the House.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I agree with the Minister that the Bill is largely a Committee Bill, and I must confess that I know very little about it, because, although for the last few days we have been inundated with Bills, for some reason or other, this Poisons Bill has not been administered to me. I find that there is one very drastic clause—clause 11. On glancing at it, I observe that the penalty for an offence under it is imprisonment, without even the option of a fine. That, at first blush, does appear to make the punishment out of all proportion to the offence. There may be certain circumstances which would mitigate the offence, and make it more proper to impose a fine than to sentence the offender to imprisonment, as would have to be done under the clause as drafted. It was

pointed out by Mr. Smith, who has had a good deal of experience in business in connexion with the sale of cyanide of potassium, that that substance is largely used in the trades of jewellers, electro-platers, gilders, and so on, for which trades no exemptions are provided in the Bill. As far as I can see from the measure, at first blush it would appear to be an offence to sell cyanide of potassium to any of the persons engaged in those trades. Of course, it was never intended that that should be so, and I think that there should be some exemption of such trades. Further, it would seem that persons requiring cyanide of potassium, even for the legitimate object of trade, would be under the obligation to fulfil all the requirements set out in clause 7. A sale to a trader could only be made to him if he was the holder of a permit for the purchase of cyanide of potassium for mining purposes—

> unless the purchaser produces to the vendor a certificate in the prescribed form and containing the prescribed particulars and signed by—
>
> (*a*) member of the Police Force in charge of the police station nearest to the place of sale; and
>
> (*b*) such other person (if any) as is prescribed—
>
> that the purchaser is a fit and proper person to be permitted to purchase cyanide of potassium.

I do not suppose it was ever intended for one moment that a small jeweller in the city, requiring cyanide of potassium for the purposes of his business, should be called upon to go through all that procedure. It seems to me that the clause ought to be amended so as to provide that traders will not be harassed in that way. Of course, the main purpose of the measure, as we know, is to protect animal life in the country.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I think that that is all the clause refers to. It deals only with the Game Acts.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Clause 7 says nothing about the Game Acts.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I thought you were referring to clause 11.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Clause 7 is perfectly general. It has relation to the sale of cyanide of potassium, and provides that certain permits shall be obtained. It would serve no purpose to make it obligatory for jewellers who require a small quantity of cyanide of potassium for legitimate purposes to go to all the trouble and expense that would be involved in complying with the conditions of the clause.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—A man would require to go to a lot of trouble to buy any other dangerous poison. I admit that the clause is drastic.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—The honorable gentleman can make it as drastic as he likes for the purpose of protecting animal life or human life, and every one will agree, but to ask a man who requires cyanide of potassium for legitimate use in his trade to go to all this trouble, and to waste valuable time, is asking more than is reasonable. The Minister is a reasonable man, and I should like to ask him to see if there is any exemption in the measure of the trades to which I have referred. I notice a gentleman sitting behind the Minister who seems to have some familiarity with the subject.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Mr. Butcher will give me every assistance.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Perhaps the Minister can tell me if there is any exemption that does protect traders in the way I have indicated. If there is, it may obviate the necessity of my asking for the postponement of certain clauses.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—The permit appears to apply only to the sale of cyanide of potassium for mining purposes.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—The clause provides that cyanide of potassium may be sold to a person who is the holder of a permit to purchase it for mining purposes, but that it shall not be sold to a person who is not the holder of such a permit, except under certain restrictions. I want to prevent every small trader in the community being restricted in the way set out in the clause when it is absolutely unnecessary that he should be so restricted. If the Minister can point out any provision that does protect the small trader in the way I desire, it will, of course, shorten the discussion very much.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—In the first place, I wish to congratulate the Ministry on having introduced the Bill. I think there is a necessity for such a measure, and, from the Minister's remarks, I am quite sure that he is with us in desiring to protect traders as well as the public. I did not hear the whole of what the unofficial Leader had to say, but probably

he referred to the smaller traders who use cyanide of potassium in their businesses. I have had a lot to do with cyanides—cyanide of potassium, cyanide of silver, cyanide of lead, and so on—which are used in the electro-plating, the oxidizing, and the gilding trades. Every jeweller in the suburbs and the country—in the country particularly—has a little gilding bath, and he uses generally 1 lb. of cyanide to a gallon of solution. They are mixed together, and anything that has to be gilded is dipped in. In the electro-plating trade, the copper trade, and the gilding trade, in which very large baths are employed, from 1 lb. to 100 lb. of cyanide may be required at a time. I used to sell a lot of cyanide, and it was always our custom to mark it "Poison." I had a young employee once who sent out some cyanide in tins without labelling them "Poison." The goods were sent to a leading firm, and I made a great fuss about the matter. I may say that we used to sell cyanide all over Victoria, and there were other firms also selling it. I have sold as much as 20 tons in a year. Sometimes I would sell it in 1-lb. tins, and sometimes in 1 cwt. cases. We cannot prevent the traders to whom I have referred obtaining cyanide. If the mining people are allowed to do so, we must allow the wholesale jeweller and the electro-plater to do so as well. Cyanide is used for various purposes. Sometimes it is called cyanide of potassium, and sometimes it is called cyanide of sodium. There are copper, silver, brass, zinc, and other cyanides. All these salts are made with the cyanide inside them. How are the traders to be protected? I think we had better consult the people who use cyanide. The traders have to be protected as well as the public. Cyanide is used by probably 3,000 or 4,000 traders in Victoria. I had a large number of purchasers on my books. I feel that the Minister wishes to be reasonable, and to protect the traders as well as the public. I think that it would be well to adjourn the consideration of the Bill, perhaps when it gets in the Committee stage. I should then have an opportunity to consult representatives of various trades on some of the points raised.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I shall be prepared to postpone the particular clauses requiring amendment.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—If the honorable gentleman promises to postpone those requiring amendment, I think that will do.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—We shall postpone the clauses that relate to cyanide.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH. — It is of the greatest importance that something should be done to protect the trade. If the trade representatives are reasonable, I am sure that the Government will treat them in a fair manner.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—I ask for the adjournment of the debate. Copies of the Bill were not sent to us. The first that we saw of it was when copies were distributed in the House this afternoon. It is an important measure, and consists of many clauses. I do not understand the Bill at present, and I should like to read it through. I do not think that it contains anything to which I shall object, but, nevertheless, I think we should not pass a Bill like this without giving people outside the House and members an opportunity of studying it. I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Hon. A. BELL.—I support the request of Dr. Harris. There are a number of mining companies that use cyanide for the recovery of gold. This is the first time that I have seen the Bill, which is a very important one, and I should like an opportunity to consult interested people regarding it.

The Hon. A. E. CHANDLER.—I support the motion for the adjournment. Certain clauses will apply to sprays of all descriptions, including those for noxious weeds and fruit. It is just as well not to harass the industries concerned too much. The passing of the Bill will mean that arsenate of lead and bluestone as supplied to orchardists will have to be labelled as being poisonous. These matters need looking into.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Public Health).—I think that the request for an adjournment is eminently reasonable. This is an important Bill. Recognizing that the copies of the measure have only just been placed in the hands of honorable members, I agree to the postponement of the debate until next Tuesday.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—By leave, may I say that I think that the debate should be adjourned for a fortnight at least? That will allow honorable members and the people interested in the measure to have an opportunity of studying it. Honorable members should have an opportunity of consulting those people before the debate is continued. If copies of the Bill had been distributed a fortnight ago, we should have had an opportunity of seeing what it contained, and of consulting our constituents.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—You know that would have been an impossibility.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—I know that, but I am not now asking for an impossibility when I suggest an adjournment for a fortnight.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—What about adjourning the debate until the next day of meeting, with the right of proposing a further adjournment if necessary?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—If we can get through the second reading stage next Tuesday, there then could be a further postponement if it were thought necessary.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, October 4.

ALTONA RAILWAY BILL.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This is a small Bill to ratify an agreement that was entered into on the 29th of March, 1926, by Mr. Allan, the ex-Premier, and the Altona Beach Estate Company in regard to a line, called the Altona railway. Under a former agreement, made between the company and the Victorian Railways Commissioners in 1917, the latter undertook to operate the railway on the condition that the company would guarantee to pay any deficiency between the revenue and the cost of operating. In 1924, the company notified the Commissioners, and also the residents of Altona, that it would not be responsible for any further deficiency that might occur. This view was adopted by the Government of the day, and by the successive Government, on behalf of which the then Premier made the agreement with the company in 1926. Representations were made to the then Ministry that the Railway Department should take over the line; that it would be seriously detrimental to the district if the railway were abandoned; that, with a properly conducted service, especially under electrified conditions, there would be substantial development in the district, which would convert the line into a paying proposition; and that if the line were so taken over, the Altona Beach Estates Company would be enabled to raise the money necessary to pay the Commissioners the amount of £7,289 owing by the company to the Commissioners under the agreement referred to in 1917. The agreement for which ratification is now required provides for the payment in suitable instalments of the amount owing by the company to the Commissioners, and for the surrender to the Government of:—(*a*) the railway and its appurtenances; (*b*) the land upon which the railway is constructed, down to a depth of 50 feet; (*c*) other lands, the property of the company, which may hereafter be required for an extension of the railway or for purposes incidental to the working of the railway. The agreement contains safeguards in regard to the title to the land affected, and also in regard to any mining operations conducted by the company. It is provided in the agreement that the Railways Commissioners will continue to operate the railway as part of the Melbourne suburban system, and that, if within ten years they cease to so operate it, the railway property and lands are to be re-transferred to the company. Provision is also made for the electrification of the line with all reasonable despatch. As a matter of fact, the electrification has taken place. Clause 7 relieves the Commissioners of any obligation to fence the railway, or to erect gates or employ gatekeepers, and of any liability for damage caused by the absence of gates, gatekeepers, or fencing. A clause of this nature is always inserted in railway construction Bills. I think that this is a Bill that the House can readily accept, particularly as it merely ratifies an agreement which was entered into over a year ago, and has been in operation ever since. The railway has been taken over by the Commissioners, and has been running since the date of the agreement.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I have read the Bill, and have heard the remarks of the Minister. I see no reason why the measure should not be passed.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

PETROL PUMPS BILL.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Forests).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The introduction of this measure has been rendered necessary by the development of the motor industry. Honorable members are well aware that during recent years the means of distributing supplies of petrol to motor-owners have undergone a radical change. Some years ago it was necessary for motor-owners to purchase petrol in tins, and convey it in that form to their garages. During recent years, however, the American method of supplying petrol from an underground storage tank to motor vehicles by means of a pump at the street kerb has been introduced. This method has led to some municipal councils in Victoria irregularly adopting the system of charging licence-fees for what are known as kerb petrol pumps. The placing of an obstruction on the footpath of a street is an offence against the Police Offences Act, but the sections in that statute relating to obstructions on footways could only be put into force by the municipal councils which exercise control over the footways. Therefore, the councils by allowing obstructions in the form of petrol pumps to be placed on the footpaths on payment of a fee have really winked the other eye at the provisions of the Police Offences Act, which have relation to obstructions on footways. The municipal councils have found that they have been charging fees illegally for petrol pumps, and in order to safeguard their legal position and to carry out the provisions of the law relating to the safe storage of petrol, they have decided almost unanimously in favour of the introduction of this legislation. The object of the Bill is to authorize and provide power to any municipal council to license petrol pumps on the footway of any highway within its municipal district. I have not gone to the trouble of obtaining a census of the number of petrol pumps established in the streets of the metropolis, but I venture to guess that there are between 2,000 or 3,000 pumps in operation at the present time.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—Are you referring to petrol pumps on private land?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I am referring to those pumps which have been placed on the footpaths with the permission of the municipal councils. I understand that there are about 80 pumps in the streets of one municipality. How many there are in the City of Melbourne alone I do not know.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Does this Bill relate to pumps on private land at service stations?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I am referring at present only to those pumps placed on footpaths, or as they are more commonly known, kerbstone petrol pumps. I shall refer later to those established on private land by service companies.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—May I point out that this is another Bill which was not placed in the hands of honorable members until the Minister rose to speak.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I am sure that honorable members will realize that it would be irregular for this Bill to have been circulated before the motion for the second reading. I have respect for the practice of Parliament, and I consider it would have been an impertinence to have circulated the Bill before the second reading was called on.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I know of dozens of Bills which have been circulated before the second-reading motion.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I consider that Parliament should conserve its rights in this respect, and honorable members should be the first to see a Bill after its introduction. No Bill should be circulated before the second reading is moved.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I was not precisely correct in my interjection. I should have said that I know of many Bills which have been circulated before the second reading has been taken in this House.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—That applies when a Bill is introduced in another place. This Bill has been initiated in this House. Therefore, the unofficial Leader agrees with my view.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—That is so in respect of Bills initiated in this House.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Under the law at present municipal councils have no power to authorize the erection of petrol pumps in the streets or to charge licence-fees for their use. This Bill will empower the councils to do those things, and it will put the whole position on a proper legal footing. There is no doubt that legislation of this kind is essential for the safety of the public and the municipal councils, and is urgently required. It is universally recognized that from the point of view of public safety the adoption of the petrol pump system in which the petrol is stored in underground tanks is preferable to the conveyance of petrol in open containers or tins across footpaths and along streets. It should, therefore, be encouraged. The modern method of distribution by pumps obviates the need for the storage of petrol in tins in private garages under conditions which may not be safe. This aspect has been stressed by the fire brigade authorities. Under the modern system petrol is stored underground in special tanks, and is therefore not so dangerous as it was under the old conditions under which tins of petrol were left open in garages, and the escape of vapour caused loss of petrol, damage to vehicles in the garages, and sometimes damage to the buildings themselves. I shall now explain the clauses. Sub-clause (2) of clause 1 provides that the Act shall come into operation on a day to be fixed by proclamation of the Governor in Council. This procedure will permit of regulations being drafted prior to the coming into operation of the Act. Under clause 3 power is given to municipal councils to license pumps in, on, or under any footway in any highway, and used by the licensee for the sale or supply of motor spirit. Clause 4 provides that a licence shall not be granted for any petrol pump which in the opinion of the council will obstruct a thoroughfare, or will not comply with any regulations made by the Governor in Council under the provisions of clause 7. Clause 5 relates to the period of the licences. All licences shall continue in operation until the 31st December after the granting or renewal of the licence. The clause makes provision for a broken term. If a person desires to install a pump in the middle of the year he will pay the licence-fee for only six months. Quotas will be fixed for monthly payments according to the time when the licence is taken out. All licences will be due on a specified date, and this provision will obviate a great deal of bookkeeping and clerical work in the municipal offices.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—The end of December is the most awkward time in the year to fix for the renewal of licences.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I think it is reasonable to assume that when the owners of petrol pumps know that their licences will expire on the 31st of December they will take good care to renew them during December. The owners being business men will naturally assume that as the municipal offices are closed during the Christmas holidays, it will be necessary for them to renew their licences before the holidays.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—But many people go out of town before the Christmas holidays.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—If the 31st of December is specified in the measure for the renewal of licences the holders of the licences will have that date fixed in their minds, and they will take steps to renew their licences before that date.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Would there be any objection to the 30th of June being fixed as the date?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I think there would be on the part of the councils. The object of fixing the last day of the year is to allow the councils to obtain the fees at a period of the year when they are not receiving rate revenue. Municipal rates are due on or before the 10th of June, and after that date the council's funds are in credit for some months. In the latter part of the year, however, the councils usually work on overdraft. Therefore, if the revenue from petrol pump licences is obtained in December—and it will be a considerable source of revenue for some councils—they will receive that money at a time when it is necessary that they should obtain every penny they can for the purpose of reducing their overdrafts.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Would it not be better to stipulate that the licence-

fees should be paid in June at the same time as municipal rates are due?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I do not think so. I consider that the practice adopted by the Melbourne City Council should be extended, and the payment of rates allowed in two moieties at different times in the year. I think that the garage proprietors would prefer to pay their licence-fees for petrol pumps at a different time from that at which they are accustomed to pay their municipal rates. However, that is a matter which can be dealt with when the Bill is in Committee. Clause 6 empowers councils to make by-laws with the approval of the Governor in Council for the administration of this measure. The councils will have power to make regulations for the placing, fixing, and maintaining of petrol pumps; the granting, renewal, and transfer of licences and applications therefor; licences and conditions to be contained in licences; prescribing fees for the granting, renewal, and transfer of licences. The fees will be for the granting or renewal of a licence not less than £2 2s., and not more than £10 10s.; for the transfer of a licence not more than 10s. Provision is made for a proportionate reduction of fees payable in respect of licences granted for any number of months less than twelve months. The clause provides for insurance by licensees against liabilities which may be incurred in respect of petrol pumps. This is considered a necessary provision, and a safeguard to the public in the event of accidents. The possibility is that this Bill, if it becomes law, will not bring in more fees to a municipal council than are at present received, but it regularizes their receipt of fees, which to-day is somewhat questionable.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—What right have they to collect fees?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Only the inherent right of the municipality, which pays for the upkeep of footpaths, to have a certain control over what is placed on those footpaths. It may be said that municipalities have somewhat stretched the powers conferred upon them by the Local Government Act, but they had to meet the situation as it arose. I think the fee charged was quite a legitimate one. Certainly a person who requires to use for the purpose of trade a portion of a public thoroughfare, which is for the convenience of the public, should pay some small fee.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—What does Fitzroy charge?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Either two guineas or three guineas. The measure provides a range of two guineas to ten guineas. After all, the minimum amount is a very small sum for any vendor to pay for twelve months' licence to use a portion of a footpath for the purpose of trade. In regard to the maximum fee, as is well known, there are certain favorite spots. There may be a case in which some one wants a kerbstone petrol pump in a prominent position. There may be also a similar requirement in a back street, where the amount of trade derived would be considerably less. Those are the reasons for the range of two guineas to ten guineas. Mr. Smith asked a question which was very pertinent, and that was—Who is to receive the fees for licences? We know that at times there might be impecunious Treasurers who would say, "Here is a big source of revenue. We will go fifty-fifty with the municipal councils in connexion with it." The present Government, and members of Parliament generally, recognize that with the passage of years, more and more obligations have been thrown upon municipalities—obligations which have sometimes been foreign to the duties for which they were originally responsible. Therefore it has been wisely considered that the whole of the fees should go to the municipalities. Clause 7 is one of the most important in the whole of the Bill. Honorable members will find that it extends the provisions of section 11 of the Local Government Act 1921. It gives power to the Governor in Council to make regulations with regard to the construction and repair of petrol pumps, tanks, apparatus, pipes, and appliances for the supply of motor spirit to petrol pumps, and prescribing the classes or types of petrol pumps in respect of which licences may be granted. Under this provision certain classes of petrol pumps could be embodied in the regulations as meeting the requirements of the Governor in Council without regard to their form of construction. If honorable members turn to the Local Government Act they will find that it gives power to the Governor in Council to make

regulations in regard to the storage of petrol. Since the time when that power was given, a new factor has come on to the scene—the motor service stations. There is no power at present to provide effective means to inspect and regulate the existing pumps and apparatus for the storage of petrol. A clause has been inserted in the Bill, not to charge any fees in this connexion, but to carry out the intention of Parliament when it amended the Act in 1921—before the service stations came into existence. Under the Bill power is given to the Governor in Council to make certain regulations in the interests of public safety.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Will the provisions apply, not only in respect of a public footpath, but in respect of land away from a footpath but owned by a service station?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Clause 7 covers all pumps and other apparatus not erected on the public footpath. The amendment of the Local Government Act to which I have referred gives power to the Governor in Council to make regulations in regard to the storage of petrol. Now, there are service stations in existence, and it is felt advisable that there should be some inspection of the various apparatus attached to those stations, and of petrol stored privately or otherwise.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Will people who have their own service tanks come under the measure?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Undoubtedly.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I presume that no fees will be charged for inspection.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—That is so. No fee will be payable to either a municipality or the Government. Clause 8 provides that where any petrol pump causes, or is likely to cause, undue obstruction, or is likely to become dangerous, a council may require the licensee at his own expense to remove the petrol pump, and may if it thinks fit cancel the licence. It must be recognized that it may be necessary as circumstances change to give councils power in that respect, in the interest of public safety and convenience. Clause 9 deals with the prohibition of petrol pumps, except on footways, and provides that any person who erects or retains any petrol pump or any portion of a highway, except the footway, or any petrol pump on a footway, unless he is the holder of a licence, shall be guilty of an offence against the Act. Clause 10 refers to specific types of tanks used for the supply of petrol to petrol pumps. Clause 11 deals with the penalties that may be imposed. I think that I have given the general principles of this small measure, and some idea of the intention embodied in it.

The PRESIDENT (Sir Frank Clarke).—The Minister, when introducing the Bill, explained—in answer to the unofficial Leader—that it would have been improper to circulate the Bill before the second reading. I think that those were the words he used. Sir Erskine May on that subject says that after the first reading a Bill is ordered to be printed, so that its contents may be published and distributed to every member before the second reading. It has always been my view that, once a Bill has passed the first reading, it becomes the property of the House. It is quite true that it has grown to be almost a custom in the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, though not of this House, for Ministers frequently to withhold their Bills from circulation until they make their second-reading speeches. I think that it ought to be recognized by honorable members that, where a Minister has a good reason for withholding a Bill before his second-reading speech is delivered, he should be allowed to do so, but undoubtedly the practice of the House of Commons is to circulate Bills after their first readings have been passed. I think that the rule that a Bill becomes the property of the House after its first reading ought to be retained.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It has not been customary here.

The PRESIDENT.—It may not be customary in the Assembly, but I repeat that I should not like honorable members to lose any of their rights.

(At 6.25 p.m. the sitting was suspended until 7.52 p.m.)

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I propose to ask that the debate on the second reading of this Bill be adjourned. The Minister told us that it was a little Bill. The size of it, however, is no indication of its importance. I think that in all these cases where, whether by custom or

otherwise, a Bill has not been circulated amongst members prior to the second reading, an opportunity ought to be afforded a Chamber such as this, which is supposed to be a check upon hasty legislation, to give proper consideration to the measure. Speaking for myself, I do not feel justified in discussing a Bill which I have not read. The Minister went to a lot of pains to explain it. But that does not give us the grasp of the Bill that we should have before we give it our blessing. I notice, for example, in clause 6 a provision that fees up to £10 10s. may be prescribed in respect of each of these petrol pumps. Now, the Minister has told us that there are more than 2,000 of these pumps in the metropolis, which means, or may mean, and probably will mean, because the municipalities will put their heads together, and all charge the same fees, that a levy of £20,000 or more is going to be made upon metropolitan motorists.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I would point out that the Melbourne City Council is the only council that charges an excessive rate.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I hold no brief for motorists. I am not a motorist myself. But we have to protect the interests of the community. The thing that appeals to me is this: the Bill has not yet been circulated. The general public—the persons most interested—have had no opportunity of presenting their side of the case. And even if every man in this House agreed with the Bill, I do not think it ought to be passed until such time as the persons who are interested, or may be interested, in opposing the Bill, have had an opportunity of presenting their case. That is a fair proposition, with which the Minister will, I think, agree. When the Bill has been broadcast, and the people who disagree with it, if there be any such, have had their opportunity to oppose it, we can safely deal with it.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—May I suggest that if other honorable members desire to speak on the second reading, they be allowed to do so? I shall then be only too willing to postpone the further consideration of the Bill.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I think I am voicing the feelings of honorable members generally when I ask that further consideration of the second reading be postponed. One of my functions as unofficial Leader is to criticize the construction of Bills placed before this Chamber. I do not feel equal to the occasion tonight, not having read the Bill. There is the other very important consideration—that no Bill should be dealt with by any legislature which the public who are interested in it have had no opportunity of criticizing. For that reason I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Forests).—By leave, may I remark that it is my desire on all occasions to consult the wishes and convenience of honorable members. I realize that in initiating legislation it is necessary for every honorable member to be made acquainted with the contents of the Bill. Therefore, the request made by the unofficial Leader is a reasonable one, and I have no objection to the debate being adjourned.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, October 4.

INSTRUMENTS BILL.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This is a short measure to amend the law relating to bills of sale. The purpose of the Bill is to provide a simpler and less expensive method of giving notice of intention to file a bill of sale. As is probably well known, a bill of sale, to be effective and valid at law, must be filed in the office of the Registrar-General within 31 days of its execution by the parties. In order that creditors of the grantor of a bill may have an opportunity to caveat against the filing of the bill, notice of intention to file the bill in the form provided by Part VI. of the Instruments Act 1915 must be lodged at least fourteen days before the last day on which the bill can be filed. The notice of intention is advertised in the trade circulars, and within the period allowed before the filing of the bill caveats may be lodged. The Registrar-General may not file the bill whilst a caveat remains in force. A notice of intention under the present provisions of the Instruments Act 1915 is a somewhat lengthy and tedious document to prepare, and must necessarily contain many of the particulars set out in the bill of sale itself. This Bill, therefore, provides for the bill of sale to

be lodged, not filed, with the Registrar-General at such a time that it may itself denote an intention to file the bill of sale, and may, in fact, constitute notice of such intention. This object is sought to be attained by repeal of the existing provisions in the Instruments Act 1915 for lodgment of notice of intention, and the insertion in lieu thereof of provisions that the particulars now required by law to be disclosed in a notice of intention must be set out in the bill of sale. In order that the revenue may not suffer, the Bill provides that the fee, 1s., at present required on notice of intention shall be paid on the lodging of the bill of sale, while the usual fee, 3s. 6d., is payable on the filing of the bill. The measure is one that can be accepted by this House. It comes from another place, and, as indicated in the statement I have just made, is a measure that makes for greater simplicity in respect of the handling of important documents that are used very largely for security purposes. I understand that the Bill has been considered by that very useful institution, the Law Institute of Victoria. In fact, I understand that the Law Institute is the principal sponsor of the Bill. It appears to be a measure that will make for greater simplicity, and I have no doubt decrease legal costs associated with documents of this kind.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Until a short time ago I had no doubt about the desirability of making the provisions set out in this Bill, which, I believe, have the sanction of the Law Institute. After I had read it I saw no difficulty whatever in regard to the proposals contained in it, but this evening Mr. Richardson has placed in my hands an objection which has been raised by members of the Law Institute practising in Geelong. It is suggested that a certain ambiguity or uncertainty exists in the principal Act, and will still exist when that Act is amended by this Bill. The suggestion is that the opportunity ought to be taken now to remove all doubt which exists and not perpetuate it. I have not had the chance of considering the suggestions made in a letter which Mr. Richardson has handed to me, but I am prepared to agree to the Bill going into Committee if the Minister will give me an opportunity subsequently of further considering the matter should occasion arise. It may be that when I look into it I will see that the difficulty does not exist, but I hope the Minister will agree to the Bill being recommitted if necessary.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—The point to which the unofficial Leader has referred comes from the Solicitors' Association in Geelong. Members of the legal profession practising there recognize that the Bill is a good one, as it will simplify the law in connexion with bills of sale. I do not think the amendment suggested is in any way vital to the Bill, but it will simplify the law. The unofficial Leader is able to deal with this matter more effectively than I can. I am not a lawyer.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and committed.

Clauses 1 and 2 were agreed to.

Clause 3—

> For section one hundred and thirty-two of the principal Act there shall be substituted the following section :—
>
> "132. No bill of sale lodged as hereinbefore provided shall be filed before the expiration of fourteen days from the date of lodging the same or after the expiration of thirty days from the said date."

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—It is in this clause that it is suggested that an alteration should be made. It is proposed that the words "or after the expiration of thirty days from the said date" should be omitted. In the few moments at my disposal I have not had the opportunity of seeing how this amendment would affect the law. It is suggested, however, that the amendment would simplify the law, and remove a doubt which is said to exist now. I suggest that if the Minister prefers the Bill to go right through Committee now he should give me a promise to have the measure recommitted if necessary. If, after consideration, I find that there is nothing in the point raised, I will inform the Minister, and the Bill need not then be recommitted.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Is it proposed to place no time within which a bill must be filed?

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—That is not the idea. It is suggested that the matter is sufficiently provided for in another section.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—If there is no provision that a bill should be filed within a certain date, the holder of a bill might find himself in an awkward position.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I do not think that is the proposal.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I will read an extract from the letter sent to Mr. Richardson. It is as follows:—

> Suggest that the old apparent inconsistency between sections 128 and 132 of the principal Act be now removed.
>
> Section 128 requires a bill of sale to be filed within 31 days after the making or giving such bill of sale.
>
> Section 132 implies that a bill may be filed up to 30 days from the lodging of the notice of intention, and the proposed new section 132 still leaves that implication, substituting only the lodging of the bill for the lodging of the notice.
>
> Why not omit from the new section 132 all the words after the words "the same:"?

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—With regard to the procedure to be adopted, it would be more simple to report progress, and to continue the consideration in Committee of this clause on the next day of meeting. I have not studied the Bill, but I may point out that if we amend clause 3 it may be necessary to amend some item in the schedule, which will be dealt with after all the clauses have been passed. What the unofficial Leader suggests, however, is quite in order.

The Hon. W. TYNER.—I regret that I was out of the House when the Minister explained the provisions of the Bill. It is an important measure, and I have been wondering if it takes away any of the rights of people who desire to lodge caveats. Business people should be assured that their rights and privileges in this respect will not be interfered with.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—I can give the honorable member that assurance.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Instead of notice of intention to file a caveat, the bill itself will be lodged in the office for fourteen days. That will simplify the proceedings.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I am willing to adopt the course suggested by the unofficial Leader of the House, and I shall be glad if he will let me have the letter to which he has referred. If an amendment is to be moved to carry out what is desired, it would, in the ordinary course of events, be printed, and I would then have the opportunity of submitting it to the Attorney-General for his consideration.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I will give the honorable gentleman a copy of the amendment it is desired to make.

Progress was reported.

MILK BOARD BILL.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Public Health).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

I look upon this Bill as one of the most important measures of the session. There has been a lot of agitation and controversy in relation to the supply of milk to the metropolitan area in recent years. I do not propose at this juncture to cover all the ground which it was found necessary to cover when the Bill was in another place. I propose to confine my remarks to the provisions of the Bill itself, and to the Acts already in existence dealing with this question. I may say in passing, that in another place this Bill met with general approval, and with the exception of one clause, relating to the constitution of the board, the whole of the provisions and the various stages of the Bill were agreed to on the voices. I must admit that there was considerable debate upon every clause. Honorable members know that for some years past the business of milk production and distribution has been most unsatisfactory, principally on account of the great disparity between the price received by the dairy farmer for milk supplied to the metropolitan area, and the charge of the retail distributor to the consumer. The difference between the two prices at certain periods of the year is as much as 200 per cent. I want honorable members to bear in mind the important fact that the Bill relates only to the supply of milk to the metropolitan area. The situation which, as I have indicated, has existed for some time, has been stressed by various deputations which have waited upon Ministers with a request that the supply and distribution of milk should be placed upon a much better basis than it is at present. It has been authoritatively stated that the price received by dairy farmers for milk supplied to the metropolis varies from 7d. per gallon in the flush of the year to 1s. 4d. per gallon in the winter, averaging approximately 11d. per gallon the year round, out of which freight has to be paid by the dairy-farmer, and that the price charged to the consumer for this milk is out of all proportion to that paid to the producer. Examples quoted showed that at a certain period of the year producers received 9½d. per gallon,

whereas the consumers paid 7d. per quart —equal to 2s. 4d. per gallon. We find that the control of the milk supply at present is governed by the Dairy Supervision Act, which deals principally with the licensing of dairy farms and dairies, also with the sanitation of dairy premises and equipment and the health of the dairy herds. Following on this, there is also the Milk Supply Act, which is read as one with the Dairy Supervision Act, and which makes better provision for the supply and distribution of milk to the metropolitan area, such provision being for the cooling, treatment, and bottling of milk. This Act also provides for the establishment of grades of milk according to bacterial content, and sets out the temperature above which milk may not be sold to the consumer. Regulations have been drafted by the Milk Supply Committee appointed under that Act recommending the grades of milk to be adopted. These regulations provide for higher grades and, consequently, a higher standard of purity than that at present in force. Inasmuch, however, as the Government fears that the dairy-farmer who supplied the highest grade of milk specified would not receive a better price for such milk than the dairy-farmer who supplied a lower grade, it is considered necessary that legislative provision should be made to secure a minimum price according to grade of milk supplied by a dairy-farmer. If such provision were made, it is claimed that the progressive dairy-farmer would receive the necessary inducement to modernize his plant and equipment and improve his herd and his method of handling the milk so as to supply the desirable higher grades of milk. The present Bill has, therefore, been devised to provide for the appointment of a Board, which will report to the Governor in Council what should be from time to time the minimum price to be paid to the dairy-farmer supplying milk to the metropolis, and the maximum difference between such price and that charged by the retailer to the consumer. The Board for this purpose will comprise—

(*a*) Two persons representing the owners of dairy farms from which milk is supplied directly or indirectly to the metropolis.
(*b*) One person being a retail distributor of milk representing the dairymen.
(*c*) One person representing the consumers.
(*d*) An independent person who shall be chairman.

The representatives of dairy-farmers will be elected by owners of dairy-farms licensed under the Dairy Supervision Act, the remaining representatives on the Board being appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister. I may say here that this Board —representing, as it will, all sections directly interested in the production and consumption of milk—will act merely in an advisory capacity. I agree with honorable members, who appear to be commenting, that this is somewhat in the nature of experimental legislation, but there will be judicious safeguards. It will be for the Ministry of the day to decide whether it will or will not accept the recommendations of the Board. There is this further important consideration, that if it is found that the operations of the Board have not been satisfactory, either to the producer or to the consumer, whatever order has been made by the Governor in Council, following upon a recommendation, may be revoked. Thus, no harm will have been done to any one. We have in this Bill an attempt—it may not be a scientific attempt—to secure to a class of people who are the most sweated in the whole community something approximating to a reasonable standard of living. Any one who knows anything of the conditions under which a dairy-farmer and his family have to toil from the beginning to the end of the year must be sympathetic with any effort in the direction of giving to the farmer a more adequate return for his labour. As it is, his toil, and that of his wife and their children, bring him scarcely the equivalent of the basic wage. If, therefore, this legislation is in the nature of an experiment, it is at least an honest attempt to provide relief for a gravely underpaid section of the community.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—Is the Government sure that the dairy-farmers of the State desire to be given this method of relief?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It is the responsibility of Mr. Goudie to represent to the best of his knowledge and ability the dairy-farmers among his constituents. If those dairy-farmers do not require this measure of relief, it is for him to take the responsibility of throwing out the Bill. It is the duty of this Government, as of any Government worthy of the name, to place legislation before Parliament for its approval. Members of Parliament have to take the responsibility

of saying yea or nay. There has been no attempt on the part of this Government, or of any other Government, to force legislation on the community.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—I am merely making inquiries. I desire to obtain information respecting certain provisions in the clauses themselves.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I propose to deal presently with the provisions of the clauses, one after another.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—If the information were provided now, it might have a bearing on the carrying of the motion for the second reading.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I undertake presently to give Mr. Goudie all the information at my disposal with respect to the individual clauses. I was referring to the election of the representatives of dairy-farmers on the Board. Special provision for the election of the dairy-farmers' representatives is made on account of the large numbers of individual producers of milk for the metropolitan area, whereas in the case of the retailers' and consumers' representatives there are organizations in existence which would be requested to submit nominees from whom candidates would be recommended by the Minister to the Governor in Council for appointment.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—What organization represents the consumers?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Parliament! The Bill further provides that the Board, before recommending what should be the minimum rate payable to owners of dairy farms, shall take into consideration the cost of production of milk on an average dairy farm and allow for the basic wage for those engaged in the industry, as well as for interest at the rate of 6 per cent. on the capital invested. The Board is also empowered to take into consideration variations in the supply of milk available during different seasons of the year. Provision is also made for the Board to make any inquiry it deems necessary for the purpose of submitting its recommendations relative to the prices for milk, and to take evidence thereon. A further provision is that the Board shall, when required by the Minister, inquire into any matters affecting the production and distribution of milk and report thereon. An exhaustive examination can be made of all the circumstances, so that when the Board has arrived at a decision, and has advised the Minister, he will be thoroughly satisfied that that decision is wise.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Who is the Minister in control of our milk supply?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT. — The Attorney-General and Minister of Agriculture.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—He is a good man.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I am glad to hear that, even though he is a member of the legal profession. With regard to the minimum rate per gallon to be paid to the dairy-farmer for milk, and the maximum difference between that and the price charged by the retailer to the consumer, the Board will have no power other than that of reporting what should be the respective prices. It rests with the Governor in Council to declare, by order published in the *Government Gazette*, what these prices should be. I think that should subdue the qualms that may be in the minds of honorable members who object to legislation of this character. After all, the Act will be only permissive. The Board will be only advisory in its activities. The responsibility for putting the provisions of the Act into operation will rest with the Government of the day, which will be responsible to the whole of the people.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—The Act would never be put into operation during the régime of certain Governments.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I should not like to say that. This is not a party measure. The Government to-day, whatever may be its politics, should introduce legislation tending to this end, for the needs of the case have become so urgent. As a matter of fact, I think that the Allan-Peacock Government contemplated a measure very similar to this.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—But not to go in for price fixing.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I want to be fair, and no less than fair, to the late Government, and to do it the justice it deserves. A penalty is provided in the Bill for any person carrying on the business of a dairyman, or dealing in or treating milk, or buying and forwarding milk to a dairyman, paying the producer of the milk a price lower than the declared rate. I do not think that there is any member of this Chamber who would object to such a provision as that. I cannot imagine that any man would desire to sweat the men engaged in what is, by its natural conditions to-day, the most sweated industry in

the community. If there were such a man, and he did seek to sweat the producer, he should be subject to a penalty. Legislation to that end should have been passed long ago. No proceedings can be taken under the Bill, however, for an offence of this kind without the consent of the Minister.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—It is really a milk and water proposal?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I shall leave it to the honorable member to deal with the question of water later on. I am dealing with the milk supply only. I object, and the consumers object, to the introduction of water into milk. Power is given in the Bill for the inspection of the books and accounts relating to the retail supply of milk. The declared rate—that is the rate payable to the producer—and the declared difference between that rate and the price to be paid by the consumer are to operate from the commencement of the Act, notwithstanding any contract relating thereto which may be in force at the commencement of the Act, or afterwards. That is so that no unfortunate dairy farmer in the clutch, possibly, of some financial power, will be able to contract himself out of the provisions of the Bill, which are specially devised for his protection. I have said all I desire to say as to the general intention of the Bill. As I said I would do at the outset, I have purposely avoided dealing with any subject apart from the measure itself, because the questions of milk supply, the fixing of prices, the provision of wholesome milk, and all that sort of thing, are so big that I am afraid that if I were to depart from the subject-matter of the measure, instead of finishing up in a quarter of an hour, as I expect to do, I should be speaking for the rest of the sitting. Clause 1 is the citation of the measure, and clause 2 is the interpretation clause, which defines the meaning of the terms dairy, dairy farm, dairyman, grade, the area in which the Bill operates, and so on. Clause 3 provides for the appointment of the Milk Board. The selection of the representatives of owners of dairy farms is to be by ballot on the preferential system of voting. Any three members of the Board will form a quorum, and power is given to the Board to regulate its own proceedings. Provision is made for the payment of fees and travelling expenses for attendance at meetings. The fees of ordinary members are not to exceed £90 in any one year. In the case of the chairman the amount is £120. The tenure of office of members is to be two years. If at any time a representative on the Board of the dairy-farmers ceases to hold a licence under the Dairy Supervision Act he will cease to be a member of the Board. The Governor in Council will have power to fill any vacancies. Clause 4 provides for the appointment of a secretary to the Board, and for making available the services of the officers of the Department of Agriculture to assist the Board in its deliberations.

The Hon. A. E. CHANDLER.—What salary is the secretary to get?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I presume the salary of the secretary will be fixed at the first meeting of the Board, when it defines exactly what his duties shall be.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—You are going to set up quite a new department.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Not at all. The measure will be administered in the Department of Agriculture, and I think it will be found, when I go further into the provisions of the Bill, that the Milk Board will be practically self-supporting. Even if it were not so, if we can only settle the vexed question of securing justice to the producer—after all, that is the idea I have in my mind, and it is the idea behind the Bill—and it costs us £1,000 a year, it will be money well spent indeed, as any man will admit who has ever had anything to do with dairy-farming. Clause 5 defines the duties of the Board with regard to reporting to the Governor in Council what should be the minimum rate per gallon payable for milk supplied by dairy-farmers to dairymen carrying on business in the metropolis, and the maximum difference between such rate and the retail selling price in the metropolis. The Board is to take into consideration the cost of production of milk on the average dairy farm, such cost to provide for the basic wage for those engaged in the industry, and 6 per cent. interest on capital invested. Clause 7 provides for a penalty where milk is purchased from dairy farmers for retail distribution in the metropolis at less than the declared rate.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Does the producer as well as the buyer pay a penalty?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—If the honorable member possesses himself in patience for one moment, he will see. A similar penalty is provided for if any dairyman sells or offers to sell at a higher rate than the sum of the declared rate and declared difference. Proceedings are not to be instituted without the Minister's consent.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—There is too much of "the Minister."

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—If, in Committee, the honorable member, or any other honorable member, can suggest any other way of dealing with this problem, and at the same time of securing the results we desire, his suggestion will be cordially received. Clause 8 empowers any officer of the Department of Agriculture, authorized by the Minister, to require any purchaser of milk for re-sale in the metropolitan area to furnish information as to whom he purchased the milk from and the price charged or paid therefor, and to produce for inspection invoices, agreements, or receipts, books, accounts, &c. Dairymen may also be required to produce books and accounts relating to the retail sales of milk. The penalty for failing to comply with this provision is not to exceed £20. Every one will realize that this is a very necessary machinery clause.

The Hon. Dr. HARRIS.—What is it going to cost the country to administer this measure?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I shall go into that matter in Committee. Clause 9 makes it an offence to aid or abet the commission of an offence under the measure. Such provisions apply when two or more persons are responsible for the same offence, and similar liability exists in the case of a corporation. Clause 10 provides for the declared rate and declared difference in regard to the price of milk to take effect notwithstanding the existence of any contracts in force.

The Hon. A. E. CHANDLER.—Then all contracts will be annulled?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I am very much afraid that so far as the dairy farmers are concerned it is all a matter of day labour.

The Hon. A. E. CHANDLER.—They make contracts to supply milk.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Whatever contracts are in force on the coming into operation of the Act will be null and void. That is to say, the provisions of the Act will be carried out on the declared date. When the Act commences to operate, every man who produces milk and supplies it to the metropolis will be under the protection of the measure, and will have to be paid according to the grade of his milk at the then declared price.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I have not yet discovered that there is any penalty on the producer for selling to the dairyman at less than the declared rate.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—There is not. I think the idea in the minds of the framers of the Bill was that the producer is penalized quite enough, without adding to his already very heavy load.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—The Bill is solely for the benefit of the producer.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Certainly. The idea behind the Bill is to secure for the producer the just reward for his labour. Clause 11 gives the Board power, when required by the Minister, to inquire into any matters affecting the production and distribution of milk. Clause 12 provides for the Board to inquire into and report on any matter that it deems expedient for the purpose of the Act, and to conduct its proceedings in such manner as it deems proper. Powers are also given to take evidence. Most honorable members represent country districts. I represent a town district, but, for all that, I recognize, just as they do, the urgent necessity for a measure of this nature. I must again remind honorable members that although the Bill was discussed at very great length in another place, it was carried through all stages on the voices, with the exception of a division on an amendment as to the constitution of the Board. That shows that the members of another place were satisfied that the Bill was an honest attempt to grapple with one of our most serious problems.

The Hon. A. E. CHANDLER.—They said, "Let the Bill go to the Legislative Council. They will deal with it."

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—That may have been said in Parliaments of the past, but I am satisfied as to the honesty of members of another Chamber when they allowed this measure to go through all stages in their House, after an exhaustive debate, without a division, with one little exception.

The PRESIDENT (Sir Frank Clarke)—The honorable gentleman must not discuss the proceedings of another place.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I merely mentioned the matter in passing. I again commend the measure to the House.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—The Minister has assured us that this is an important Bill. I am satisfied that it is, because I have been inundated during the last few days with all sorts of literature concerning the measure. A large amount of that literature I have not yet been able to read, as two large consignments of it came only to-day.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Have you had any letters in favour of the Bill?

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I do not know. I have not read those that came to-day.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—You do not represent the milk producers.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Evidently they think that I do represent them, because they have approached me in the literature which I have read, and, apparently speaking with a unanimous voice, have asked me to present their side of the case to the House. However, it is not my intention to-night to proceed with the debate, and I propose to move for its adjournment. This is a most important Bill. We are not permitted to refer to what has occurred in another place, and the only means we have of knowing about it is what the Minister has told us to-night. We know that the debate in another place proceeded for a great number of weeks, so evidently there was a great deal of discussion on this little Bill, which, we are told, is merely looking after the interests of the producers in the country, although, as far as I can see, on the face of it, it deals only with those producers whose milk reaches Melbourne, and I venture to say that the milk of four-fifths or more of the milk producers never reaches Melbourne. Those people, according to the harrowing picture drawn by the Minister, are in a state of slavery of which this country ought to be ashamed. But, if we can give a measure of relief, even to a particular section of the community, we ought to do it, if we can safely see our way to do it. I should like to have the advantage of reading the various arguments that have been adduced in favour of and against the Bill. I understand that the general feeling of members is that they should have the same opportunity. The measure is one of such importance that it should be discussed in a full House. I understand that some of those honorable members whose contributions would be of most value to the debate will not be able to be present on Tuesday next. Consequently I ask that the debate should be adjourned for a fortnight. I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I do not oppose the motion for the adjournment, because I should be prepared to vote the Bill straight out. It is one of the silliest measures ever brought before the House. It is an attempt to deal with the supply of milk in the metropolitan area. At the same time I should like to say that I am out to see that the consumer gets pure milk.

The PRESIDENT (Sir Frank Clarke).—I do not think that the honorable member is speaking to the motion for the adjournment of the debate.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I am just giving some reasons why the debate should be adjourned. Several honorable members have been called to the country, and I know that they would like to speak on the Bill. We should have an adjournment, though it will be a waste of time to consider the measure.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Public Health).—On the question of adjournment, I wish to say that, of course, I desire to meet the convenience of honorable members. I do not think that the unofficial Leader has been quite fair to me as the Minister in charge of the Bill. I have moved the second reading of two important measures to-day, and they have been advanced to certain stages. On both occasions I have been asked to adjourn the debate because copies of the measures had not been circulated. I realized the reasonableness of the request, and willingly agreed to it. That reason cannot be applied to the Milk Board Bill. It has been discussed in the press for many months past. Every honorable member must have some knowledge of the contents of the measure. It has been circulated, and has been in the hands of honorable members——

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—How long has it been in our hands? It was agreed to by another place only about a week ago.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I think that it has been a week in the hands of honorable members. Copies were sent to every honorable member. Honorable members have also had the advantage of reading reports in the press of the discussion that took place in another place. I am in the hands of honorable members, and wish to meet their convenience in every way, but I do not think that the adjournment should be granted, because several honorable members who desire to speak on the Bill are here now. If the motion is carried, it will deprive those honorable members of their privilege to speak on the measure.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—I think that the request of the unofficial Leader is in order. I doubt whether there has been a more involved Bill placed before this Chamber. It will have to be carefully investigated in the interests of the Minister who will have to control its administration. The more one looks into the Bill, the more impossible it seems for the Board or the Minister to carry it out. There is so much to look into that I do not think we can do with an adjournment for less than a fortnight.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Some honorable members may desire to speak now.

The Hon. W. H. EDGAR.—I doubt whether any honorable member wisnes to speak at the present moment on the Bill. After the explanations that have been given by the Minister, it appears that the Bill bristles with difficulties.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—Since I entered this Chamber, no Bill has caused so much confusion as this one. The indignation raised by the measure is very great.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—It was not evidenced in another place.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—I do not know about another place. I do not wish to go into what happened there. I will, however, say this, that there were two members at least who spoke against the measure and then voted for it.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I have known other honorable members to do that.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—I have received sheaves of letters regarding this measure. Several people in my district desire to see me about it. I do not want to oppose everything that this Government brings in. I want to hear the arguments on both sides. The unofficial Leader is wise in asking for an adjournment for a fortnight. It seems to me, a town member, that the four Ministers in this Chamber, who also are town members, are bringing in a Bill that does not protect the consumer. This measure requires a lot of meditation, and, therefore, so that we can go into the matter thoroughly, we should have an adjournment for a fortnight.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I hope that the Minister will not agree to the motion for the adjournment of this discussion.

The Hon. A. E. CHANDLER.—He will lose the Bill if he does not.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—If I could believe that honorable members had any honorable or kindly intentions towards this Bill, I should be prepared to agree to the motion for the adjournment of the debate. That motion is merely an effort to bring about a mild execution of the measure. It would be better if those who are not prepared to approve of the measure and to assist the producers were frank, so that the country would know exactly who they are. We know the intentions of those who support the adjournment.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—You cannot form an opinion.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—It is quite evident, from what has been said.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I have an open mind.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Some honorable members expect that if an adjournment is obtained, the Bill will not be brought on again. It would be better if the House were frank. I hope that the Minister will insist on going a little further with the measure.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—By leave, I should like to amend my proposal so as to adjourn the discussion until next Tuesday week. It may happen that there will be no meeting on Wednesday week. All we desire is a reasonable adjournment. The Minister will probably agree to this proposal at once.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—All right.

The Hon. G. L. GOUDIE.—I understand that the Minister is agreeable to postponing the discussion until Tuesday week. I should not have risen to support the remarks of the unofficial Leader had it not been for the insinuations made in regard to members of this House. I have an open mind on the Bill. I have been away in the Mallee, and returned only last night. Some representatives of co-operative societies have interviewed me in regard to the probable operations of the measure. They have put forward arguments and recommendations, and a member of this House must consider them. It is absolutely necessary that we should have time to consider the Bill. I have pleasure in supporting the request of the unofficial Leader.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Tuesday, October 11.

LAW INSTITUTE BILL.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This measure is designed to effect an amendment in the Law Institute Act, and to widen the scope of inquiries that may be conducted by the Statutory Committee of the Law Institute into alleged misconduct by members of the legal profession. I think that it is much to the credit of the legal practitioners that they devote attention to keeping the profession clean. That is something that might be adopted not only by other professions, but also by trades and callings. If those who followed trades and callings were to do as people did in the olden days, and keep their own sections clean, it would be better for the whole of the community. The legal and medical professions do that now, and, in my opinion, they do it very successfully. This practice of the legal profession adds to its prestige, and secures a great deal of protection to the public from practitioners who in the absence of such a system might become negligent and careless. This measure is designed to widen the scope of the word "misconduct." To explain the Bill thoroughly, I cannot do better than read to the House a very useful explanatory memorandum that has been submitted to me by Mr. Lucas, President of the Law Institute, in which he sets out the reasons for this amending legislation. It is as follows:—

This Bill will make right two deficiencies in the working of the principal Act which the experience of the last ten years has disclosed.

The defects to be remedied arise in the part of the Act contained in sections 15 to 23, headed "Statutory Committee." This portion of the Act provides for the appointment of a statutory committee, to consist of six practitioners, to whom everybody complaining of misdeeds done by a lawyer can appeal, with the object of having the offending lawyer disciplined. This committee is empowered to summon the accused man before them, take evidence, and, if they think that misconduct has been proved, they are empowered to make a report to the Supreme Court. Their findings of facts are to be accepted by the Court, although there is an appeal. When a report is made to the Supreme Court, it is a Judge who decides whether the guilty person shall be struck off the rolls or suspended from practice for a period, or merely ordered to pay the costs arising from the matter, each depending upon the gravity of the offence in the eyes of the Judge.

The Government of the day in 1917, from a feeling of caution, which experience shows to have been over-caution, limited the misconduct which the committee could deal with to that class of misconduct which is called "misconduct in a professional capacity"—examples are, misappropriating clients' money or swearing false affidavits, &c. &c. By confining the misconduct within that narrow limit, remedy is restricted in a way that has no justification, and the Bill now submitted is intended to give the same power to the committee in all classes of cases in which the Supreme Court has from all time disciplined lawyers.

Technical defences can now be raised which prevent the committee dealing with certain cases, and there are innumerable instances of misdeeds which are not committed in the capacity of solicitor, although the man at the time of committing the misdeed was a solicitor.

Under the heading of "Discipline," on page 844 of *Halsbury's Encyclopædia*, volume 26, will be found examples, particularly on pages 850 and 851. One example which recently exercised the minds of those dealing with the matter was the case of a solicitor misappropriating money at a time when he was not giving legal advice or acting as a solicitor. For instance, a solicitor may be employed to collect interest, or to collect rent or any other money. If it is not legal business, and he embezzles an offence has not been committed in a professional capacity, and the statutory committee is helpless.

The books also show that, outside his business operations, a practitioner may be struck off the rolls for grossly immoral conduct or for having committed a criminal offence (see paragraph 1376). It is not proposed in any way to increase the list of offences for which a man may be struck off the rolls, but only to enable the statutory committee to continue its voluntary work of investigating the facts of each case, and to give it power in non-professional

cases, as well as professional cases, to find a man guilty of misconduct such as the Courts have been in the habit of regarding as deserving of suspension, striking off the rolls, &c.

Section 2 of the present Bill, therefore, redefines the word "misconduct" by describing it as any conduct in respect of which a solicitor may by law be struck off the rolls, &c., and the following sub-sections of that section make the necessary consequential amendments in the Act.

Section 3 of the present Bill provides for an oversight in the drawing of the original Bill. Section 7 of the principal Act creates a council to consist of a specified number of persons, and in the last sub-section of that clause it is noted that the continuing members of the Council may act, notwithstanding any vacancy in their body. This should have been repeated in respect of the statutory committee is section 15, and being absent there is good reason to suppose that the moment a death occurs in the committee, the committee does not continue until a fresh appointment is made, and that the committee ceases to exist. This would be a serious state of things if a death were to occur while a case of misconduct were part heard. It would probably be necessary to start the hearing again, and put all parties concerned to loss of time and expense that would arise by the repetition. Section 3 of this Bill, therefore, repeats the provisions of section 7 of the principal Act, and will provide that, provided there is a quorum of the statutory committee, it will continue in existence, notwithstanding any vacancy arising by death or otherwise.

All vacancies are supplied by the Chief Justice after careful inquiry as to the suitability of the persons to be appointed. On a vacancy arising, he might be absent, or be in vacation, and the whole business of the committee might be suspended until he made a fresh appointment, hence the importance of this section 3 of the Bill. The statutory committee is, of course, a voluntary body. The Chief Justice has always been able to find capable practitioners who have, for the honour of their profession, done this work with the object of keeping the ranks of the profession free of undesirable persons who have committed offences, and the committee is anxious that technicalities should not stand in the way of its work in its future operations.

I think honorable members will agree that that is a comprehensive statement, and shows that the Law Institute supports the Bill. Because I think that we are all agreed that the Law Institute has done its work well, and needs this amending legislation, I am confident that honorable members will allow the Bill to have an easy passage through the House. The Law Institute has pointed out that there is need for the rectification of anomalies in the present law, and I am sure that the House will do its part in removing those anomalies.

Hon. J. P. Jones.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—The statement which the Minister has read was described by him as comprehensive. It is certainly entitled to be so characterized, and I think it would be supererogation on my part to attempt to add to it. It deals with the matter from every point of view, and presents the case most clearly. It may be asked whether the legislation embodied in this measure is being introduced for the first time in legal history. I may inform honorable members that a similar enactment has been in operation in England for 60 years, and in South Australia for ten years. The Law Institute does not deal with the alleged offences that come before it. It merely makes reports upon which a higher tribunal may act. It is a safeguard that complaints may be dealt with by the Law Institute, because inquiry may show that those complaints are without foundation. The client making a complaint may then be satisfied, and go no further with it. Cases have been known in which allegations have been made against a lawyer, and he has sought an inquiry by the Law Institute in order to clear his character. This is a desirable Bill, and I commend it to the House.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

VICTORIAN LOAN AUTHORITY BILL.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This is a simple measure, and its object is to provide for the cancellation of the unexhausted authority under certain loan Acts. In previous years, approval has been granted for the raising of loan moneys for specific purposes. For example, in December, 1914, loan Act No. 2568, afterwards amended by Act No. 2598, was passed, giving the Government of the day power to grant an advance by way of a loan to farmers for the purchase of seed and fodder. These loans to the farmers were to be made on or before the 31st December, 1915. The amount of loan money authorized under this Act amounted to £600,000, of which there is an unraised balance of £148,186 3s. 4d. Act No. 3037 was passed

in 1919, enabling the Government to make advances of a similar nature. The amount authorized under this Act was £80,000, of which there is an unraised balance of £19,566 6s. 7d. There are several other Acts in the same category, and the unraised balances must be carried forward from year to year as loans authorized, although no further moneys are required and no expenditure can be made under these Acts. The object of this Bill is to give the Treasurer, if at any time he is of opinion that the raising of any further money is not required, authority to request the Auditor-General to prepare and certify a statement, as set out in clause 2, sub-clause (2), of this Bill. Upon the receipt of the Auditor-General's certificate, the Governor in Council may, by order published in the *Government Gazette*, declare that on and after the date of publication of the order, no further moneys shall be raised under the authority of the Act referred to. It appears to me to be a very simple measure, and it is a measure that is asked for by the Treasury Department. I hope that the House will pass it.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I think that it is a very useful Bill, and ought to be passed.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed through its remaining stages.

COWWARR LAND BILL.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY (Honorary Minister).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the measure is to revoke the permanent reservation of 2 roods at Cowwarr, set apart in the year 1888 for a mechanics' institute and free library. It is proposed to add this area to a site for State school purposes which adjoins. The mechanics' institute committee is to receive from the Treasurer of Victoria, as compensation, the sum of £106, which represents the value of the land after the committee moves its buildings. The Bill provides that this amount is to be applied by the mechanics' institute committee to the improvement of a new site, privately purchased, for mechanics' institute purposes in a more convenient situation in the town, namely, Main-street, Cowwarr, where it is proposed to have the new mechanics' institute. The first schedule describes the site it is proposed to revoke, and the second schedule the State school area to which it will be added. I know of no local objection to the Bill, and the Education Department and the mechanics' institute committee are in agreement on the matter. I understand from inquiries made that the school committee have been most anxious to get this additional area for school purposes, and the mechanics' institute committee are also anxious to have a more suitable site for the institute. They want one more in the centre of the town.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN. — The Bill is of a type with which the House is becoming very familiar. The only objection that I take to the Honorary Minister's statement is that he calmly says that he knows of no local objection to the Bill. What inquiries has the Honorary Minister made on that point?

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—I made inquiries from the representative of the district.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Where is Cowwarr?

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—In the Mildura district.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Who are the representatives of the district?

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—Mr. Crockett and Mr. Goudie, I believe.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—They are so interested in the Bill that they are conspicuous by their absence.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—They knew that the matter was in good hands.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—While we are always prepared to accept the assurance of local members, it has been the custom in respect of such matters as that which we are now considering to make inquiries from the municipal council, or the representatives of such a body, in order to ascertain whether, speaking on behalf of the citizens concerned, the representatives can say that there is a general feeling that the exchange should be effected. Of course, one would naturally expect the Education Department and the committee of the mechanics' institute, who have arranged the exchange, to be in agreement over the matter. If that were not so there would be no *raison d'etre* for the Bill. Apart from that, however, I think that we should have on such matters something more than a mere statement by a Minister that he knows of no local objection to the Bill.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Would you suggest that the Honorary Minister should personally visit Cowwarr and ask the residents' opinion?

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—I do not think that the Honorary Minister could be spared, but I do hold that some steps should be taken to place before this House material by which we could be assured that people, other than those directly interested, are anxious for the proposed change.

The Hon. W. TYNER.—I should like to know something about the location of Cowwarr. The Honorary Minister said that it was somewhere near Mildura. If that be so, Mr. Goudie and Mr. Crockett would be the representatives. When I look at the first schedule I find the following—

Land permanently reserved by Order in Council of the 8th October, 1888, as a site for a Mechanics' Institute and Free Library (*vide Government Gazette,* of the 7th September, 1888, page 2783; and 12th October, 1888, page 3117).

Two roods, County of Tanjil, Parish of Toongabbie North, township of Cowwarr, &c.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—It is only a few hundred miles away.

The Hon. W. TYNER.—I think that it is in Gippsland.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—I must have been misinformed.

The Hon. W. TYNER.—I do not want to raise any objections to the Bill, but I feel the Honorary Minister has not really considered its contents.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Who represents Cowwarr?

The Hon. W. TYNER.—Mr. Davis and Mr. McGregor, I think. I am of the opinion that the Honorary Minister cannot be serious when he says he has made inquiries in regard to the Bill. We look to a Minister, when he is presenting a Bill to the House, to give us some definite information. I certainly support the remarks of the unofficial Leader. I agree that we should know something of the opinions of the citizens in the district.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—What is the value of land in Cowwarr just now?

The Hon. W. TYNER.—I have not the slightest idea.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and committed.

Clause 1—(Short title).

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY (Honorary Minister).—I wish to make an explanation. I made inquiries from Mr. Abbott, and he assured me that Cowwarr was in the Mildura district. In addition, he gave me certain other information regarding it.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Uncertain!

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—Evidently so. To become more conversant with the Bill, I secured a plan relating to the township allotment. When it said of Toongabbie that it was "north" again I thought that I was quite safe, and that the information given to me was reliable. I must confess that there are so many peculiar names in Victoria that it is difficult for an ordinary member to become conversant with the location of the places to which they refer. But when I told honorable members that the school committee was anxious to acquire a larger area, I though there would be no difficulty whatever in having the Bill passed.

The Hon. W. TYNER.—It commends itself to me, being for educational purposes.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—Then why raise objections, or express adverse comments? I was misinformed. I have often previously had my leg pulled, and evidently that has been done again in reference to this matter. I do not think that it was done purposely. However, I am sure all honorable members are seised of the necessity of having more grounds for our local schools, and that is one of the main objects of the Bill.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I think we can all understand how the mistake occurred. In Mr. Crockett's electorate there are a number of State schools, and also mechanics' institutes. When the Minister referred to those buildings, some honorable members naturally thought that the buildings were in their electorates.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Has the Minister satisfied himself that the £106, which is passing from one body to another, is a fair and reasonable price for half an acre of land? It represents a price of £212 per acre. I do not know where Cowwarr is, but the price does seem to be an extortionate one for land in that district.

The Hon J. H. DISNEY.—I cannot give that information just now.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—We ought to have an explanation from the Minister before we pass the Bill. The honorable gentleman does not seem to know where the land is. Some arrangement may have been made for the payment of a high price for the land. We should not agree to a Bill of this kind unless we are satisfied that the revenue of the State is not being distributed in an extravagant manner.

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—There is no particular hurry. If honorable members desire further information, I shall not object to an adjournment of the discussion.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—The Minister might not object to an alteration being made in the schedule to bring Mildura in.

The Hon. M. SALTAU.—I think it would be a mistake to postpone the consideration of this small Bill. There can be no doubt that the arrangement proposed is mutually satisfactory to the people concerned.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—That is not the point. It is a question of principle. This question is not being raised for the first time to-day. The amount at present under consideration, £106, is but trifling. To-morrow, we may be asked to deal with a much bigger amount—£106,000, perhaps. This House is entitled to full information. On a previous occasion when the question was raised, certain honorable members were able to assure us that the arrangement then proposed was a profitable one. The Minister in charge of this Bill is not in a position to give us such a reassuring statement. Mr. McGregor may be able to give us the information we require.

The Hon. M. McGREGOR.—I have read the Bill, which relates to land in the township of Cowwarr. Cowwarr is a Gippsland town on the Maffra line.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—A very important town.

The Hon. M. McGREGOR.—In its way, it is. Every town in Gippsland is important. I can honestly assure the House that the Bill should pass.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—What is the value of land, per acre, in that part of the State?

The Hon. M. McGREGOR.—Values vary very considerably. I should say that land on the Cowwarr flats is worth from £75 to £85 per acre.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—The land referred to in this Bill is valued at £106 for half an acre.

The Hon. M. McGREGOR.—But this land is situated in the main street of the township of Cowwarr.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—What is the value of land there?

The Hon. M. McGREGOR.—It is sold by the foot.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—At what price per foot?

The Hon. M. McGREGOR.—It is a long time since I have speculated in land. I have been hit so hard over land in Melbourne that I have taken to the broad acres of Gippsland.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Are you prepared to assure us that the land is worth £106?

The Hon. M. McGREGOR.—Yes, I should say it is well worth that.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—That settles the matter as far as I am concerned.

The clause was agreed to, as were the remaining clauses and the schedules.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and the report was adopted.

On the motion of the Hon. J. H. DISNEY (Honorary Minister), the Bill was read a third time.

ELECTORAL (ABSENT VOTERS) BILL.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This is a Bill to provide for absent voting for the Legislative Assembly. Honorable members will see that the measure does not in any way affect this Chamber. It has been adapted from the Commonwealth law, with such alterations as are necessary to suit State requirements. The last legislation that was passed in connexion with elections for the Assembly provided for compulsory voting. The provision of facilities for absentee voting is a necessary corollary to compulsory voting. A great number of electors who failed to record their votes at the last election have since given their reasons for not doing so. Many were absent from their electorates on the day of election, and,

owing to the fact that there was no provision for absentee voting, they were unable to record their votes. I understand that the Electoral Office has been practically compelled to accept a number of apologies for breaches of the Act. There are, of course, many reasons that account for the absence of electors from their electorates on polling day. Commercial travellers, for instance, have to move about from place to place. Among legitimate reasons for failure to record a vote is illness. A dozen reasons could easily be found which would satisfactorily account for the absence of an elector from his electorate or his electoral subdivision on the date of election. It is therefore desirable to amend the law in such a way as to enable absent voters to record their votes. Provision is made for doing so at Commonwealth elections. The Bill appears to me to be a very reasonable one, and, seeing that it does not affect this Chamber, but only the Legislative Assembly, I take it that honorable members will be quite prepared to give to the Legislative Assembly the kind of voting facilities that the Assembly thinks its electors require.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—Was this Bill passed unanimously in another place?

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—I cannot say whether honorable members in another place were unanimous in their desire that the Bill should pass. I have read the speech delivered by Dr. Argyle, who apparently handled the Bill there on behalf of the Opposition, and, as far as I can make out, he gave the Bill his blessing. There does not appear to have been any opposition to the Bill. The record of the debates on the Bill contains no division. The Bill was agreed to on the voices. Clause 2 embodies the principle of absentee voting, and is, therefore, the vital provision of the measure. For the rest there are machinery provisions to enable absentee voting to be carried on. These provisions must necessarily be somewhat elaborate, the desire being, as far as is humanly possible, to prevent misrepresentations—to prevent persons voting under other persons' names.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Those provisions are on the lines of the Commonwealth law, I take it?

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—They are all on the lines of the Commonwealth law, which has been in operation for many years. If compulsory voting is to be successful in this State, it is apparently necessary to provide that electors who are absent from their electorates on polling day shall be permitted to vote elsewhere. We are not by this Bill interfering in any way with postal voting. That system will still obtain as it has in the past, but the Bill now before us will give electors other privileges, or perhaps I may say rights, in being able to vote as absentees when they are away from the electorates for which they are enrolled.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—We are having such a rapid succession of Bills that it is difficult to give them the proper degree of study. What appeals to me in the argument of the Minister is that, in the first place, absentee voting appears to be a necessary corollary to compulsory voting. In the second place, it seems to bring the State law into line with the Commonwealth law in this respect, and that is desirable. For these two reasons we shall be justified in passing this Bill, more especially as it appears to have had the more or less unanimous approval of another place.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I have studied this Bill, and I may point out that I have had a great deal of experience in connexion with parliamentary elections. Before I became a member of Parliament I was for a number of years deputy returning officer in Geelong. I can plainly see that this Bill, when it becomes law, will delay the declaration of polls at State elections. That is one of the effects of absentee voting in the Federal electoral system. I remember one instance when the declaration of the result of a Federal election was delayed for six weeks because a vote had to be sent from Bowen, in Queensland, to Geelong. This Bill will allow an elector enrolled in one division to vote in another. That means that a person who is lazy, and does not want to take the trouble to go to the polling booth in the division for which he is enrolled, may vote in some other division. This will put the electoral officers to a considerable amount of trouble. I do not think that this system of voting is absolutely necessary. Ample opportunities are provided in the present law for an elector to apply for a postal vote. Another objection to absentee voting is

that there is not the same amount of opportunity to prevent votes being used incorrectly. It may be that there are thousands of people who will go to a polling booth and apply for absentee voting papers, although the booth for the division in which they are enrolled may not be distant so far as some of them are concerned. The system of absentee voting does not provide for a proper check on impersonation. That is one of the troubles I see in allowing an elector in one division to vote at a polling booth in another division. Absentee voting will not only mean extra work for the returning officer, but it will mean extra expense.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—It will cost less than postal voting.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I am satisfied that it will mean a lot of extra work and extra expense. I have seen electors on the occasion of a Federal election crowding a polling booth. Many of the electors could vote at another booth which may be only a mile away from where they are, but they are too lazy to walk to it. When an elector applies for an absentee voting paper, the returning officer has to ascertain whether his name is enrolled for the electorate in respect of which he claims to be enrolled, a form has to be filled in, and then the paper has to be sent to the returning officer for the particular electorate for which the man is enrolled. All this means a lot of extra work. I am not going to oppose the passage of this Bill, because I want to see everybody have an opportunity of voting, but I do say that in providing for absentee voting we are legislating for a lot of lazy people. Honorable members may know that a returning officer has to wait the arrival of the absentee votes before he can declare the result of an election, and it may take days for the absentee votes to reach him.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—An elector cannot vote outside of the State.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Under the Federal law an elector can vote in any part of the Commonwealth. In my opinion, we are legislating for lazy people. Absentee voting will delay the announcement of the result of an election, and some days may elapse before a candidate will know whether he has been returned or not.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I can see no objection to this Bill. Mr. Richardson has said that it will help the lazy voter. We have adopted the system of compulsory voting to compel the lazy elector to exercise his vote, and a natural corollary is to offer every facility for electors to discharge their duty.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Do you believe in helping lazy people?

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—We compel lazy people to vote, and I think we should provide facilities for absentee voting. I remember on one occasion I was able to cast my vote at Frankston, and it was a great convenience to me. If there had been no provision for absentee voting I would have had to return to Melbourne to vote. I do not think providing for absentee voting will delay to any extent the declaration of a poll. It certainly does not have much effect in that direction at Commonwealth elections. The State returning officer will have the same power as the Commonwealth officer, and he will be advised as to the number of the absentee votes, and be able to determine whether they are sufficient to alter the figures in hand to the extent of affecting the result of the election. If they are not, there need be no delay in announcing the result of the poll.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Returning officers have to be advised by telegram that a certain number of absentee votes are being forwarded, and they cannot declare the result of an election till they are received.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—If the number of absentee votes is insufficient to affect the result of an election, the Commonwealth returning officer does not wait until the votes reach him. After all, it does not matter very much if there is a little delay, because in most cases the result of an election is known before the absentee votes are counted.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Occasionally a few votes may alter the result of an election.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—It is very seldom that the voting is so close that the absentee votes will determine the result. So far as impersonation is concerned, there is not nearly so much danger in absentee voting as there is in postal voting. The facilities for wrong-

doing and impersonation under the postal voting system are infinitely greater than under the absentee voting system. I am sure the House will realize that it will be to the advantage of an elector to record his vote as an absentee if his position on polling day makes that course desirable. It must be recollected that a special apartment is set aside for absentee voting, so that the ordinary voters are not subject to any interference. For the reasons I have given, I cannot see any objection to the Bill, and I hope it will be passed.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was read a second time, and committed.

Clause 1 was agreed to.

Clause 2—

(1) At the end of sub-section (1) of section 236 of the principal Act there shall be inserted the following words:—

"Provided that, subject to the Constitution Act Amendment Acts, if such person is enrolled in respect of residence in such subdivision, he shall in accordance with the provisions of the said Acts, and any regulations thereunder relating to absent voting, be permitted to vote at any other polling place in Victoria at which a polling booth is open if during the hours of polling on polling day he has not been or will not be within such subdivision under conditions which would permit of his voting at any polling place for such subdivision."

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I should like the Minister to say if it is not possible to limit the distance in regard to which an absentee voter can take advantage of this new provision. I do not think the provision should be exercised in the case of an elector who is only comparatively a short distance away from the polling booth for the division in which he is enrolled. It is all very well for Mr. Kiernan to suggest that absentee votes will not delay the declaration of a poll, but he must remember that all absentee votes have to be sent to the returning officer and credited to the various candidates. This Bill will permit an elector to vote at any polling booth within the State.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The onus lies on the voter. He has to sign a declaration that he will not be within his subdivision on polling day.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Is the Minister in charge of the Bill satisfied that there is adequate provision against malpractice?

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—I feel sure that there is.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—A question has been raised in respect of which honorable members would like to hear the views of the Minister of Public Works. It has been suggested to me that this legislation will apply only in cases where a person is resident in a district and has a right by virtue of that residence to vote. If absent from his own district on polling day, he will be entitled to vote elsewhere. It would appear that, if, by virtue of any other right, a man was entitled to vote—for example, as a property-holder, in a particular electorate—he would not be entitled to an absent vote. I direct the attention of the Minister to the proviso to the clause. It suggests that only residential voters will be allowed this privilege. What is the reason for such a distinction?

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—There are reasons for this provision which were discussed, I think, in another place, which, after all, is the House interested in this Bill. I understand that Dr. Argyle accepted the provisions of the Bill as they now appear. There were certain legal difficulties which arose, I believe. One of these had to do with the matter of an adjourned poll. In such circumstances it would be possible for a voter having a property qualification to vote twice at an election—once on the original polling day and again at the adjourned poll.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—On the original polling day he might vote in one electorate, and at the adjourned poll he might vote in another?

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—Yes. This Bill merely provides that, as a precaution against wrong-doing, the privilege of casting an absent vote shall apply only to residential voters. In this we are following the Commonwealth law.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—It is not equitable to debar a property qualification holder from the privilege of casting a vote as an absentee. There could be required of him a declaration that he has not previously voted, just as in the case of an ordinary elector who wished to cast an absent vote. It is unfair to debar one class from a privilege which is given to another class.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Forests).—The argument of Mr. Smith might have had considerable force in the old days, when there were many more voters possessing the property qualification in the electorate of East Melbourne alone than in the whole of the other electorates of the State. Such conditions do not apply to-day, however. In the electorate of Collingwood, which embraces the municipality of Fitzroy, I happen to know that there are only two electors on the roll by virtue of the property qualification. I may add that I put those two gentlemen on the roll myself, for a particular reason. If a poll were adjourned, an elector might be able to cast two votes—one in one district and the other in another. If an elector is away from his electorate, he still has a qualification of some description. If he does not wish to vote where he resides, he can vote by post.

The Hon. W. TYNER.—But there may not be an election where he resides.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The provisions with respect to voting by post would still hold good. If a person did not want to vote where he resided, but wished to vote for a candidate in the electorate in which he held a property qualification, he could still vote by post. That is the law. I repeat, however, that there are very few electors who are enrolled in respect of the property qualification to-day.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—I do not see why a person enrolled in respect of a property qualification should be deprived of his right to cast an absent vote. I move—

That the words "in respect of residence" be omitted.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—It is well to remind honorable members that it was this House which originated the provision for a property-owner to be given a special voting privilege.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I think that that privilege was given by another place.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I believe that that is not so. There are electors whose names are on two rolls. I know that that is the case of a number of electors in Geelong. I suppose there are many people residing in Kew and other suburbs who have their businesses in Melbourne, and could be on two rolls if they so wished. Then they could decide which roll they would use for voting purposes. Sometimes there is a by-election, and such people could vote in respect of the two rolls. I have done the same thing. I have been enrolled at Barwon and at Geelong. But generally people do not bother about utilizing the two votes in such circumstances.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—There is still the same opportunity of voting personally, or by post.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—The vote of the property-owners is not being taken away by the proposals contained in the Bill.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I do not think it is possible to contend that the person who has the right to vote in respect to residential qualification and the elector who has business premises in another part of the metropolis to that in which he resides would be on the same footing in connexion with the Bill. The proposal is to allow men or women who are absent from their residences for holidays, or for health or for other reasons, to record their votes.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—What about the case of the man who is resident in one district where no election is being held, and desires to exercise his undoubted right to vote for another electorate?

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—The position in regard to the property franchise is that the elector who is qualified in that respect is generally absent from the district. If Mr. Smith's amendment were carried, it would mean that every person who was entitled to a property qualification vote would, if he were enrolled in respect of it, be allowed to vote as an absentee under this Bill, whereas the Bill's provisions apply to persons who are entitled to vote in respect to residential qualification and are absent from their residences for certain reasons. That does not give every voter in the community a right to exercise an absent vote.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—It does.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I cannot see that point. I do not suppose that there is, in the whole of Victoria, a person who while being on the roll of one electorate would wish as an absentee voter to exercise a property qualification vote in another electorate. Dual enrolment obtains only in the cases of men living in South Yarra, or Toorak, who have businesses in Melbourne.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—At Macedon there are many people who have residences and pay rates. They could be placed on the roll there if they cared to apply.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I do not think that in the electorate in which Macedon is situated there would be one person on the roll merely by virtue of the fact that he had property in that district. In East Melbourne, during Mr. Farthing's time, there were more of these voters on the roll than there were in the whole of the rest of Victoria.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—That was good organization!

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—There was special organization in that respect. For the reasons I have given I think it is quite unnecessary to alter the Bill.

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—I do not think there is a great deal arising from this matter. Probably nine-tenths of Mr. Kiernan's argument relating to numbers is perfectly correct. There was a time when men who held a lot of property in Victoria had two or more votes in different places, but those days have gone for ever. In fact, no one would claim such privileges nowadays. By a process of whittling down, men were allowed to vote only once—where they resided or where they held property. It is a reasonable proposition that a man should be allowed to express his opinion where his interests lie. I do not like to see any further whittling away of our rights, however small they are. There is no doubt that, under the Bill, an elector enrolled in respect of residence will get a privilege which a man who claims a vote because of having financial interests in an electorate will be denied. I do not wish that citizens should surrender a right which they possess. I think that the Committee might decide to accept an amendment which provides for property-owners recording absent votes. I have not studied the Bill sufficiently to know whether Mr. Smith's amendment meets the situation, but I am certainly inclined to support the principle it contains.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Forests).—There seem to have been two objections to the amendment. One was that it would make a distinction between the State Electoral Act and the Commonwealth Electoral Act. I can foresee a difficulty. Supposing a person goes to any polling booth. He is asked, "Are you an elector?" He replies, "Yes." The official makes a reference, and ascertains that the person is not absent from his residence. "Are you absent?" he asks. The reply is, "Yes. But I do not claim that I am absent from my residence. I claim that I am absent from my place of business." How is that difficulty overcome? After all, to carry out the wishes of the mover of the amendment, it would be necessary to give such a person the right to say, "Yes, I am living in Malvern, but I want to vote in Melbourne, where my place of business is situated." This would mean a considerable alteration to the electoral law. I think that the unofficial Leader will readily grasp that point. A person may go to a polling booth in a district where he is enrolled and resident. He may say, "I claim a vote for Geelong." He would be asked, "On what grounds?" His reply might be, "Because I have a business there, and I am away from that."

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—What is wrong with that?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—There would need to be a radical alteration so that such a person could claim the right to record an absent vote. How could he claim that if the polling booth is next door to where he resides?

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—He has a postal vote.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Yes, he has that right.

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—Then why should he not claim the other privilege?

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Supposing he is living in Brighton, next door to the polling booth. He may go into the polling booth and say, "I want to vote, but not for Brighton, where I reside. I am an absent voter." The official would stare at him and say, "Your name is on the roll here." The elector might say, "I want to vote for Swan Hill because I have a vote there, and I claim it because I am an absent voter."

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—He would be absent from Swan Hill.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—Absolutely. The fundamental principle behind absentee voting is that the man who votes as an absentee shall be absent from his ordinary place of residence.

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—Absent from the electorate in which he is entitled to vote.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—The honorable gentleman is getting away from the principle of absentee voting altogether. Every man should have the absolute and unassailable right to exercise his franchise. Voting is compulsory. The honorable gentleman suggests that a man should be able to go to the polling booth next door to his residence and say, "I claim to be an absent voter." The thing is absurd on the face of it

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—The Minister of Forests has expressed exactly the view that I was afraid of. He said that if a man was resident in Brighton who had a property vote in Swan Hill he should not be allowed to vote in Brighton for the Swan Hill electorate, because the Brighton electoral officer would say to him, "No, you reside here, and you must vote where you reside." I have been attempting to express the desire of all of us who have a property vote outside of the districts in which we reside to retain that property vote. I value my property vote more than my residential vote. I would sooner give up my residential vote than my property vote. When the Minister says that the electoral officer at Brighton would very likely say to the man with the property vote at Swan Hill, "You must vote where you reside," the honorable gentleman is voicing the opinion that a man ought not to have a property vote, but ought to vote only where he resides. I think we ought to oppose that contention.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT (Minister of Forests).—I think it will be seen readily by every honorable member that if a person has a property qualification at Swan Hill but resides at Brighton, he will know perfectly well that he will not be at Swan Hill on election day. Therefore, he can vote for the Swan Hill electorate by post. The reason for an absentee voting measure is that voting is compulsory, and that a man may be called away suddenly from his home or business and may not be able to apply for a postal vote. Then he can vote as an absentee voter in order to comply with the compulsory voting law. But a person resident at Brighton with a property qualification at Swan Hill would have the time and opportunity to get a postal vote, and could thus record his vote for the Swan Hill electorate. As I have said, every person has to vote, and the circumstances of an elector may compel him to be absent from the place where he is enrolled on election day. The Bill gives him an opportunity to comply with the law.

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—We agree with that.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—In every other case an elector has the opportunity of recording his vote either personally or by post.

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—You are taking away the absent vote from an elector with a property qualification.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—I cannot see why he cannot vote by post.

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—It is more a matter of principle than of fact, but there is a principle involved.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—This House has, rightly or wrongly, affirmed the principle that a man shall have an alternative vote for his residence or his property in certain circumstances and under certain conditions. He cannot exercise both, but he can exercise one if he puts himself in a proper position to do so. We ought to be consistent, and allow that right in all its entirety for what it is worth. While an elector has that right he ought to be able to exercise either alternative in precisely the same way. The Minister of Forests has spoken of a case where there may be elections in various electorates on the same day. There might, however, be a by-election at Swan Hill, and a person living at Brighton might be well entitled to vote at that election, yet he would not be entitled to exercise his vote as an absent voter under this measure.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—He could vote by post.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—But if every person who has a right to vote is able to vote by post, there is no necessity for the Bill at all. It is because there are difficulties in the way of postal voting that the Bill has been devised, and all that has been suggested is that all electors who have the right to be on an electoral roll shall have the same privilege. The Minister of Forests has stated that certain questions have to be asked of the elector. As a matter of fact, those questions are incorporated in the Bill. In sub-clause (2) of clause 3 it is provided that the returning officer or deputy returning officer shall put the following questions to a

person tendering his vote as an absent voter:—

(i) Have you already voted in any electoral district to-day?

(ii) Have you received a postal ballot-paper enabling you to vote at any election for the Legislative Assembly to-day?

If those questions are answered in the affirmative, the returning officer will know precisely what to do. But, according to the Bill, the next question would be—

Are you enrolled in respect of residence on the electoral roll for the subdivision of the electoral district of ?

As a consequential amendment to the amendment suggested by Mr. Smith, that question would be altered to read—

Are you enrolled on the electoral roll for the subdivision of the electoral district of ?

The next two questions provided for in clause 3 would go by the board. They are—

Do you now reside in the electoral district of ?

Did you reside in the electoral district of at any time within the last three months?

All that it would be necessary to find out would be whether the applicant for an absentee vote was enrolled, and whether he had voted. If he had not voted, and was entitled to vote in respect of the distant place, he would then get the necessary ballot-paper to enable him to vote as an absentee voter. The President has stressed the point that this House ought to be consistent, and that as long as the property vote privilege remains, the correlative provision of absentee voting ought to be given.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I think the President expressed the fear that if the clause were carried it would prevent a person residing, say, in Brighton, and with a property qualification elsewhere, from exercising his vote at all because he happened to be a resident in the district where he applied for an absentee vote. The President said that under the clause the electoral officer would say to the man "You reside next door, and must vote in this electorate."

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—No; I said the Minister of Forests expressed the wish that that should be so.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—All I wish to say is that the clause does not deprive the property voter of any privilege that he has now. But an amendment in the direction indicated would mean that practically every enrolled property-owner would have the right to vote as an absentee voter. In the case of residential voters, the right to vote is given only to the few who would be absent from their residences on election day.

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—Would a property vote carry all the privileges that a residential vote carries?

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Yes; and more.

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—I have played poker with four of a kind.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (to Sir Frank Clarke).—Whose hand are you calling?

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—Mr. Kiernan's.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—Every property-owner would have four methods of voting—the right to vote in the electorate where he is enrolled in respect of his residential qualification, the right to go into the district where he owns property and to record his vote there, the right to vote by post, and the right to vote as an absentee voter. The residential voter would have the right to vote in his electorate, the right to vote by post, and the right to vote as an absentee.

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—I do not think that the property vote is mentioned in the Bill.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN.—I am fighting for a principle. Only a few voters will be affected.

The Hon. J. P. JONES.—A dozen in the whole State.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—The words, "Are you enrolled in respect of residence?" should be struck out of clause 3. That is where the trouble comes in. Wherever the word "residence" appears it should be struck out. The same privilege would then be extended to all electors. The Bill withholds from the property-owner a privilege given to other people.

The Hon. H. I. COHEN.—One matter mentioned by the Minister of Public Works had relation, I think, to the Bill as first drafted. He referred to the possibility of the property voter exercising his vote twice. An amendment was made at the suggestion of the Chief Secretary to prevent double voting by any person. If we look at sub-clause (2) of clause 2 we find that—

The provisions of The Constitution Act Amendment Acts with respect to voting by absent voters shall not, in the case of the adjournment of any poll, entitle any person to vote as an absent voter at the poll on any day to which the poll is adjourned.

So there is a bar against voting at an adjourned poll. Therefore, the objection that was in the Minister's mind is of no moment.

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

Clause 3—(Provisions as to voting by absent voters).

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—Sub-clause (2) of this clause reads—

> The returning officer or deputy shall put to any person tendering his vote as an absent voter the following questions:—
>
> (*a*) (i) Have you already voted in any electoral district to-day?
>
> (ii) Have you received a postal ballot-paper enabling you to vote at any election for the Legislative Assembly to-day?
>
> The returning officer or deputy may if he thinks fit and shall if required by any scrutineer put to any such person the following questions:—
>
> (*b*) Are you enrolled in respect of residence on the electoral roll for the subdivision of the electoral district of ? [*the district in respect of which such person claims to vote*]:
>
> (*c*) Do you now reside in the electoral district of ? [*the district aforesaid*];
>
> (*d*) (*If the answer to the question numbered* (*c*) *is in the negative*)—Did you reside in the electoral district of [*the district aforesaid*] at any time within the last three months?
>
> (*e*) Are you a natural-born or naturalized subject of His Majesty?

It will be necessary to omit words from paragraph (*b*) and also to strike out paragraphs (*c*) and (*d*).

The Hon. W. TYNER.—In view of the amendment that has been carried, I am strongly of opinion that progress should be reported. If that were done the necessary amendments could be circulated, and on the resumption of the debate honorable members would be in a better position to discuss the Bill.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I think that if Mr. Smith will allow the unofficial Leader to move whatever amendments are required, in a proper manner, we shall be able to finish the business in five minutes. If that is not done, we may be here an hour.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—I move—

> That the words "in respect of residence" be omitted from paragraph (*b*).

The amendment was agreed to.

The Hon. H. H. SMITH.—I move—

> That paragraphs (*c*) and (*d*) be struck out.

Sir FRANK CLARKE.—I am not quite sure that we should eliminate these paragraphs. The Bill applies chiefly to residential voters, and in regard to residential voters I am of opinion that the electoral officers are entitled to ask for the retention of paragraphs (*c*) and (*d*). I think we should put in some such alternative questions as "Do you now reside in the electoral district of so-and-so?" and, "Have you a property vote for such an electoral district?" I think that Mr. Tyner's suggestion that progress should be reported is a good one.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—I agree with Mr. Tyner and the President that we should report progress. It is no use muddling the Bill up.

The Hon. W. J. BECKETT.—You have done your best to do so.

The Hon. H. F. RICHARDSON.—Nothing of the kind.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I would suggest that proper notice be given of the proposed amendments. I hope honorable members will do that. I propose to report progress.

Progress was reported.

ADJOURNMENT.

The Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works).—I move—

> That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, October 4.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.43 p.m., until Tuesday, October 4.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, September 28, 1927.

The SPEAKER (**the Hon. O. R. Snowball**) took the chair at 4.17 p.m.

AUSTRALASIAN PERFORMING RIGHT ASSOCIATION LIMITED.

COLLECTION OF FEES AND PAYMENTS TO AUTHORS.

Mr. LINTON (*Boroondara*) asked the Attorney-General—

> If he will have inquiries made with reference to the Australasian Performing Right Association Limited as to—
>
> 1. The authority of the association to collect fees?

2. The proportion of the fees collected by the association which are—(*a*) paid to authors, and the mode of payment; and (*b*) retained by the association?

Mr. SLATER (Attorney-General).—I may point out to the honorable member that this is entirely a matter for the Commonwealth authorities to deal with. The Commonwealth as well as international law is involved. The question was the subject of a conference held in Adelaide in August of last year. The conference was presided over by Mr. Deane, the secretary to the Prime Minister's Department, and included representatives of the Australasian Performing Right Association Limited and individuals who were complaining against what I might call the exactions of that association. I have in my hand a newspaper report of the proceedings, the final paragraph of which reads as follows:—

> The Prime Minister said he was extremely gratified at the success which had attended this series of conferences, and with the fair and reasonable attitude that had been adopted by all concerned. The result would go far to clear away the friction and misunderstanding which had existed for some months past. He was informed by Mr. Deane, who presided at these conferences, that the delegates were practically unanimous in their appreciation of the generous manner in which their requests had been met by the Performing Right Association, and it was to be hoped that all concerned would now work together for their mutual benefit.

I have no objection to making inquiries, but, as I have pointed out, it is really a matter for the Commonwealth authorities. I have just been reminded that an international conference on this subject is to be held at Rome, and the Commonwealth will be represented by Sir Harrison Moore.

Sir WILLIAM MCPHERSON.—Will there be a State representative? Is there any chance of a job?

Mr. SLATER.—The honorable member might make representations to the Commonwealth authorities. As he is a friend of the present Commonwealth Government they might select him.

RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

MOTOR BUSES AND MOTOR TRUCKS.

Mr. KENT HUGHES (*Kew*) asked the Minister of Railways—

1. What are the makers' names of—(*a*) the motor buses; and (*b*) the motor trucks in the Railway Department and the total number of each make?

2. What percentage of the purchases of motor buses and trucks during the year ended 31st August last is British?

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE (Minister of Railways).—The answers are—

1. (*a*) Motor Buses—12 White, 6 International, 1 Fageol, 1 Brockway.

(*b*) Motor Trucks—1 Ford, 1-ton; 2 International, 1-ton; 10 International, 30-cwt.; 2 International, 2-ton; 5 International, 3-ton; 1 Thorneycroft, 3-ton; 3 Dennis, 3-ton; 5 Bean, 30-cwt.

2. Buses—Nil.

Trucks—Eight trucks out of the eleven purchased during the twelve months ended 31st August, 1927, were of British make.

IMPORTED GOODS FOR STATE DEPARTMENTS.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE (Minister of Railways), pursuant to an order of the House (dated October 17, 1905), presented a return of machinery, goods, and material manufactured or produced outside the Commonwealth for the use of the Railway Department (State Coal Mine) for the year ending 30th June, 1927.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL.

Mr. WEBBER (Honorary Minister), by leave, moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend section 493 of the Local Government Act 1915.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—The Government has already a Bill to provide for the amendment of the Local Government Act. Is this an urgent matter?

Mr. WEBBER.—Yes.

Mr. HOGAN.—This Bill is to deal with the power certain shires exercise in the closing of roads to wood-carters during winter months. That is the only issue in the Bill.

The motion was agreed to.

The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

ARCHITECTS REGISTRATION BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Council and, on the motion of Mr. WEBBER (Honorary Minister) was read a first time.

DROUGHT CONDITIONS.

RELIEF FOR SETTLERS.

Mr. GLOWREY (*Ouyen*).—I desire to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance, namely, "the need of immediate assistance being rendered by the Government to wheat-farmers in the north-western areas of this State owing to the failure of their crops in consequence of the drought."

Twelve honorable members rose in their places (as required by the Standing Order) to support the motion.

Mr. GLOWREY (*Ouyen*).—I regret very much that the necessity has arisen for bringing this matter before the House. Last night the Premier expressed doubts whether the drought had extended over any material part of this State. Those of us who are conversant with the conditions prevailing in the north-western part of Victoria, and who frequently pass through it, regret to have to say that it does extend over that portion of the State. In submitting this motion, it is, perhaps, advisable to review Mallee settlement generally, otherwise there may be some misapprehension in regard to the Mallee being suitable for the purpose of cultivating wheat. The need for assistance being necessary is due to the policy which has been followed in putting men on that particular area. Many of the settlers there did not have a very great amount of capital. When holdings were being allotted the Closer Settlement Board was instructed to give preference to those with a restricted amount of capital, and for that reason, perhaps, the Mallee as a successful area for cultivation is likely to be misjudged. It probably would not be necessary to appeal to the Government to-day for assistance if the men settled there had had an adequate amount of capital when they took up their holdings. There are a number of glaring examples of men who will not be able to carry on unless the Government comes to their aid. At the present time there are about 4,000 settlers who are dependent on the Closer Settlement Board for financing their operations. There are about 80,000 farmers in this State, and nearly 9,000 of them, which is approximately one-ninth of the total number, are carrying on their operations in the Mallee. It will not be necessary to grant assistance to all of those 9,000, but it is regrettable that a very large percentage of them will have to be assisted. A statement was made by the Premier that he had a report from two persons, whom he could rely upon, which indicated that there was no need at the present time for assistance to be given to distressed settlers. Surely the Premier ought to be guided by the statements of members of Parliament, who are public men, and who are conversant with conditions in the areas they represent, and travel in these areas frequently. The opinions of members should weigh more with the Premier than the statements of one or two individuals who are, perhaps, more favorably situated than others in the part of the State to which I refer. Apart altogether from the statement of members, the Premier will find in the files of the Closer Settlement Board reports of inspectors indicating that in certain areas a complete state of drought exists. That certainly is the case with regard to the Annuello and Manangatang districts. An inspector told me that he had written a report stating that a complete drought does exist there, and my own observation bears out that report. When I visited the district last Sunday, I did not see any crop which would return the wheat-growers sufficient seed for next season. I do not wish that statement, however, to be regarded as applicable generally to the Mallee. It is not so. This has been an extraordinary season. At Ouyen, for example, we have not yet had 5 inches of rain this year. Such rains as have fallen have been patchy. They have swept over narrow strips, so that, in certain areas, there are still fair crops. In my own case, I have even yet the prospect of a fair yield, but it cannot be within 50 per cent. of what I expected a fortnight ago. If the present weather conditions continue for one week longer, I doubt if I shall get even one-eighth of the return that I had reason to expect a fortnight ago. Governments, as a rule, are very slow to move in matters such as this. It is essential, therefore, that the Government should be impressed with the urgent necessity of taking immediate steps to see

that sustenance is granted to those in need. We make our plea only for those. Many of the storekeepers have closed down on the settlers already in certain areas. That is to say, they have refused to give them food supplies, except on payment of cash. Others have extended their credit until Monday of next week, anticipating that the Government may be influenced to do or promise something definite and immediate. If nothing is done, however, these storekeepers will insist on being paid in cash for such supplies as they may make available to the settlers. But the men on the land have not got the cash. The area in which settlers require Government assistance is vast, and, naturally, the organization of relief must take some time. It is for that reason that I press for action without delay. I have referred already to the number of settlers who come within the scope of the Closer Settlement Board. In the case of some of these 4,000 persons, their time has expired, and their relations with the Board have been ended. There are many other settlers, however, who have been for years in the Mallee, struggling along by themselves, and in no way concerned with the Closer Settlement Board, who are in as bad a position as any of those under the Board, if, indeed, they are not in a worse plight. They commenced operations with an initial lack of capital. After a time, they arrived at a stage at which land values were appreciating to such an extent that they found that they possessed an equity. Thereupon, they negotiated with mortgagees and received advances with which to pay various obligations, including those to the Government. Now they are indebted to private mortgagees, who will give them no further aid, and those settlers are at a dead-end. They have not the means nor the opportunities to obtain even essential commodities for the maintenance of their families. With respect to closer settlement, I have stated in this House that, approximately, £3,000,000 of public money has been advanced, of which £2,000,000 is still owing by the settlers in the northern areas. Therefore, this question of relief is a national one. The Government must protect its own assets. We do not desire the Government merely to make advances that will keep the settlers on their own blocks in idleness. That would not be in the best interests of the settlers or the Government. The vast majority of the blocks in the Mallee have not yet been brought up to a stage of thorough efficiency. Very few have been fenced sheep-proof, and many of the blocks are not equipped with dams as water storages. The Government should tackle the problem of furnishing prompt assistance, and should make its relief available for work to be done on the settlers' own holdings, with the view of bringing them up to the highest practicable state of efficiency. It may be necessary, therefore, for the Government to provide more money than the Act permits in connexion with the activities of the Closer Settlement Board. But if we do not make some desperate effort to bring those farms up to a state of efficiency, it will be impossible for the Government to get its money back, and it will be equally impossible for the settlers to succeed. If, on the other hand, the Government proceeds in the right way, the day will not be far distant when every penny ever advanced to the Mallee settlers will have been repaid. Then the settlers will be beyond that stage at which they need ever again call on the Government for aid. With respect to soldier settlers, the Advisory Boards were appointed with the definite object of ascertaining those settlers' present position, and of making recommendations for the men to be put on a basis whereby they might succeed ultimately. It must be realized now, however, in view of the severity of the drought conditions, that those Advisory Boards cannot make effective recommendations. The decisions that have been reached already must inevitably go by the board, and any that they might make in the course of the next two or three months would be bound to be influenced by the existing state of affairs. I am sure that the Advisory Boards would admit that if they were consulted. I have the backing of the returned soldier settlers of Annuello when I appeal to the Government to suspend the operations of the Advisory Boards in the areas affected. Those settlers in the Mallee who have had the necessary capital to adopt scientific methods of farming are doing well. I say this to impress on the House that we have still the utmost faith

in the Mallee. Last year, at Carwarp, Mr. Stewart, M.H.R., grew a 24-bushel average crop on a rainfall of only 4½ inches during the growing period. There are many other such instances which I might quote. To condemn the Mallee generally because there are men who cannot succeed on it, and have had to come to the Government for aid, would be doing our great north-western country a great injustice. After all droughts the experience has been that the year following the actual climax has provided a bumper harvest. If a good season should follow this, then those who are pessimistic concerning the future of the Mallee will be astounded at the vast results obtained. I may say that my own crop at Ouyen, with only 3 inches of rain for the year, up to four weeks ago had arrived at a stage at which I had every justification in expecting a return of eight bags to the acre. In fact, the experiences of this year have given me greater confidence than ever in the future of the Mallee. I am persuaded that, with improved farming methods, we shall grow crops that will vastly surprise the people of the Wimmera and other wheat-growing areas of the State. There is an outstanding characteristic possessed by the people of the north-western Mallee. They have taken up their holdings, and have battled through year after year of adversity. I have been with them when they have been reaping their harvests, and have been reflecting with gloom on the approach of the dreaded 4th of February. They have not had the money at that stage to pay the accounts looming up against them. But all their depression has disappeared a month later, when they have been occupied in tilling the soil preparatory to sowing their seed for the next harvest. They have forgotten the black past, and they are looking longingly forward to a good year at last, in the anticipation that one good season will enable them to wipe out their obligations and place their feet on the road to ultimate success. Honorable members may ask how it is that these settlers have persevered year in and year out. It is because of their confidence in the country and their hope for the future. I appeal to the Government not to do anything which would break down that spirit and result in the settlers being driven off their holdings so that others would take them over and reap the reward that is bound to come in the Mallee. It is essential, I say again, that the Government should take immediate steps. I appeal to it to move promptly, and in a way that will be worthy of this Government. If it does, then its action will go down in the history of the Mallee as the great turning point of that country. Referring, in conclusion, to the question of water-works, the Government has indicated already that the work of construction may be performed by the settlers. In fact, such work has been actually offered to the settlers to-day, but at the rate of 7¼d. a yard. That is not fair. No man could make horsefeed at such a remuneration; that is, on the present price of chaff. If the Government is going to make these works available to keep the settlers of the north-west on their holdings, the payment should be such as would enable them at least to keep their homes together. In speaking as I am doing, I recognize that we owe a duty to the taxpayers of the State as a whole. I suggest that local advisory committees be appointed to advise the Government what specific measures of relief are necessary, and what works should be put in hand on the soldier settlers' farms to bring them up to a state of efficiency. If that practical step were taken, I am sure that our confidence in the sincerity and determination of the settlers would be fully justified.

Mr. ALLAN (*Rodney*).—Some little time ago, I directed the attention of this House to the true conditions—which were becoming daily more seriously pronounced—of the northern areas. I was twitted, however, by members on the Government side of the House with being a pessimist. I was told, in effect, that I did not know what I was talking about. The remarks that have been uttered to-day, and particularly the concise statements of the honorable member for Swan Hill last night, must have brought home to this House the real nature of the predicament into which our producers have fallen in at least two-thirds of the total area of the State. Past Governments have always treated the wheat-growers in a generous fashion. I have heard it said that the Mallee was not worth saving. I do not believe, however, that any one

would say that to-day, because the Mallee is now the great wheat-producing area of Victoria. I was not at all satisfied with the reply of the Premier to the statements of the honorable member for Swan Hill last night. The Premier did not appear to appreciate the position of the people throughout two-thirds of the State, so far as the prospects of production were concerned. When I use the word "production," I have in mind that production may be said to be the centre of gravity so far as the welfare of Victoria is concerned. I have previously referred to our adverse trade balance, and I know perfectly well that the only way by which that trade balance can be put right is by increased production from the soil. The honorable member for Ouyen, in submitting his motion, referred to the north-west Mallee. I wish consideration to be given to the settlers in a far wider area than the north-west Mallee. With regard to the districts north from the city known as the Goulburn Valley, I have no hesitation in saying that there will not be more than seed for those districts from the coming harvest. If there is not rain within a week, there will not be seed in the Goulburn Valley. I could name quite a number of people who have turned their stock on to their crops. Some of the New South Wales squatters have rented crops, and probably some lucerne, and their sheep are now in the Goulburn Valley.

Mr. HOGAN.—Can you give the names of the places?

Mr. ALLAN.—I do not want to give the names of the farmers, but I refer to places on the Nathalia side, and on the west side of the Goulburn River.

Mr. HOGAN.—The rainfall for Nathalia for August was above the average.

Mr. ALLAN.—I do not know what the rainfall for any particular centre was during August, but from my own experience in the northern district, I can say that if there is not good rain in the month of June, the producer has to look out for trouble. Last June, there was almost no rain. There was only very light rain, at all events, and in my own district there has not been one fall of rain measuring an inch for thirteen months, which is a pretty long spell. The rainfall has been extremely light, totalling from 5 to 6 inches. The rain has fallen in showers, and there has not been anything like the amount of moisture a few inches under the soil that is required for a wheat crop, or a crop of anything else. I was surprised that the Government did not put in operation the starving stock railway rates. There are thousands of sheep being moved from the north to the Hamilton district, and to Gippsland, but I have not heard anything about the starving stock rates being applied.

Mr. HOGAN.—The honorable member must have knocked off reading the newspapers. The starving stock rates are in operation, and that fact has been published in the newspapers.

Mr. ALLAN.—I have not seen any one who has had the advantage of them yet, though I have seen many stock trains going along. There will be very little wheat in Victoria. Probably there will be some in the Wimmera district. Perhaps there will be enough to supply the State, but I am doubtful whether there will be.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—Will there be none for export?

Mr. ALLAN.—No; there will be none for export.

Mr. HOGAN.—I thought the honorable member for Gunbower was pretty pessimistic yesterday when he said the harvest would be only 20,000,000 bushels, but you have written it down to 9,000,000 bushels.

Mr. ALLAN.—I have written it down to 10,000,000 bushels, and that is the local consumption. There is just one gleam of light so far as Australia is concerned. I understand that the crops in Western Australia promise to be pretty good.

Mr. FROST.—They will have a 40,000,000 bushel harvest.

Mr. ALLAN.—When I was in that State, the crops were looking well, and the reports are that the Western Australian harvest will be sufficient to supply the wants of Australia, with possibly a little over for export. There is another matter to which I wish to refer. I am not in a position to say what effect the frosts have had on the fruit trees in the northern districts, but I am in a position to say what effect they have had upon the

vines, and I am quite satisfied that the yield of dried fruits this year will not be half that of a normal year. I do not know whether the apricot and peach crop will be up to the average, but I hope that they will be satisfactory. However, as I have said, I do not know what damage the frosts have done to the trees. Apart from wheat-growers altogether, in the Goulburn Valley there are a great many overseas settlers who are in a particularly bad way. They are on dairying blocks, which I have always said are too small, and there does not seem to have been good supervision. They have not very much lucerne, and they do not seem to have planted any millet or amber-cane for their stock. I frankly say I do not know what they are going to do for the summer. I consider that overseas settlers, who were not conversant with Australian conditions, should be given special attention when a drought comes along. As I have said, it does not appear as though the supervision had been particularly satisfactory, because these settlers have not been told how to cultivate their blocks. Those in the irrigation districts, at all events, should be in a position to carry on through the summer. Either the supervision was lax, or there was something else wrong, because I am quite sure that these settlers are going to be in very severe straits before the summer is over. Now, previous Governments have always said, not only to Mallee settlers, but to settlers who have been producing in all parts of the State, and thereby adding to the wealth of the State, when a time like this has come along, that they would find them seed and manure for their next year's crop. Those Governments recognized that the immediate necessity was to provide for the settlers' horses in some way, so that they could carry on until the time of seeding came along. I can say frankly that the Government will not be running any risk in giving assistance to the producers in any part of the State. Figures that were quoted in the House a little while ago by the Minister of Lands clearly indicated that there was no danger in that respect, because the whole of the money that had previously been advanced for seed and manure had been paid back. Sometimes it takes a year or two for the Government to get the money back, but it always comes back. Consequently, when a drought comes along, we are not in any danger in going to the assistance of the Mallee settlers, or the settlers in any other part of the State. A drought in Victoria has an effect on the whole of Australia, just as the Queensland drought had an effect on Victoria during the last year. It is said that something like 7,000,000 to 10,000,000 sheep died in Queensland. I shall not be surprised if at least that number die in New South Wales. Probably a lesser number will die in Victoria. Our stock will be tremendously depleted next year. I admit that supplying chaff to settlers under the conditions and with the prices that exist to-day is rather a difficult problem. The price of chaff in my district has reached £9 per ton already, and I scarcely know where supplies are going to come from, so the chances are that the price will reach a higher level than at present. I believe that, so far as the closer settlement areas are concerned, the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and the Closer Settlement Board must know exactly what the conditions are, but so far as the dry areas are concerned, Mr. McIver is the only member of the Closer Settlement Board who has a clear understanding of the exact conditions from week to week. I would suggest to the Minister of Lands that it would be advisable to let Mr. McIver take a run through those districts to consult with the settlers and land-holders, and see what should be done. There is no one who knows the State better than Mr. McIver, and no one who knows how to get the settlers out of their trouble with less cost. I hope that the Minister will allow Mr. McIver to go round the northern portions of the State, at all events, so that he will be fully alive to the exact conditions that exist there. Then he will be better able to advise what should be done. I was a little surprised to hear the honorable member for Ouyen say that storekeepers had practically closed down so far as giving credit was concerned. I do not know whether honorable members will be surprised to hear it, but, from what I can learn, the banks have pretty nearly closed down on credit. Therefore, it is not surprising

that the storekeepers are doing the same thing. In the closer settlement areas the banks have no security, and consequently they are not inclined to lend any money.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—They will not lend money when they are offered security.

Mr. ALLAN.—As I have said, I believe they are closing down a bit, even where they have the security. The settlers have for many years been kept going by the storekeepers, and I certainly give a good deal of praise to the storekeepers for carrying the settlers through difficult times. It can be plainly seen that if the banks close down on the storekeepers, the latter have to close down on the settlers, and that appears to be the position at the present time. I fully realize what production means to Victoria and to Australia as a whole, and I have no hesitation in saying that every producer in the State, provided that he is at all solvent, is worth keeping on the land, because you cannot put any one else on his block who will show a better return over a number of years than he will. He knows it better than any one else. Therefore I hope the Government will deal with the settlers in a very generous spirit, realizing that production must increase, and also realizing that we cannot allow any part of our State—the Mallee, or anywhere else—to go back to grazing. We have to keep up production, and I feel sure that the whole of the money advanced this year will come back within a year or two at the latest.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—What would be the effect of a good fall of rain?

Mr. ALLAN.—A good fall of rain will give a little more than seed for Victoria, if it comes within a week.

Mr. HOGAN.—Nonsense.

Mr. ALLAN.—If it does not come within a fortnight, that is the end.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—Providence is kind.

Mr. ALLAN.—I think Providence likes the settler who depends on himself as much as possible. One gleam of hope is that there has been some rain in the portions of Queensland where they have had a drought for two and a half years. I understand that in Central Queensland there are hardly any stock at all. The cattle are all gone, and only a few stud sheep are left. There has been some rain there, and I am hoping that from the north rain will come to Victoria during the midsummer months. I was called a pessimist a few weeks ago, and I do not want honorable members to call me a prophet. I may say, however, that it is surprising how much the squatters in New South Wales know about weather conditions. They were shifting their stock from New South Wales three months ago, so evidently they guessed pretty well what was coming. They were very nearly prophets. I hope that the Government will take a considerate view of the whole question, and that they will take action quickly, so that the settlers will realize that we know the value of their production, and that we do not want them to go off the land, but want them to continue, knowing perfectly well that their production will be resumed within a year or two.

Mr. POLLARD (*Bulla and Dalhousie*).—I join with the honorable member for Ouyen in expressing the hope that the Government will see fit to take early steps to give some form of relief to the settlers who have been hard hit. I do not agree with the alarming and pessimistic statements made by the honorable member for Rodney. I came down the Mildura-Maryborough railway line recently and I can safely say that, with the exception of the country north of Donald, the crops are not as bad as the honorable member would have us believe. The statement that the farmers throughout two-thirds of the State are in a bad way is not correct.

Mr. ALLAN.—I said there was a chance in the Wimmera.

Mr. POLLARD.—If we get rain in three or four weeks, the crops will not be good, but they will be fair. The position is a very sorry one in the country north of Donald. The people there will be extremely fortunate if they recover their seed. During my trip, I came into contact with many settlers, both Australian and overseas people, and I was struck by the fact that they are all exceedingly hard workers, and have great faith in the land on which they are settled. I am sure that the Government, acting on the advice of its officers, will see fit to make arrangements for advances for seed, fodder, and sustenance for the needy settlers. It could use some of its present organization—for instance, the Closer Settlement Board—in that work. Employment should be made available on some

of the waterworks channels, so as to give the settlers an opportunity of earning money during the present trying period. The honorable member for Rodney related a very sorry tale. He even hinted that the banks were feeling the pinch, and that there might be a financial crash. I deprecate such a statement. We have to realize that the possibilities of a financial crash in Victoria, or in Australia, are remote, because the Commonwealth Bank stands behind the associated banks.

Mr. ALLAN.—I did not hint at a financial crash.

Mr. POLLARD.—The honorable member said something about the banks closing down. In parts of the State the position is bad, but it is not bad all over Victoria. I join with other speakers in urging that early relief should be supplied to the deserving settlers in those portions of the State where the conditions are bad. It is true that people in the dried-fruits industry have suffered severely on account of the frosts affecting their plants. A moderate estimate is that 50 per cent. of their expected crop has gone.

Mr. ANGUS (*Gunbower*).—I regret that the Premier is not present now. Like other honorable members, I appreciate the statement made by the honorable member for Ouyen. That statement is substantially correct. Last night the Premier doubted my veracity as well as my judgment. The words that I employed on that occasion have been confirmed by every honorable member in this chamber except those in the Ministry and one other "Doubting Thomas." What the honorable member for Swan Hill and I said last night has been substantiated. My story was really an under-statement. I wished, in a friendly way, to make the Premier acquainted with what was taking place in the dry areas. It should be the desire of any Government to know the conditions of the State. It does not show good taste on the part of the Premier to doubt a statement made in this House by any honorable member. We represent the people. I have no doubt concerning the truthfulness of the statement that was made to the Premier by an isolated farmer who said that he had the promise of a crop. I know of certain instances where heavy local rains have fallen, and the crops do still give promise of some return. In the northern part particularly, there is an area between Bendigo and Dingee that is looking comparatively well. Rain fell more heavily there than in the other districts. In some parts, about 1 inch of rain fell at one period. In Wycheproof, rain fell, and the prospects are better. Speaking largely of the north, both in and out of the Mallee, not only is there a failure of the wheat crop, but there is, unfortunately, a dearth of fodder, and the stock are starving. While I congratulate the honorable member for Ouyen on his speech and on his advocacy of relief for those areas, I wish to assure the House that no mistake was made in placing settlers on the Mallee. The Government is taking no risks in advancing money to the people on that particular area to enable them to erect additional improvements. After all, in extreme cases, where an advance up to £2,000 has been made, there is an equity in the land. Most of the land in the Mallee is worth, at the very least, £5 to £6 per acre. If the £2,000 has been wisely expended, an area of 800 acres will be worth £4,000, and there is the 50 per cent. equity. That land will have full productive value when we get back to normal times. The Government should borrow money wisely at this juncture, and should, so far as it is practicable, construct works that will be required during the next two years for stock and domestic supplies and irrigation, and so keep the people employed. Such steps will not increase the liabilities on their holdings, but will enable them to earn money to keep down their debt to the Government. As far as it is practicable, the people should be encouraged to become the contractors of the State. The Country Roads Board should now construct more cross-country roads leading to the railway stations. A special loan should be floated for this particular purpose. Money should also be advanced to shire councils, free of interest for one year, to enable them to carry out works that will be needed during the next two years. We should lose slightly on the interest, but that course will be infinitely better than doling out a sum of money for the maintenance of the people. If it is impossible to give outside work, then I agree with the honorable member for Ouyen that provision should be made to enable the people on the newer country to erect improvements that will increase the national assets. As the State is the mortgagee in those cases, every improvement becomes an additional security for

the Government. We do not want to dole out sums of money purely for the sustenance of the people. They do not want that. They desire to be kept going. It is in the interests of the country that money should be provided for these purposes. I have no doubt about the capacity of the storages to supply the area west of the Loddon river. The storages are ever increasing. Within two years at least, there will be an abundant supply of water for irrigation purposes. In the meantime, the channels would give stock and domestic supplies to that area. There are districts between the Goulburn and the Loddon rivers that should be brought under irrigation. Irrigation systems should be regarded as insurance against the disastrous effects of drought. If we had developed the irrigation system further, and had spread the water over a greater area, there would not have been the losses in stock that have already occurred, and will occur during the coming summer. An extension of the irrigation system would be of national benefit. Unfortunately, this drought does not affect only Victoria; New South Wales is in a worse position than we are. The losses in the Riverina involve losses to Victoria. We cannot give assistance directly to the people in the Riverina, but if our irrigation system had been properly developed, it would have assured the survival of a big percentage of the sheep and cattle that died during the present drought. So long as it was possible, I have abstained from saying that we are in the midst of a drought, because I realize that much damage is done by funk. The financial institutions and the Government are afraid to launch out just when there is the greatest need for assistance. By a wise system of borrowing and of expending money, we shall be able to come out of the present drought in a better financial position than we ever did after any preceding drought. After the land has been allowed to fallow, it will be capable of producing more than in ordinary circumstances. I believe that it will be in the best interests of the State if the Government realizes that this is only a temporary set-back, and will provide for it. Unfortunately, I do not think that the Premier did himself credit last night. He deprecated the advice that was given on that occasion. I hope that he will realize that it is the unanimous wish of this House that he should do something on broad business lines to obviate the disaster that must occur if action is not taken promptly. Honorable members would be lacking in their duty if they delayed in placing before the Government the fullest information regarding the whole situation. I mentioned last night that it was necessary that the settlers' horses should be kept in the best condition in order that they might be used to the best advantage, and earn money for their owners during the dry period. My suggestion is that the Government should give settlers with teams employment so as to enable them to earn not only sufficient money to obtain feed for their horses, but, in addition, to secure sufficient funds to enable them and their families to live in comfort. If the Government grants assistance to the settlers, and thereby enables this policy to be carried out, the resources of the State will be conserved, and it will recover quickly from the set-back following on a dry year. The tragedy of a drought is that many sink beneath the tide of adversity during that period, but the State, as a whole, although it receives a temporary set-back, quickly recovers. We should learn from the lessons of the past. The Premier informed the House last night that he trusted in Providence, but I remind him that Providence invariably helps those who help themselves. It is the duty of the Government to assist Providence to provide for the best interests of the State. I was greatly surprised at the attitude which the Premier adopted last night when he spoke on this subject. I do not know whether he is sufficiently strong to withstand the strain of office during a period when the State is experiencing a set-back. It seemed to me last night, when the Premier spoke on this subject, that he was crumpling up under the strain of office. Now that the honorable gentleman has entered the chamber, I repeat that I was surprised at his attitude last night. He did not do justice to himself when he cast doubt on statements that had been made by some members on this (the Opposition) side of the House. He said that Providence would take care of the State. It is all very well to trust in Providence, but we must not overlook the fact that the welfare of this State is now in the hands of

the Premier and his Ministry. I hope that he will be guided by Providence, and that he and his Ministry will make adequate provision immediately to assist those men on the land who so sorely need assistance during this critical period.

Mr. ALLNUTT (*Mildura*).—I agree with the remarks of the previous speaker, and those of the honorable member for Rodney, that it is necessary for the Government to make provision promptly for the relief of those settlers in the northern districts who are suffering as a result of the present dry spell. What concerns me at present is that the Government may follow the example of previous Administrations, and extend assistance to the settlers when it is too late to be of real value. Unfortunately, that has been the experience in this State in the past. The settlers in the north-western districts have received assistance from previous Governments during dry spells, but, unfortunately, those Governments took so long to consider whether they should grant that assistance that it was of little use to the settlers when they received it. The situation is so acute at present that it demands immediate attention. Many suggestions have been made by honorable members during this debate as to the manner in which the Government may meet the position adequately. One trouble in the past has been that no supervision was exercised over the advances made to settlers to tide them over the difficult period. The settlers were compelled, without assistance, to feed their horses for some months with the result that the horses went back in condition before assistance was obtained from the Government. Then the settlers found that they could not get their horses into good condition when they desired to work them. Such a mistake as that should be avoided this year. The Government should take immediate action before the horses of the settlers in the dry districts get into low condition. One thing the Government should do is to ascertain the number of settlers who will require assistance in providing feed for their horses during the summer. Along the Redcliffs to Meringur railway line a large number of settlers' horses are still the property of the Closer Settlement Board. On the Government lies the responsibility of seeing that those horses are kept in good condition during the summer. As the Government has made available an amount of about £120,000 for the extension of water channels, and an amount of about £10,000 for road construction in the north-western part of the State, I suggest that it should consider the advisability of giving preference of employment on those works to settlers who are suffering as a result of the dry conditions, and who are competent to do the work. I recognize that a considerable number of settlers have had no experience of that class of work, and it would not therefore be profitable to the State or the settlers to employ them. The position could be met by the Government removing the horses owned by those settlers to southern districts where grass could be provided for them, or, if it were necessary to hand-feed them, that could be done at a lower cost than in the northern areas which are now affected by the dry weather. Most of the settlers will have to cart water during the summer months. That work will occupy a great deal of their time. If, in addition, they are required to cart from the railway station to their farms chaff which has been trucked to the stations by the Government, a great deal of additional work will be thrown on the horses, and the result will be that they will lose condition.

Mr. BODMAN.—I was informed by the Closer Settlement Board to-day that it is reserving abandoned holdings in Gippsland on which there is grass with the object of providing feed for the stock of settlers in the dry districts.

Mr. ALLNUTT.—I am glad to hear that. I know that in other dry periods the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, the Country Roads Board, and, in some cases, shire councils have made work available for the settlers who were in necessitous circumstances. The full value of that assistance was not secured because of the lack of adequate supervision over the men engaged on the work. It is very necessary to exercise careful supervision, because many of the settlers are not experienced in the class of work required on water channels and roads. It will be wise, therefore, to employ only those settlers who have had experience. My remarks have reference to the newer

Mallee, which I represent. The settlers in that part of the State could be employed in fencing, clearing, and other labouring work, and full value would be obtained for the assistance granted in that way if supervisors were appointed to see that the work was carried out efficiently. I do not suggest that money should be advanced to settlers as has been done in the past during dry periods. The advances were made too loosely in many cases, and the settlers who received that assistance did not give full value for the money obtained. The honorable member for Rodney suggested that the Director of Land Settlement should make a tour of inspection, and ascertain the exact position in the districts affected. I do not agree with that suggestion, because the position is so serious that it merits an inspection by a member of the Ministry. If the Minister of Lands were to visit the Mallee, and meet not only the settlers who are in need of assistance, but those who have had experience of other dry spells, the whole position could be discussed, and a policy worked out with advantage to the State and the settlers. I hope that the Minister of Lands will endeavour to do that. The settlers in the wheat-growing districts in the Mallee are not the only ones in that part of the State who have received a setback. The dried-fruit producers have also suffered. I am glad to say that those growers and I appreciate the action that the Government has taken in sending a Government inspector to the dried-fruit areas to ascertain the true position of the growers. I hope that the Government will make no distinction between the dried-fruit producers and the wheat-growers in the extension of assistance during the drought period. I do not desire to debate this question at any great length, but I wish to intimate that I speak on it in the spirit of helpfulness. I want to point out that, despite statements to the contrary, the Mallee is worth saving. Mention was made by the honorable member for Ouyen of the fact that last year the experimental plots on Mr. Stewart's farm yielded an average of 24 bushels per acre. Unfortunately this year—or rather in eleven months—not quite 3½ inches of rain has fallen in that area, and even that quantity has not all fallen in the growing period. When the rain has come it has registered from 10 to 25 points, and in some cases 30 points. Only three weeks ago there was the heaviest fall in eleven months—from 38 to 50 points. I inspected the plots on my way to the railway station yesterday, and I found that while they looked fairly ripe, they were beginning to turn in the stalk right at the ground, and I expect it is likely—if the present weather continues for the week—that when I return home on Saturday I shall find those experimental plots, which last year gave excellent results from a 4-in. fall of rain, will be a failure this year, despite the 3½-in. fall. I desire to emphasize that we have had an exceptionally bad season. Our fallows this year, which will carry crops next year, will not be so good as formerly, because we could not obtain good fallow, and the land has not received adequate working. We want the Government to take immediate steps in the matter, and to accept the position as it has been described in this House last night and this afternoon. They should not wait until the harvest is at hand, and some of the settlers have been forced off their holdings. I may mention, in conclusion, that the report that stores have closed down on settlers is, unfortunately, only too true. I have had complaints from settlers to that effect. The storekeepers have requested me to attend a combined meeting next Friday to discuss the question of making representations to the Closer Settlement Board with a view of assistance being granted to the settlers so that they can meet their liabilities and carry on.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON (*Hawthorn*).—I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, of the whole-hearted sympathy of all the Opposition members with the efforts of the honorable member for Ouyen and the honorable member for Swan Hill to persuade the Government to do something for those settlers who have been afflicted. I think it stands to the credit of this State that in the past—no matter what Government was in power—when disaster overtook the people, the Government was always prepared to assist them. We can recall the action taken by Governments in respect of bush fires, and one can very well feel proud of the people who also came forward to aid those in distress. Those helpful actions redounded to the credit of Victoria, not only in other parts of Australia, but all over the

world. The feelings of the people in connexion with disasters that overtake honest settlers were truly displayed. Then there was the outbreak of thrips which seriously affected the fruit in a certain district. The Government of the day helped the growers. Quite recently there was a cyclone, and the Government very properly came forward and assisted those in distress. I think, therefore, that we may look forward to the present Government helping in the case in point. The main thing that has been emphasized by honorable members is that whatever assistance is given should be given promptly. As the honorable member for Mildura said, we want to see the money spent wisely. The people who need assistance do not want charity, nor do they want doles. If the Government takes up this question enthusiastically and promptly, the money that it will advance can be spent on reproductive work. The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, various other Departments, and some public bodies have work available. The heads of the various Departments should be called together, and, after consultations have been held with the Government, certain work should be pushed forward in the districts concerned. That would be beneficial to the men whom we are trying to help, and beneficial also to the districts. We have had previous experiences of advancing money to settlers. When I was in office the Lawson Government made liberal advances for seed wheat, and I understand that practically every penny of the money so advanced has been repaid. I think that if help is given wisely on this occasion, the Government will not be very many pounds out of pocket in the end when seasons turn round and the settlers get on to their feet. I have been reminded by the honorable member for Boroondara that the Migration Agreement provides that money can be had from the Commonwealth for roads, railways, and bridges, and the interest payable is only 1 per cent. I throw that out as a hint to the Government. They may possibly use some of that money for the particular case that has been submitted. It could be had by the people at a low rate of interest and they would be able to discharge all their obligations. The matter under consideration has been very well dealt with by the honorable member for Ouyen and the honorable member for Swan Hill. But I urge the Premier to determine whether he can see his way to accord these people such assistance as they want, and to do so in such a way that the money will be returned, or that the work on which it is spent is reproductive. If he does this he will not only accord the people a great benefit, but he will be falling in with their wishes.

Mr. DUNSTAN (*Korong and Eaglehawk*).—I desire to support the remarks of honorable members on all sides of the House. Although I do not wish to sound any note of alarm, it is of no use to adopt the attitude of the ostrich and bury one's head in the sand, believing that all is well. I appreciated very much the optimistic spirit of the Premier when he announced in his Budget proposals that he was counting on a normal harvest, but I am very much afraid that any expectations that he has in that direction will not be realized. I am very glad that honorable members on all sides of the House have been anxious to support the motion, and to speak sympathetically of those struggling farmers in the northern part of Victoria. We are particularly desirous that a question of this kind should be dealt with purely in a non-party way—apart from any political feeling whatsoever. After all, the greatest assistance in such cases is that which is given immediately. I have just returned from a visit to the north-western part of the Mallee. I was there with the Railways Standing Committee, of which I am a member. I am quite satisfied that as far as the new areas in the Mallee are concerned, the statements which have been made by the honorable member for Ouyen, the honorable member for Mildura, and others have been in no sense exaggerated. We found that whether rain comes or not there will be practically no wheat in the north-western portion of the new Mallee district. Nothing can save the crops in that area. I do not quite agree with the honorable member for Rodney, who holds the view that we shall be lucky if we have more wheat this season than is necessary for local consumption. I am not so pessimistic as he is, because on our journey down yesterday we noticed that there were very good crops at Donald, St. Arnaud, Dunolly, Bealiba, and surrounding districts. There are other good crops in certain portions

of the Wimmera. However, everything is hanging in the balance, and if we do not receive good rains in the next week or two, the yields in those portions of the State will be comparatively moderate. Right throughout the length and breadth of Victoria, on the present outlook, the crops on an average will be poor, and I think we shall be very lucky if, even with rains, we have a yield of 20,000,000 or 25,000,000 bushels for the whole of the State. We find that in the north-west portion of the Mallee the settlers, as mentioned by the honorable member for Ouyen, are of a very fine type. Although they are disappointed with the dry season, they are in no sense downhearted. They are anxious to keep going, and that work should be provided for their teams. They wish to provide sustenance for themselves as well as for their horses. I hope that some effort will be made by the Government to meet their requirements. During our travels we met a number of the overseas settlers, and I was quite agreeably surprised to find that they were also of a very good type. I am pleased to say that they are quite as determined as the Australian settlers, and I believe they are going to make good also. The Mallee is certainly a very great asset to Victoria. The cry "Is it worth saving?" has been raised in the past. When the Mallee fails in its wheat harvest in any year, then the wheat yield of the State as a whole is always very low indeed. When the Mallee country has been cultivated for a longer period on a truly scientific basis, it will, in my opinion, bring forth a yield per acre equal to that produced in any other part of Victoria. Last week we came across a very large stretch of country that is particularly well suited for wheat-growing. We desire now that the Government shall push on with channel construction works throughout those areas. It will be a step in the direction of making land available for settlement. It will provide work for those who now cannot employ their teams. These men could be employed in no better way than by working on channel, road, and railway construction works in that important part of the State. It does seem very regrettable that no Government in the past has gone in for a policy of fodder conservation. Had such a policy been adopted, the settlers would not be in their present deplorable position. During the few days that the Railways Standing Committee were touring the Mallee districts, we did not notice even one stack of hay. The reason for that is that the Mallee farmer, who is a struggling farmer, cannot afford to stack hay. He must harvest his wheat, because he can obtain cash for that, and he must obtain cash in order that he may carry on. If we had in operation a scheme of fodder conservation under which the Government would make liberal advances against hay placed in a stack, properly protected and fenced against mice, the farmer would be enabled to keep a sufficient quantity of hay on his land to carry on with during the drought period. Right throughout the wheat-growing areas of the State we have to face occasional droughts. I hope that the present Government will take into consideration very seriously the necessity of pursuing a bold policy of fodder conservation. I hope that in the near future provision will be made to enable settlers to put aside quantities of hay sufficient to enable them to carry on. I wish, also, to express regret that the Department of Agriculture should issue very early estimates of our wheat yields.

Mr. FROST.—The Railway Department issues those estimates.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—I think the Department of Agriculture also issues a forecast. I believe that it did so quite recently. I noticed in the press a short time ago that it was estimated that the wheat yield of Victoria this year would reach a total of 45,000,000 bushels. Estimates of this kind, furnished so early in the year, are of absolutely no value. They are quite unreliable. They are altogether misleading to the general public. They have the effect, even if a fair yield follows upon the estimate, of depressing the wheat market, and they achieve no useful purpose whatever. I hope that the Government will request the officers of the Department of Agriculture to refrain from issuing these early forecasts as to the yield of wheat in future. The framers of the estimates should wait until, say, October. Not until October can an estimate of any value be issued for the information of the public.

Mr. MACKRELL.—The Railway Department issue estimates of the wheat yields expected in different areas.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—They take a certain area. They say, "In this area the yield

will be so many bushels of wheat." They take the average yield of the previous year or two for that area. But that is no way to go about making a forecast of a yield of wheat. The right way to forecast the harvest is to give due consideration to the seasonal prospects. The rainfall during the winter months is an important factor. The man who forecast a yield of 45,000,000 bushels of wheat in the State this year could not have taken into consideration the fact that the rainfall during the winter months was below the average. Any such estimate is misleading. However, the main thing is to provide work for the settlers in the north-western portions of Victoria to enable them to keep their teams going. We cannot afford to allow the horses to perish for lack of fodder. If work is not provided, and the settlers cannot earn money in order to obtain the fodder for their stock, the horses will perish. That will be a loss not only to the settlers, but to the State, because the horses will be required during the seeding period next year, when the farmers will have to put their crops in. I do not want to appear to be too pessimistic, but I do impress on the Government the importance of looking this question fairly in the face. It is no good camouflaging the position. The settlers are right up against it, and something must be done. The Government must finance them for the time being, or they will not be able to carry on. I hope that the Premier and the Minister of Lands will give very sympathetic replies to the requests that have been placed before them.

Mr. OLD (*Swan Hill*).—I introduced this matter last night on the adjournment, and received an unsympathetic and unsatisfactory reply from the Premier. Therefore, I feel it my duty to direct public attention to the matter. When an honorable member who is the elected representative of the people in an important electorate presents a case to Parliament on their behalf, he is surely entitled to be treated with ordinary courtesy by the head of the Government.

Mr. ALLAN.—You presented your case very well, too.

Mr. OLD.—That I presented a good case has been amply demonstrated by the speeches of other honorable members who are as conversant with the conditions as I am. The Premier stated that he had had an interview with a gentleman who is now farming at Underbool, and that he had been told that the man's crop was satisfactory. He also said that a farmer at Chinkapook had made a similar statement. He said, in effect, that he would defy any one to prove that the crops were failing, because in August there was a rainfall up to the average rainfall for that month throughout the length and breadth of Victoria. That statement may be, and probably is, true. But the crops of Victoria are not dependent on the rainfall of August alone. An important factor is the fallowing of the previous year. During the fallowing period of last year there was a low rainfall. The amount of moisture conserved by the fallowing process was not sufficient to keep the crops going in view of the subsequent light rainfalls. If honorable members desire proof of that statement, they have only to look at the case cited by the honorable member for Mildura. The honorable member for Mildura referred to Mr. Stewart's experimental plots, which last year gave excellent results with a 4-in. fall of rain. He stated that the average yield was 24 bushels to the acre on those plots. He further stated that during the last eleven months not quite 3½ inches of rain had fallen in that area, and that the crops will be a failure. I know that to be true. The fact that there was a satisfactory fall of rain in August in the Western district, or in Gippsland, does not affect the position in the northern districts at all.

Mr. HOGAN.—I know that it does not.

Mr. OLD.—The Premier did not say that last night.

Mr. HOGAN.—Some members made the statement last night that there were dry conditions all over the State.

Mr. OLD.—The Premier was replying to a statement that I made, and he simply stated that because some friends of his, who reside in my electorate, had said that their crops would be all right, there was no prospect of a crop failure.

Mr. HOGAN.—I did not say that at all.

Mr. OLD.—What can we think of the Premier of a State who apparently makes such contradictory statements? Last night he said that there was no drought in Victoria, but, in reply to the honorable member for Rodney to-day, he said that starving stock rates were in operation. What in the name of fortune does he mean by stating that the starving stock

rates are in operation if there is no starving stock? Last night I requested the Premier to take steps to have a responsible officer sent into the northern districts to investigate the position. That is a fair and reasonable request, and I sincerely trust that it will be acceded to.

Mr. HOGAN.—We have responsible officers there.

Mr. OLD.—We require something more than an investigation made by a man on the spot who is doing routine work. Either the Minister himself or the head of a Department should go.

Mr. BAILEY.—You are assuming that the Government has done nothing.

Mr. OLD.—Nothing of the kind. I am simply referring to the reply given by the Premier last night.

Mr. HOGAN.—You are doing nothing of the kind. You are making a garbled statement.

Mr. OLD.—There is nothing garbled about it. I am making a plain, unvarnished statement, and it can be substantiated by every honorable member of this House. I asked that a responsible officer should be sent to the district I referred to, and all that I could get from the Premier, when replying to me, was the statement that the Government would consider the matter. We are not discussing a matter of party politics. It is a subject that is above party altogether. Had the honorable member for Ouyen given me even the faintest hint of his intention to move the adjournment of the House to-day to discuss this very important question, I should not have mentioned the matter last night at all. I should have been only too pleased to assist the honorable member for Ouyen to-day. But for reasons best known to himself, he did not mention the fact that he intended to move the adjournment of the House.

Mr. GLOWREY.—You did not tell me that you were going to speak on the adjournment of the House last night.

Mr. OLD.—I consulted the honorable member on a previous occasion. However, I do not want to be side-tracked. When I had made up my mind to move the adjournment of the House on the important question of the subdivision of No. 1 Dry Area for the purpose of the appointment of District Inquiry Boards in connexion with soldier settlement, I consulted both the honorable member for Ouyen and the honorable member for Mildura, because I recognized that they were as interested as I was in the question. A national disaster has struck an important part of the State, and it is up to the Government, which cannot evade its responsibility, to take immediate steps to relieve the distress that undoubtedly exists there. I do not want to take up the role of carping critic. But I do want to make one or two suggestions. Other honorable members have stressed the importance of having public works carried on by the settlers. The honorable member for Ouyen touched on another aspect of the matter. He pointed out that there are certain essential works on the farms that can be carried out by individual settlers. If those works were put in hand, the assets of the Crown would be improved, and the settlers would not have to leave their homes. Advances could be made to enable the settlers to do what may be considered essential works on their farms. I would point out to the Premier and the Minister of Lands that it will be exceedingly inconvenient for a number of these settlers to leave their homes to take part in contract work. Many are newly married, and have young children. If they had to go to a distance their families would be left without means of conveyance of any kind. It would be a very undesirable state of affairs. Useful work could be done on practically every farm if advances were made to the settlers. As I stated last night, advances will have to be made irrespective of the equity of the settler, whether he be soldier or civilian. In many cases the advances are already in excess of the amount allowed by law. But in this period of national disaster that fact will have to be disregarded entirely. Sufficient advances to enable relief works to be carried out in some form must be provided in the case of each individual settler in need of relief to enable him to maintain his wife and family in a reasonable state of comfort. The teams must be kept alive so that they may be available for local work, or else they must be sent to more favoured parts of the State. I notice that about 1,000 acres in the Barwidgee portion of the Happy Valley Estate near Myrtleford is to be sold next month. I understand the ground is well grassed, and in good order. It would probably carry from 300 to 500 horses for the next six months. I suggest that the Minister of Lands should make inquiries, and if he finds the estate is in

as good a condition as I believe it is, he might consider the advisability of withdrawing it from sale, and allowing settlers in the drought-stricken areas to pasture their horses there. I strongly stress the point that time is the essence of the contract. The statements I made last night are, unfortunately, only too true. Storekeepers are unable to carry the settlers any longer. They have been forced into that position, and I believe that at the end of this week some settlers will be hard put to it to obtain the necessaries of life unless they are assisted by the Government.

Mr. LIND (*Gippsland East*).—I have no desire to take up the time of the House at any length, but I feel it is my duty to say something just now even if it is only for the purpose of encouraging the Premier and the Cabinet to reach out as quickly as possible and help these poor settlers who have been referred to by previous speakers. I want to congratulate the honorable member for Swan Hill and the honorable member for Ouyen for making this appeal to the Government. With other members of this House I passed through portions of the north-west Mallee during the week-end. We started at Nowingi on the main Mildura line, and then we went in a western direction through Raak and part of the parish of Willah and the adjoining parish. Travelling in the direction of the South Australian border we met settlers at Double Tanks, and then went through Merribah, Loxton, and Lyrup to Renmark. We saw drought-stricken areas in South Australia, and on reaching Renmark saw large areas of vines blackened with frost. On returning from South Australia we travelled on the Redcliffs to Meringur railway line, and through portion of the parishes north of that line, where we saw thousands of acres of wheat which were almost a complete failure as a result of the dry conditions. We passed through many parts of the country which had crops which will not return a bag to the acre.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—You are referring to the north-western part of the Mallee?

Mr. LIND.—Yes; I am referring to the area from Nowingi to the South Australian border, and thence to Meringur.

Mr. HOGAN—You are not referring to the country from Melbourne to Ouyen?

Mr. LIND.—No.

Mr. HOGAN.—You made an inspection of an unsettled area?

Mr. LIND.—Oh, no! We met a lot of settlers.

Mr. HOGAN.—You would not see many crops in the course of your inspection?

Mr. LIND.—We saw thousands of acres along the new line under cultivation. I want to help the Premier, and I am sure he is willing to help me to develop my case. During our travels we met many settlers, including some men from overseas. We heard from them the awful conditions in which they are at the present time. They have reached the limit of their advances, and are absolutely without prospects for the future. They told us that they were at their wits' end to know how to carry on, unless the Government came to their assistance.

Mr. ALLAN.—They are a good class of settlers.

Mr. LIND.—These people from overseas are undoubtedly a good class of settlers. There is no doubt that they are triers, and have the spirit necessary to make good in that country.

Mr. BAILEY.—I told them, when I was in that locality, that they could get advances so long as they effected certain improvements.

Mr. LIND.—I am glad the Minister has made that interjection, because it is my intention to refer to the advances which are necessary. When we were at the South Australian border we did not see any wheat growing that will be harvested. We passed through small patches under crop on the Victorian side of the border, but all that it would be good for would be for fallowing the land. It seemed as if each grain produced only one stick, and there was no life in the crop. I am satisfied that a fall of inches of rain would not make the crop profitable to harvest. In fact, a harvester would not be able to reach it, as the ears are too close to the ground. I have the greatest possible admiration for the men settled in that particular part of Victoria, but their position is desperate just now. The men from overseas did not have the Australian experience which is necessary on going into new country like the Mallee. At this point I should like to say that to put people from overseas in a settlement by themselves is absolutely wrong. Immigrants should be distributed amongst Australian settlers who have a knowledge of local conditions. At one place we stopped

at there were two or three settlers from overseas holding areas amongst our own people. One of them asked to be allowed to speak on behalf of his fellow-immigrants. This man was prepared to admit that they were in a better position through having their holding amongst those held by Australians than were other men from overseas who were in community settlements. I come from one of the most favoured districts in Victoria, so far as climatic conditions are concerned, and it was tragic to me to see the condition of the country I visited at the week-end. I appeal to the Premier and his Cabinet to act as quickly as possible to provide help for these people. I hope the assistance will not be in the form of providing employment on the making of roads and channels, but in the way of developing the holdings and helping the settlers to prepare a larger area for cultivation next season. The Government could help them by providing the necessary seed and fertilizers for the next season. I agree with all that has been said in this connexion by previous speakers, and as a representative of a portion of the State other than that affected, I urge the Government to render help as speedily as possible.

Mr. McLACHLAN (*Gippsland North*).—I want the Premier, in giving consideration to the claims of settlers in the Mallee, not to forget that there is an unfortunate section of people in part of North Gippsland who are also suffering from the want of rain. Generally speaking, Gippsland is favorably situated as far as rain is concerned, but at the present time some localities are wanting rain, and consideration should be extended to the settlers there. I shall be glad if the Government will get information from officers concerning the conditions of some of the settlers in parts of the district I represent.

Mr. ALLAN.—Are you referring to the Sale district?

Mr. McLACHLAN.—Yes. That district is drier than usual, and the Maffra district as well as the country south of the Latrobe river is also dry. Many settlers from overseas, on the irrigation areas at The Hart and Clydebank, are having a hard struggle at the present time to make both ends meet. I am satisfied that the Government will be sympathetic with these men, and if rain, which is anticipated, does not fall soon, many of them will want assistance. Some little time ago, in response to a request from settlers on Cobain's estate, the Government extended practical sympathy to them, and I am sure that others will be treated in the same fashion if an appeal is made for help.

Mr. HOGAN (Premier).—I am impressed by the representations made by honorable members on all sides of the House regarding the parlous condition of settlers who have planted a crop, who are faced with the possibility of not being able to gather the harvest, and consequently will get no remuneration for their year's work. I have always had a large amount of sympathy for any one in such a parlous condition. The concluding statement I made when referring to this matter last night was that the Government would do everything necessary to provide relief to settlers who are in need, as a result of their crops failing for want of rain. I want to make one or two comments on statements which have been made in the House this afternoon. The honorable member for Ouyen, who brought this matter up, stated that only men without capital were granted blocks in the Mallee. I am not aware that this is the case.

Mr. LIND.—That has been the practice for years.

Mr. HOGAN.—I do not think it has been the practice. I know of many instances where the opposite is the case. It is not a wise practice. It is very unwise; in fact, if the Government, or any Government Department or officer, says to an applicant for a block in the Mallee, "because you have some capital we refuse to give you this block," such a policy would be stupid.

Mr. GLOWREY.—It operated when Ouyen was first opened up, and it has continued to operate ever since.

Mr. HOGAN.—As the honorable member knows thoroughly well, capital is essential to farming operations in the Mallee. I do not think any good purpose would be served by exaggerating and in embarking on any orgy of pessimism. I deprecate the statement of the honorable member for Rodney that even if we get good rains in the course of the next few days we shall reap only enough wheat for seed.

Mr. ALLAN.—We shall see who is right.

Mr. HOGAN.—The honorable member has delivered a pessimistic statement, and I do not think that it would be borne out even if the dry conditions of to-day were to continue.

Mr. ALLAN.—But it is true.

Mr. HOGAN.—I have every sympathy for any farmer who has planted a crop and fears that he will not garner it. I have expressed the hope that we shall yet have bountiful rains. Meanwhile, we should be grateful for such benefits as we have received at the hands of Providence rather than indulge in an orgy of wailing, and in magnifying the seriousness of our plight. I said last night that the rainfall for the month of August was, over a very large part of the State, above the average for that month. That is a fact. I know that we had a dry summer. There was little or no rain during the months of January, February, and March; and we had a dry autumn. But there was sufficient rain to germinate the seed, and keep the crops going. In August there was a pretty good rainfall in practically every district throughout the State. The exceptions were the Mallee areas, and small portions of the electorates of Gippsland East and Gippsland North, and the area around Melbourne. The rainfall for August, I repeat, was above the average. I hold in my hand a chart which has been compiled by Mr. Hunt. It shows the whole of Victoria and part of New South Wales. Honorable members will perceive that by far the greater part of the chart is tinted blue. All that blue area received falls of rain which made the total for the month of August higher than the average since records have been compiled. The small portions which show white received falls below the average.

Mr. MCDONALD.—The rainfall was above the average for one month only.

Mr. HOGAN.—I have said so. I believe that even that small area in Gippsland has had relief since this chart was published. The position at Orbost, and in all that country farther on, to the New South Wales border, is now all right; but conditions are still dry around Maffra and Sale. Some members appear to have adopted the slogan of that character in one of our Australian poems, who cried, "We will all be ruined." The honorable member for Rodney was so pessimistic as to forecast that we should have a harvest of only 9,000,000 or 10,000,000 bushels. He went on to say that about 10,000,000 head of sheep had died in Queensland, that another 10,000,000 had died or were dying in New South Wales, and that about 10,000,000 were going to die in Victoria.

Mr. ALLAN.—I do not think that I said how many would die in Victoria.

Mr. HOGAN.—The honorable member indulged in a real orgy of pessimism. I assure him that over a large area of Victoria conditions are very good, and that over more than three-fourths of the whole State conditions are fair. Even over that part concerning which the honorable member was most doleful, namely, the Goulburn Valley, the rainfall for August was above the average for that month. Unfortunately, there has been a dry period covering the last couple of weeks, but I am hopeful that we shall have relief within the next week. We have read with great pleasure of very good falls of rain in the central areas of Queensland, where exceptionally dry conditions have prevailed for a long while. In all that country, which embraces such places as Longreach, Hughenden, and Winton, saving rains have fallen. In the *Herald* to-night there is further cheerful news, under the headings of "Three-inch falls in New South Wales: General falls expected in 24 hours." The telegram, which is dated, "Sydney, Wednesday," reads—

> Beneficial rain has fallen on the north coast. Murwillumbah got 328 points in 24 hours, Mullumbimby 324, Ballina 270. Rain in other parts of the State was light, but it is anticipated that within 24 hours the rain will be general over the entire State.

Mr. ALLAN.—Those places mentioned are all coastal towns.

Mr. HOGAN.—It is anticipated that within 24 hours the rain will be general over the entire State. That will not be a coastal fall. The whole State can scarcely be said to be on the coast. The honorable member is an incurable pessimist. Rain fell in Queensland on Tuesday, and, working south to New South Wales, there were recorded falls of

more than 3 inches. Now, we have the forecast of general rain over the whole of that State. That is an exceptionally good piece of news, not only for the people of Queensland and New South Wales, but for the people of Victoria; and we are hopeful that the rain will extend still further south, and reach the dry areas of our own State. With respect to the settlers in the Mallee whose crops are threatened with failure, if rain falls within the next few days those crops will not be a failure. I say that, even of those crops which the members of the Railways Standing Committee saw during their recent visit.

Mr. OLD.—There is no chance for those crops. I am sorry that you have gone too far now. You were doing pretty well up to that point.

Mr. HOGAN.—If the honorable member does not value 2 or 3 inches of rain in the Mallee in the next two or three days, I do. Such a rainfall would not be too late. The effect of it, indeed, would be very fine, and would prove the honorable member's forecast of 13,000,000 bushels for the coming harvest in Victoria to be a long way wide of the mark. Now, as to what the Government can do. We shall investigate the position, and, even if settlers who are in a parlous condition have received advances up to the maximum permitted, we shall make provision for assisting them by providing advances with the aid of which they may erect fences and undertake the further clearing of their blocks, and construct dams and carry on fallowing operations. The Minister of Lands will make a detailed statement after I have concluded, in which he will set out exactly what can be done and what is being done. He will read reports from the officers of his Department direct from the districts concerned, so that honorable members may know that the Government is giving full consideration to the matter, and has had the whole position under consideration all the time.

Mr. GLOWREY.—What about those who have mortgaged themselves to private individuals and do not come within the scope of the Closer Settlement Board?

Mr. HOGAN.—The Government will help any settler who loses his crop, and, consequently, will not be able to pay his way unless he gets some assistance. We shall render every assistance that it is practicable or possible for us to give. We shall expedite the construction of water channels by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, and so provide work for the settlers, in return for which they will be paid wages, which will materially assist them in carrying on. With respect to the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition, that the Government might make use of some of the money that is available in connexion with the Imperial migration agreement, the investigation which the Railways Standing Committee commenced last week may afford scope for the employment of some of that money. I am referring to the examination by the Committee of that area of country between the Ouyen to Murrayville line and the Redcliffs to Meringur line. This investigation is of considerable importance, and if it could be expedited so that the Committee would be in a position to present its report to Parliament this session, something might be done. That is, if the Committee reported favorably, it would be possible for the Government to start work in that district for the construction of water channels and the railway line.

Mr. LINTON.—By the utilization of portion of this cheap money?

Mr. HOGAN.—Yes, the money could be availed of for such a purpose, but it could not be used for the relief purposes which we are now considering generally. It could be made use of for the construction of this proposed new railway, or for the building of roads, or the digging of water channels in that particular area of the Mallee. I do not know, of course, whether it will be practicable for the Railways Standing Committee to expedite its inquiry. Parliament is sitting, and it is difficult for the members of the Committee to give attention to the reference in hand. I do not know whether the Committee could make necessary inspections of the area. I do not know, indeed, whether it considers it necessary to make further inspections.

Mr. POLLARD.—Two more trips will be necessary.

Mr. HOGAN.—It will be very difficult for the members of the Committee to make these inspections while Parliament is sitting, but the Government would welcome it if they could carry out their ad-

ditional investigations over the coming week-ends, just as they made one inspection during last week-end. I should greatly appreciate it, at any rate, if the Committee did all that was possible to expedite its business with a view to providing this projected new railway work and other relief work for a maximum number of people in that part of the country. I now repeat what I said last night: the Government will investigate the position, and will do whatever is necessary and practicable. In order to allow the Minister of Lands an opportunity to make a brief supplementary statement, I shall ask that the time allowed for the discussion of this motion be extended.

On the motion of Mr. HOGAN (Premier), Standing Order No. 8B was suspended so far as to allow the discussion to proceed for twenty minutes beyond the expiration of the two hours permitted by that Standing Order.

(At 6.30 p.m. the sitting was suspended until 7.42 p.m.)

Mr. BAILEY (Minister of Lands).—After the very full explanation given to the House by the Premier, I think the settlers in the north will have no misapprehension regarding the intentions of the Government towards them during the coming dry season. The Premier has covered most of the questions raised by the various honorable members who have spoken, and I feel that his assurances to the House will be regarded as satisfactory. I may say that as soon as it was brought under my notice that conditions in the Mallee were likely to be anything but satisfactory I wired to one of our inspectors to attend the meeting of settlers held at Annuello last week, at which the honorable member for Ouyen was present. That inspector has submitted to me the various resolutions carried at that meeting, and I may tell the honorable member for Ouyen that provision has already been made to meet almost the whole of the requests made by the settlers at the meeting. In addition to that, I have had during the past week inspectors going right through the Mallee districts, ascertaining the number of horses that will be required to carry out necessary works that must be gone on with for the purpose of giving employment, the quantity of chaff that will be required for fodder for those horses, and also the number of horses that it will be possible to remove without inconveniencing the settlers. Arrangements have also been made for the agistment of horses, because it will be much cheaper to move them down south to places that have been secured for the purpose of grazing them. It is the intention of the Government, as the Premier has said, to go on with certain works that will give employment to the settlers and to a number of their horses. Payments will be made in accordance with schedules of rates that were agreed upon in 1923 at a meeting of settlers at Manangatang. On the 10th of January, 1923, there was a meeting of settlers at Manangatang when the members of the Closer Settlement Board were present, and a schedule of the prices for improvements made on and off the blocks was agreed upon.

Mr. GLOWREY.—It should depend upon the value of the chaff taken.

Mr. BAILEY.—The price of chaff is higher now than it was then, and a proportionate increase will have to be paid. We have this matter well in hand, and none of the settlers will be allowed to suffer in consequence of the drought conditions. I do not think there is any necessity to take up more time. I thought that I should tell honorable members that the inspectors have been out for more than a week, and no time will be lost in giving relief to the needy settlers.

Mr. GLOWREY (*Ouyen*).—By leave, I should like to thank both the Minister of Lands and the Premier for the satisfactory replies they have given. Their remarks will ease the minds of these people in the north-west.

The motion for the adjournment of the House was negatived.

STATE SAVINGS BANK BILL.

Mr. HOGAN (Treasurer).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

In moving the second reading of this measure, I desire to place before honorable members some information regarding, first, the activities of the State Savings Bank; and, second, the way in which it is proposed to alter the State Savings Bank Acts to make them more instrumental in effecting the welfare of the people of the State. Honorable members are, of course, aware that the

State Savings Bank is a Government institution. It is well and soundly established, not only in the financial circles of Victoria, but in the affections and hearts of the people.

Sir WILLIAM MCPHERSON.—It is well managed.

Mr. HOGAN.—The State Savings Bank is well managed, as the Leader of the Opposition says. The State Savings Bank plays a most important part in our national life, because it is designed to develop habits of thrift amongst the people, beginning with the boys and girls in our schools, where there are 119,745 school depositors, with £178,750 at their credit, and continuing the good work in the factories and other places of business. The accumulated deposits now amount to just upon £60,000,000 at credit of 1,167,000 accounts. The deposits have more than doubled in the last ten years, increasing from £28,000,000 in the year 1917. The bank has 188 branches scattered over the State in all centres of population, and 394 agencies in the smaller towns and villages. It is of great moment to provide facilities and encouragement for the people to save, and also to invest and utilize their savings to the best advantage for them and for the national well-being. This has been recognized by Parliament when framing the State Savings Bank Acts, and, as a result, the funds of the bank have had a beneficient effect on the development of the State and the prosperity of its citizens. Large sums have been invested in Government and municipal loans, which have been used for the extension and improvement of railways, roads, &c.; but the most noteworthy work of the bank has been the assistance rendered under Crédit Foncier terms to farmers and other workers by advances on the security of farms and dwellings, and also by the erection of dwellings under the Housing and Reclamation Act 1920. The total amount of current loans on farms and dwellings under these two systems at the 30th of June last was £18,238,000, advanced to 35,862 borrowers.

Mr. EVERARD.—Have you the separate information for farms and for dwellings?

Mr. HOGAN.—I have the separate amounts advanced to the borrowers. The success of the Bank is indicated by the fact that it has accumulated a reserve fund in the Savings Bank department as at the 30th of June last of £2,000,000; and, in addition to that, it has a reserve fund in the Crédit Foncier department of £401,670. These facts show that the conditions laid down by Parliament for the Crédit Foncier department and housing Act systems of loans are perfectly sound, and that the affairs of the Bank have been wisely and carefully administered by the Commissioners and their executive officers. Conditions to-day are more favorable; the country has been more extensively developed, greater transport facilities are available, and the population of the State has greatly increased. We can now with safety extend the usefulness of the Bank by allowing more liberal advances to be made, especially to farmers, who have been restricted during the 30 years that the Crédit Foncier system has been in force, to advances of two-thirds of valuation, and in the case of soldiers since 1919 three-fourths. This Bill will enable the Bank to make advances up to three-fourths of the valuation for civilians as well as soldiers. The maximum loan to a farmer will also be increased from £2,000 to £3,000. This will meet the requirements of farmers and also meet the difficulties due to the altered value of money, and the higher cost of requirements generally which has affected industry and production in Australia in common with all other countries.

Mr. PENNINGTON.—Is there any provision for assisting pastoralists?

Mr. HOGAN.—The maximum that the State Savings Bank will be able to advance—if this measure is agreed to—will be £3,000. That will help the pastoralists as well as the farmers. Previously no one could get more than £2,000, but a person will be able to get £3,000 under this Bill.

Mr. ANGUS.—He can get a direct loan.

Mr. HOGAN.—The maximum amount that may be lent on buildings under the Crédit Foncier terms has been increased from £1,000 to £1,500, and the term of the loans will be extended from 31½ to 35 years for buildings of brick, stone, or concrete. This longer term will also apply to farm loans, which will enable the Commissioners to reduce the rate of repayments, and thus relieve the strain upon the producer who is tilling the soil, as well as the citizen who is striving to acquire a dwelling for his family during the period when the children are not able

to help, but are of necessity a considerable charge upon the breadwinner's income. The Bill increases the limit of the cost of dwellings under the Housing and Reclamation Act from £850 to £1,000 for those of timber and from £950 to £1,300 for those of brick, stone, or concrete.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—Does it reduce the deposit?

Mr. HOGAN.—No. The people will be able to get a more valuable house. It is a reduction in that when the maximum cost of the house was £850 a person had to put down a deposit of £50. Now if a house is of brick, stone, or concrete, and to cost £1,350, he would have to pay a deposit of only £50. The £50 deposit is not part of the State Savings Bank Acts at all. We are not dealing with the deposits in this Bill. The amount was higher previously. The Commissioners reduced the amount to meet the special requirements brought under notice by the honorable member for Port Melbourne in connexion with the houses at Fisherman's Bend.

Mr. MACKRELL.—Must the land be paid for?

Mr. HOGAN.—The sum of £850, if the house is of timber, includes the cost of the land and the house. In the case of the £1,300 house, that sum includes the cost of the land and the dwelling.

Mr. MACKRELL.—Must the land be paid for?

Mr. HOGAN.—No. The cost of the land is included in the total amount fixed for the house whether the dwelling is of timber or brick, and the loan is paid off in weekly instalments.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX.—If a man owns a block of land, can he get the full value of his house?

Mr. HOGAN.—I will not make a definite statement, but I think he can.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX.—If the land is worth the deposit?

Mr. HOGAN.—If a man has the land and consults the Commissioners, no doubt he will get a house built. The Bill includes provision, as I explained, for increasing the limit of the cost of houses under the Housing and Reclamation Act from £850 to £1,000 in the case of timber houses, and for houses of brick, stone, or concrete from £950 to £1,350. This alteration is necessary to provide more accommodation for borrowers with large families, and also on account of the increased value of land within a few miles of the city. The cost of the land leaves insufficient balance to pay for the house, and any excess over the present limits must be found by the applicant. In future, if this measure is enacted, a wider margin for borrowing will be provided, and a deposit of only £50 will be required to be made by the applicant.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Country people have not been able to take advantage of that provision. They have not been able to obtain advances from the bank for building homes, except in a few of the larger cities.

Mr. HOGAN.—An attempt will be made to remedy that position. An important clause provides for the ratification of the new agreement which has been made between the Commonwealth Government and the Commissioners of the State Savings Bank with regard to the erection of dwellings under War Service Homes conditions. This agreement does not come into operation until it has been approved by the Commonwealth and State Parliaments. The Commissioners have been building War Service homes for the Commonwealth since 1922, and are still doing so under another agreement which will lapse when the new agreement is ratified. Under the agreement now in force the bank builds for the War Service Homes Commissioner with money provided by the Commonwealth, the bank receiving 15s. per cent. per annum on the amount of loans current for building the homes, and collecting repayments. Under the new agreement, which is printed in full in the schedule to this Bill, and is therefore part of the Bill, the money will still be provided by the Commonwealth, but it will be by way of loans to the bank, to be repaid by instalments as the soldiers' repayments are made. The bank will not, therefore, have to provide any money, and the soldiers' repayments will gradually provide the money to liquidate the debt to the Commonwealth, but at the end of twenty years the bank is to have a final settlement, paying back to the Commonwealth any balance of debt still undischarged. This will be repaid by the soldier borrowers.

Mr. MURPHY.—If the soldiers default in their payments, who will bear the loss, the Commonwealth or the State Savings Bank Commissioners?

Mr. HOGAN.—The State Savings Bank, under the agreement, was working for the Commonwealth as an agent, and was paid commission as an agent. Under the new agreement the bank will become the owner of the houses, and the balance will, of course, represent the sum still to be paid by the soldier borrowers, and will be collected from them by the bank as the remaining instalments fall due. The rate of interest charged to borrowers and paid to the Commonwealth will be the same as at present, namely, 5 per cent. There is, therefore, no margin of income to cover expenses and the Commonwealth will pay to the State Savings Bank 13s. per cent. per annum on the amount of current loans from time to time, to cover expenses of management and any contingent loss that may occur. It is estimated that that 13s. per cent. per annum will be sufficient to cover working expenses, and any losses that may occur. The vital difference between the two agreements is that under the old agreement the War Service Homes Commissioner is the registered proprietor, the bank only acting as his agent; but under the new agreement the bank will become the owner of all the dwellings it has already erected, and also those to be erected by it. The State Savings Bank Commissioners consider that the investment will be perfectly sound, and the conditions under which they will work in future will be free of the embarrassing dual control which exists under the old agreement, and under which they were unwilling to continue and had given notice to terminate. The outcome of this arrangement was the new agreement now submitted for approval by Parliament. The number of homes erected by the bank under the War Service Homes conditions, as at the 30th of June last, was 2,906, and the total amount of advances current on these dwellings was £2,137,983. It is probable that in a very few years the repayments will exceed the amount of new expenditure, and thereafter the total outstanding will decrease each year. This branch of the State Savings Bank's work is carried on with the building of dwellings under the Housing and Reclamation Act, the same plans and specifications being used and the building department dealing with them under identical conditions. The new agreement will unify the control, and thereafter the dwellings will be the property of the bank. That statement answers the question which was asked by the Leader of the Opposition in the earlier part of my speech. The provision of homes for the people is a work of great national importance, because it contributes so greatly to the health, comfort, contentment, and happiness of the people, and tends to enhance the thrift and prosperity of the nation, because a healthy and contented populace will develop greater physical and mental energy and diligence. I shall now explain various clauses of the Bill. With regard to clause 2, I point out that section 38 of of the principal Act, as amended in 1922 by Act 3249, provides that a friendly society or charitable society may deposit more than £1,000 (which is the maximum for other depositors), and may receive interest on the excess at a rate to be determined by the Commissioners. The amendment now proposed will extend the same concession to trustee companies. The object is to allow trustee companies to consolidate their numerous small accounts into one account, and thus save them from the necessity of having a large number of pass-books. It will also save much clerical labour at the savings bank. Section 48 of the principal Act is affected by clause 3. That section provides that if a depositor dies, and no will has been notified within two months, or proved within three months, the bank may pay the balance at credit to those entitled, if the balance does not exceed £200. The amending clause provides that in addition to this total sum of £200, the bank may deliver up bonds, debentures, or such other securities lodged with the bank for safe custody, up to the value of £200. Dealing with clause 4, I point out that section 67 (*a*) of the principal Act provides for the lodging of cash and deposits by the Commissioners in banks up to 20 per cent. of the funds of the Savings Bank department, and limits the banks in which such deposits may be made to "banks which are constituted bankers of the Government, or if there is no such bank, then in any bank approved by the Auditor-General." It is now proposed to strike out the words "if there is no such bank, then in any bank approved by the Auditor-General," and substitute, "in any bank approved by the Treasurer of Victoria."

Mr. GREENWOOD.—What is the reason for that?

Mr. HOGAN.—Section 67 was inserted in the principal Act many years ago, and it has not operated. The Commissioners are compelled to have a large sum of money at call so that they will be able to repay the people's savings if they wish to withdraw them. The provision made in the principal Act was that the Commissioners should deposit up to 20 per cent. of the funds of the Savings Bank department with banks which are constituted bankers of the Government, or if there is no such bank, some bank approved by the Auditor-General. At the present time there are eight banks which are constituted bankers of the Government. They are the seven associated banks and the Commonwealth Bank.

Mr. GREENWOOD.—The Commissioners could pay the whole of the 20 per cent. into one bank approved by the Treasurer if this amendment is made?

Mr. HOGAN.—I think the honorable member is misinterpreting the position. If, in addition to the eight banks, the Commissioners desire to lodge money with another bank, the person from whom that authority will have to be obtained will be the Treasurer, and not the Auditor-General. This amendment has nothing to do with the allocation of deposits among the banks. It is merely a technical amendment which the Commissioners have requested. I do not think that the Auditor-General has ever been called upon to exercise the power given in section 67 of the principal Act.

Mr. MACKRELL.—The amendment will apply only if the Commissioners desire to deposit money in a ninth bank?

Mr. HOGAN.—That is so. The alteration applies also to section 98 of the principal Act, which deals with investment of borrowers' repayments in the Crédit Foncier department. Clause 5 relates to section 69 of the principal Act, which deals with the Savings Bank department, and limits the amount of any mortgage loan in the Savings Bank department to three-fifths of the valuation. The new clause makes it two-thirds, which is also the proportion allowed in the Crédit Foncier department for ordinary loans. The valuations made for the Commissioners are on careful lines, and the margin of security should be sufficient for a loan of 66⅔ per cent. of value. I shall now deal with clause 6. Section 93 of the principal Act relates to the Crédit Foncier department. Paragraphs (*a*) and (*b*) of clause 6 provide that the loan of two-thirds of valuation be increased to three-fourths. Cases often occur in which the security is of such a nature that three-fourths could be safely granted, which would make it possible for an applicant, who is worthy of assistance, to carry on. The limit in the Savings Bank department, in clause 5, is to be two-thirds; but in the Crédit Foncier Department it can be safely increased to three-fourths, because of the compulsory sinking fund which steadily reduces the debt; there is no such sinking fund in the Savings Bank department for loans limited to a period of three years.

Mr. OLD.—Under section 93, the total amount that can be advanced is £100,000. I presume that you intend to repeal that.

Mr. HOGAN.—The matter to which the honorable member referred is dealt with in the principal Act, which fixes the limit of £100,000. Paragraph (*c*) of the clause repeals that limit of £100,000, which is the total of all loans the Commissioners are authorized to grant on orchards, vineyards, and similar plantations. By paragraph (*d*) loans on orchards, vineyards, and similar plantations are limited—firstly, to two-thirds of the value of the land for agricultural and pastoral purposes, plus one-fourth of the added value of the plantation, but such added value is limited to a maximum of £30 per acre. The honorable member for Gunbower asked a question concerning this matter some time ago. This clause increases the two-thirds value in accordance with paragraph (*a*), and raises the limit of £30 to £50; and as only one-fourth of this added value can be advanced, it raises the possible extra loan from £7 10s. to £12 10s. per acre. The limitation of loans on orchards, &c., was fixed about 30 years ago, when plantations of this nature were not so well established as they are now, and the result is that the Commissioners are not able, at the present time, to give any assistance to well-established orchardists, as the value of such plantations is so far in excess of £30 per acre. Paragraph (*e*) raises the limit of Crédit Foncier loans on farms from £2,000 to £3,000; and on residential or shop securities from £1,000 to £1,500. The increases

of values, since the existing limits were fixed, has been so considerable that a large proportion of securities cannot now be accepted by the Commissioners, because of the comparatively small advances authorized by the State Savings Bank Acts in the Crédit Foncier department. At present Crédit Foncier loans must be repaid by 63 half-yearly payments, that is, in 31½ years, or less. Clause 7 provides that this period shall be the maximum for loans on residential or shop securities of wood; but for all other advances—that is, for advances on farms or residential and shop securities of brick, stone, or concrete the limit shall be 70 half-yearly payments, or 35 years. The longer term will reduce the rates of repayments, which can be safely done for all securities except those of timber-framed dwellings and shops, which will still be for 31½ years. For stone, brick, or concrete buildings, erected for farmers, the term of repayment will be extended by the Bill to 35 years. That, of course, will reduce the annual payments, and will make it much easier for poor people to make the payments which will be required under the State Savings Bank legislation, and particularly under the housing legislation in a few years. Sub-section 11 (*b*), of section 95, is repealed, because it provides that the rate on residential or shop securities must be not less than 7½ per cent., and when the term is extended to 35 years, it will sometimes be less than 7½ per cent. Clause 8 repeals certain words in sub-section (3) of section 99 which require the interest on the Reserve Fund to be shown separately after deduction therefrom of a proportion of expenses of management. This necessitates complicated calculations each year and the earmarking of particular investments, but it is of no value, and does not alter the amount of the reserve as all profits are added to the reserve fund. Dealing with clause 9, I point out that section 101 of the principal Act provides for appointment by the Governor in Council of two auditors, one to retire every year, and not to be eligible again until out of office for two years. This new amending clause provides for appointment of each auditor for four years instead of two years, and allows him to be eligible for re-appointment. It takes an auditor some time to get a full grasp of the extensive business of the Bank, and an auditor is more valuable after a few years' experience. The frequent changes of auditors under the existing section reduces the value of the audit.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—Then an auditor will not have to stand down at all?

Mr. HOGAN.—Not if the Government considers that his work is satisfactory. Trustees, executors, charitable and friendly societies are already authorized by section 107 of the principal Act to invest in stock or debentures issued by the Commissioners. Clause 10 authorizes them to invest in deposits in the Bank. The Commissioners were authorized by section 67 (*c*) of the principal Act, amended by Acts 2599 and 2823, to invest in Commonwealth loans issued "for war purposes." Clause 11 will extend the authority to all Commonwealth loans by the repeal of the words "for war purposes." Commonwealth loans are sometimes issued for the States. The total cost of a house, including land, is limited by the Housing and Reclamation Act to £850 for house of wood, and £950 for house of brick, stone, or concrete. Clause 12 raises the limits to £1,000 and £1,300 respectively. Under existing limits it is difficult to provide a house of wood for a man with a large family, and it is impossible to build more than a very small house in brick; it is also necessary to limit the cost of land to a maximum of £3 per foot, and therefore a house cannot be erected near to a railway station or in a suburb near the city, where land costs more than £3 per foot, without severely restricting the size of the house. The increased sums proposed will make it possible to overcome these difficulties. The honorable member for Port Melbourne, particularly, is aware of the importance of such changes. It was difficult to build workmen's homes at Fisherman's Bend because of the value of the land. The proposal, if made effective, will make it much easier for workers to get homes in places where the land is of such a value as to have made it impossible for them to obtain those homes under the old legislation.

Mr. MURPHY.—Does it not restrict people who are desirous of building homes in Port Melbourne?

Mr. HOGAN.—It will make the building of homes easier for them. Under the

existing legislation, when land near a railway station, or in a suburb near the city was worth more than £3 a foot and was purchased for the erection of the home, it was not possible to build a structure that would come within the prescribed limits of cost.

Mr. EVERARD.—Is the measure in place of a rural bank Bill?

Mr. HOGAN.—Oh, no; the rural bank measure will be proceeded with subsequently, and it will, of course, be in addition to the Bill which I am now explaining.

Mr. CUTHBERTSON.—Why not extend its operation to include the other prospective provisions?

Mr. HOGAN.—We shall jump that hurdle when we come to it. Clause 13 is intended to prevent speculation. The Housing and Reclamation Act is intended to assist eligible persons of limited means to acquire homes, but the Act may be used for speculative profit if a purchaser may pay off at any time after obtaining possession. The Commissioners will have discretion to allow transfers in cases where domestic or other reasonable causes make it necessary to do so.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—That means one family one house.

Mr. COTTER. — The Commissioners have the necessary power at the present time. In the event of a householder meeting with misfortune and being unable to continue his obligations in regard to his house, the Commissioners will accept another tenant.

Mr. HOGAN.—Clause 13 will restrict speculation. It is as follows:—

> Notwithstanding anything in section 8 of the Housing and Reclamation Act 1920, a purchaser who is otherwise entitled to obtain from the Commissioners a transfer of the land upon which a dwelling-house is acquired or erected in pursuance of division 1 of Part I. of the said Act shall not be entitled to obtain such transfer during the first five years after the date of the contract of sale unless the Commissioners approve, in writing, of such transfer.

If, even during the five years, because of some domestic reason, but not for speculative reasons, the worker wants to sell his home, the Commissioners may approve of a transfer.

Sir WILLIAM MCPHERSON.—After five years the householder can do what he likes?

Mr. HOGAN.—Yes. I turn now to clause 14. Section 9 of the Housing and Reclamation Act limits the period over which repayments may be spread to 28 years; this will be retained for houses of wood, but clause 10 extends the term for houses of brick, stone, or concrete to 35 years, the same period as is proposed for Crédit Foncier loans on similar securities. The sections of Acts referred to in clause 15 provide for insurance against damage by fire, white ants, or other insects with regard to all buildings held by the Commissioners, for which an insurance trust account is kept by the Commissioners. This clause extends the insurance to cover damage by any other prescribed cause. The insurance companies are now granting what are called comprehensive policies, to cover risks of all kinds. This clause will enable the Commissioners to arrange similar terms with consent of the Governor in Council. Under clause 16, the Commissioners are authorized to increase the amount loanable on Crédit Foncier conditions upon the security of a dwelling-house by 10 per cent. of the valuation, provided the house has not been erected more than six months, and provided the borrower is not in receipt of an income exceeding £400, and does not own another house, and provided the total amount of the loan is not increased to a sum exceeding £850. The present limitation is £650, which the clause increases by £200. The object of this clause is to encourage the erection of new dwellings; and the increase of the limit is necessary, because the loan of £650 is too small for the family house in great demand. Clause 17 is a new provision, and one which I am sure will commend itself to the customers of the State Savings Bank, as it will make for expedition and for economy. This clause provides that, as soon as may be, but not later than the 31st of December, 1928, the ordinary legal business of the Commissioners relating to all loans and advances shall, so far as practicable, be carried out by officers employed exclusively in the service of the Commissioners. Hitherto, and at the present time, all such legal business has been, and is being done, by one firm of solicitors, whose fees, so far as they relate to the Savings Bank business, are controlled by a schedule fixed

by the Commissioners, who are of opinion that the cost of undertaking the work by their own staff will not be less than the cost of the present system. But, if the change is spread over the next year, to allow due preparation to be made, they will be able to establish the new system to the best advantage financially, and with the least inconvenience to their clients or the bank whilst the new system is being organized. The number of loans settled during the year ended the 30th of June last was 4,540, an average of 87 per week, and as each loan usually involves several interviews, searches at the Titles Office, preparation of documents, payment of previous mortgage and other creditors, and correspondence with the borrower and others, it will be realized that a large staff must be employed, and a large area of office accommodation is also necessary. In addition to the settlement of loans, there is also a large number of dealings during the year, owing to sales and transfers of property under mortgage, releases of whole or part, and other matters.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—They had not set up a legal department?

Mr. HOGAN.—They had not power to do so. This clause is to give them the power.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—They will employ properly qualified legal men?

Mr. HOGAN.—Quite so. I now come to clause 18. The purpose of this clause is to ratify the agreement made between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State Savings Bank with regard to War Service Homes. The agreement is printed as a schedule to the Bill. I explained this clause earlier in my speech.

Mr. GREENWOOD.—What scope is left to the rural bank?

Mr. HOGAN.—A scope as wide as the four corners of Victoria. What the rural bank Bill is designed to deal with is loans to farmers and pastoralists, and relates to that question of allowing the State Savings Bank to receive deposits, and to allow the depositors to operate them as current accounts by cheque. It also designed to deal with the matter of the bank making advances on overdraft to its clients when it desires to do so.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—There will be plenty of scope for that bank.

Mr. HOGAN.—There is no doubt about that.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—You said that you would make a statement showing the financial position as regards farms and homes, separately.

Mr. HOGAN.—Yes. The position with regard to metropolitan and country advances at the 30th of June, 1927, was as follows:—

Crédit Foncier and Housing—			
Metropolitan			£13,133,223
Country—			
Houses ..	£1,602,360		
Farms ..	3,502,500		
Country Industries	92,450		5,197,310
Total			£18,330,533
Savings Bank Department—			
Metropolitan			£902,601
Country—			
Houses ..	£106,974		
Farms ..	443,779		550,753
Total			£1,453,354
Total both Departments—			
Metropolitan			£14,035,824
Country—			
Houses ..	£1,709,334		
Farms ..	3,946,279		
Country Industries	92,450		5,748,063
Grand Total			£19,783,887

The money for the Crédit Foncier and housing loans is provided by sale of Crédit Foncier debentures, and these have been taken up by the public as to part and by the Savings Bank department for the balance as follows as at the 30th of June, 1927:—

The Public	£5,484,650
Savings Bank Department ..	12,858,000
Total ..	£18,342,650

Mr. GREENWOOD.—Under the Crédit Foncier system you are going to lend 75 per cent. The State Agricultural Bank can operate only on the remaining 25 per cent.

Mr. HOGAN.—The State Savings Bank was operating under this disadvantage in the past, that it could not lend a farmer more than £2,000—that was the limit—and that it could not lend him more than two-thirds of the value of his property, irrespective of how much land he had. This Bill knocks out those two restrictions and allows the bank to advance up to three-fourths of the value of the property, and to lend up to £3,000.

Mr. GREENWOOD.—But there is only 25 per cent. for the State Agricultural Bank to operate upon.

Mr. HOGAN.—No; the field is unlimited. Another Bill will be brought in to provide for the establishment of the rural bank. But I do not want to be dragged into a discussion on that Bill at this stage, other than to say that there will be plenty of business for such a bank. The honorable member for Nunawading thinks that that bank will lend further sums of money to the people who had already been advanced money by the State Savings Bank. As a matter of fact, the rural bank will deal with a new set of customers altogether.

Mr. CUTHBERTSON.—It will do good business with overdrafts, perhaps.

Mr. HOGAN.—We will discuss that matter when the other Bill is before us.

Mr. ANGUS.—Unless the rural bank is going to be under the State Savings Bank Commissioners, it does not come into the picture.

The SPEAKER (the Hon. O. R. Snowball).—It is out of order to discuss a Bill that is not before the House.

Mr. HOGAN.—The honorable member for Gunbower wants to discuss something not before us. It is certainly advisable to defer that discussion until the other Bill is brought before the House. That concludes the explanation I desire to make on the State Savings Bank Bill. I commend it to honorable members on both sides of the House. I hope that the Bill will receive favorable consideration from honorable members, that it will have a speedy passage, and take its place on the statute-book.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—When may we expect the State Agricultural Bank Bill?

Mr. HOGAN.—As soon as it is humanly possible to bring it forward.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON (*Hawthorn*).—I feel sure that members on both sides of the House welcome this most important Bill, which liberalizes the provisions of the State Savings Bank Acts. The benefits to be derived under this Bill will be shared by the people in the country and in the metropolis alike. It contains many important provisions. The Premier will, I feel sure, readily agree to an adjournment for at least a week. I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

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

MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN TRAMWAYS BILL (No. 2).

Mr. WEBBER (Honorary Minister).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Recently we passed a Bill increasing the borrowing powers of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board. When that measure was before the House the question of the conversion of the cable system to electric traction was dealt with by several members, and the opinion was expressed that the Board should call a halt in its conversion work. The Government promised that before any more lines were converted to electricity a Bill would be introduced vesting in the Governor in Council the power to veto any further conversion work if it was thought advisable to do so. The object of this Bill is to give effect to that promise. At any rate, that is one of the objects. Clause 2 provides that with the exception of conversion operations which have been already entered upon but not yet completed, no further step in that direction shall be undertaken by the Board unless the consent of the Governor in Council is previously obtained. That will enable the Minister of Public Works to go into the whole question whether it is advisable to convert certain lines which are still being run under the cable system. The Minister will also be able to consider in what streets the converted lines will run. Those who have objections to the conversion of certain lines and to the proposed route will be able to place their views before the Minister, who will then go into the whole matter and make his recommendation to the Governor in Council.

Mr. GREENWOOD.—Will this Bill apply to Smith-street?

Mr. WEBBER.—It will enable that particular route to be dealt with. If the Board desires to convert the Smith-street cable line to electric traction under the Bill it must first obtain the approval of the Governor in Council. Before the final decision is arrived at, those who object to any deviation of existing routes, or to the conversion of the cable system, may place their views before the Minister. I may point out that this Bill will not apply to the Richmond tramway line, which is now being converted.

Mr. LINTON.—It will apply to the Victoria-street cable line.

Mr. WEBBER.—Yes, because no actual work of conversion has been begun. Some surveys have been made.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—If the Bill is passed Parliament will not have any say in future conversions.

Mr. WEBBER.—Under the law that exists at the present time, the Board can convert any line it thinks fit without consulting the Government or Parliament. By the Act which was passed in 1918, the Board has full power to convert all the cable lines to the electric system.

Mr. MURPHY.—It is time to consider whether the Board should continue to have that power.

Mr. WEBBER.—This Bill will give the Governor in Council power to control the operations of the Board in regard to conversions.

Mr. JACKSON.—It will take the power out of the Board's hands and place it in the hands of the Government.

Mr. WEBBER.—That is what is proposed.

Mr. GREENWOOD.—It will be providing for political control.

Mr. WEBBER.—In all cases where Parliament retains control it is practically political control.

Mr. COTTER.—The Government will have power to deal with the matter when Parliament is in recess. That is the danger.

Mr. WEBBER.—At the present time neither the Government nor Parliament has any power to interfere with the conversion of the cable system. It does not matter whether Parliament is in recess or not. The Board can go ahead with the work of conversion.

Mr. COTTER.—If Parliament is not sitting a Government may hang up the work of conversion.

Mr. WEBBER.—But I have already told the honorable member that at the present time it does not matter whether Parliament is in recess or not. The Board decides whether a line will be converted.

Mr. COTTER.—That is not my point.

Mr. WEBBER.—What I am trying to point out to the honorable member is that this Bill does not make the position any worse than it is to-day. It does not curtail the powers and privileges of Parliament, because Parliament has no definite power in this respect.

Mr. CUTHBERTSON.—The Bill will control the powers of the Board?

Mr. WEBBER.—Yes. If the Bill does not become law the Board can continue to convert lines as it thinks fit.

Mr. HOGAN.—The only control which can be exercised by Parliament is for us to say that we will not provide the Board with the necessary money for conversion. We could not say that we would provide money for the Board to spend in some way and not in another way. The only way would be not to let it have any money at all.

Mr. WEBBER.—Clause 3 makes an amendment in the Act which was passed in 1923. In section 25 of that Act provision is made for the imposition of a betterment rate. Certain steps have to be taken before the betterment rate can be imposed in any particular locality. A proposed tramway has to be recommended by the Railways Standing Committee. After a scheme has been so recommended the local council obtains a full report from the Board as to the probable losses that will result from the extension of a tramway line, or the construction of a new one. The betterment rate will be imposed to cover the losses which may be incurred over a period of five years in the case of new lines. Under the existing law, a council can only impose a betterment rate on the system of valuation which is in existence for ordinary municipal purposes. If a municipality is rated on the annual rental value system, the council will have to take that system in fixing its betterment rate. On the other hand, if a council has adopted the unimproved value system it must use that system for its betterment rate for tramway purposes. This clause proposes to give councils which have adopted the annual rental system the option of using the unimproved value system for the purposes of the tramway betterment rate. Honorable members will realize that whilst a council may not favour the unimproved rating system for general purposes, it may approve of the adoption of that system for the purpose of imposing the betterment rate, because a tramway extension will materially improve the value of vacant land. At the present time, if a poll of the ratepayers is taken by a council in some of the outer suburbs where there are large tracts of vacant land, but where the extension of a tramway system will materially improve its value, the people who have

the bulk of the voting power will be the owners of the vacant land, who do not reside in the locality. These people will have power to say whether or not the betterment rate should be imposed, while those people living in the district, who have not the balance of the voting power, will not have the most say in determining whether the betterment system should be imposed or not. The owners of vacant land may vote in favour of the imposition of the betterment rate, and then dispose of their property at an enhanced value. They will obtain the unearned increment which results from the extension of the tramway system, to which they are not entitled. We propose that if councils decide to impose the betterment rate to provide for the probable losses on tramway extensions, they may adopt the unimproved value system. I emphasize the word "may," because it will be optional with councils to adopt that system. If the unimproved value system is adopted, it may be that owners of unoccupied land will probably not be so anxious to vote for the extension of a tramway, and in that way we shall be giving to owners of houses already along the route more equitable voting power than they have at the present time. The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board has no power to act upon that provision unless the ratepayers concerned have a referendum upon the question. The Board has no power to impose a betterment rate. That is entirely a matter for the council and the ratepayers to deal with. If a poll results in favour of the rate being imposed, the Board then takes the necessary steps for the construction of the line. The procedure is rather complicated, and I do not propose to go into details at this stage. When the Bill is in Committee I will give honorable members any information they may desire.

Mr. MURPHY.—Are you making the betterment tax for five years optional or compulsory?

Mr. WEBBER.—We do not propose to alter the 1923 Act in that respect.

Mr. MURPHY.—No advantage has yet been taken of those provisions.

Mr. WEBBER.—There is no instance of a betterment rate having been imposed for tramway extension purposes. No council has yet asked for the preliminary steps to be taken, and the initiative really rests with the people themselves. The Board has to build or extend a line if the people are prepared to agree to the imposition of a betterment rate.

Mr. COYLE.—Will this Bill apply only to conversion schemes?

Mr. WEBBER.—The betterment rate does not apply to conversion schemes at all. It can be imposed only in regard to the extension of a line or the construction of a new one.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX.—If the Bill is passed, will it operate in regard to the conversion of the Collins-street cable tram system?

Mr. WEBBER.—I have previously pointed out that the conversion of the cable system is now in the hands of the Board. But it is now proposed to transfer to the Governor in Council the power to determine whether further conversions shall take place or not. That will give an opportunity for the whole scheme to be analysed, and very thoroughly weighed by some outside person, who would not have that unconscious bias which might be possessed by the Board. There will be, in fact, the creation really of a third party—the Minister of Public Works—who will act in the capacity of referee.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON (*Hawthorn*).—This Bill involves a new departure in regard to the metropolitan tramway system. Parliament, in its wisdom, set up a body of experts to deal with tramway matters. Now the Government proposes that power shall be taken away from that body of experts and transferred to the Minister of Public Works. Whether that is wise or not I am not prepared at this moment to say. Seeing that the Bill may have such far-reaching consequences, I presume that the Government will not object to the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. WEBBER.—This Bill is on lines that have been indicated already. I outlined its main principles when I moved the second reading of another Bill having to do with the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board some weeks ago.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON.—It would be unfair to ask the House to proceed with the debate at this stage. Therefore, I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

Mr. WETTENHALL (*Lowan*).—I trust that the motion for the adjournment of the debate will be agreed to. Here is a measure which embraces a distinctly new principle. In effect, it may be said that the Bill proposes to transfer from the Board to the Minister of Public Works the final decision as to the construction of a new tramway route. Thus arises the possibility of the introduction of political influence in the matter of deciding for or against a new line. I can only say that if honorable members are forced to go straight ahead with the consideration of the Bill to-night they will do so, and they will keep going for some time longer than the Government may wish. We are not finished yet.

Mr. JACKSON (*Prahran*).—I, too, appeal to the Government to agree to the motion for the adjournment of the debate. There is a very big principle involved in the measure. I do not know whether the Bill has been introduced with the intention of blocking the conversion of the Collins-street tramway. Honorable members will want to know where the Bill is likely to lead them.

Mr. CAIN.—Do you know of any reason why there should not be a tramline in Collins-street, as well as in Bourke-street?

Mr. JACKSON.—I am not considering that matter now. I repeat that I have a suspicion that this Bill is for the purpose of blocking the Collins-street conversion. If that were its purpose I might be in favour of it, but I cannot say that I support the Bill at this stage, seeing that a new and grave principle is involved. The Government would be well-advised to agree to the adjournment, so that honorable members and the public generally may have an opportunity to study the measure and prepare themselves to express their opinions on it.

Mr. WEBBER (Honorary Minister).—I was not under the impression that this Bill was of such magnitude, and that it possessed such important features as honorable members appear to consider that it does. I have no objection to a brief adjournment, but I remind the House that I outlined the principal features of the Bill when dealing with another matter associated with the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board some weeks ago. This Bill does not seek to make any departure from what I then announced. Honorable members must remember that the Board can proceed to-day, if it cares to do so, with the conversion of the Victoria-street line, because it has sufficient borrowing powers.

Mr. KENT HUGHES (*Kew*).—Set up a Transport Board, and get over all your difficulties at once.

Mr. WEBBER.—I am afraid that there would be considerably greater delay following on the introduction of a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Transport Board than is likely in the case of this measure. However, I am anxious to consult the wishes of the House, and I am willing that the debate should be adjourned for a week.

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

SWINE COMPENSATION BILL.

Mr. CAIN (Honorary Minister).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a third time.

When the measure was before the House last week, certain matters were raised by the honorable member for Mildura and other members. They asked particularly that provision should be made for the payment of compensation in connexion with the destruction of piggeries, apart altogether from compensation for swine. I desired that further consideration of the Bill should be deferred until the Attorney-General had had an opportunity to examine the suggested amendment of the honorable member for Mildura and to go into the matter with the Parliamentary Draftsman. That having been done, it has been found that the proposal is surrounded with difficulties, which, unfortunately, the Government cannot surmount. The suggestion for compensation in respect of the destruction of piggeries appeared to be, on the face of it, reasonable, especially as it was not proposed that the compensation should be made retrospective. The main difficulty, however, was found to be that the pig-raisers, on selling their pigs, would be the contributors to the fund, but that another set of people might be the beneficiaries in connexion with compensation for the destruction of buildings. For example, the owner of a property might lease it for a number of years to a tenant

who went in for pig-raising. If an outbreak of swine fever occurred, it would be the pig-raiser and seller who would have built up the compensation fund, but it would be the owner of the property, who had contributed nothing whatever, who would be compensated for the compulsory destruction of the piggery on his property. I am afraid that, if the proposed amendment were made, the effect would be to destroy the whole financial basis of the Bill.

Mr. BODMAN.—But the owner of the property would lose his asset.

Mr. CAIN.—That would not affect the fact that he would not have been a contributor to the fund from which he was to be compensated.

Mr. BODMAN.—But he would have provided his tenant with the necessary buildings to enable the latter to engage in pig-raising.

Mr. CAIN.—That may be so, but there are objections to the suggested amendment from a legal point of view. The Attorney-General will explain the legal position more fully than I can.

Mr. BODMAN.—There is a combination.

Mr. CAIN.—The honorable member's statement is that the owner of the building contributes something by reason of the fact that he owns the building.

Mr. BODMAN.—Yes; and he finds housing for the pigs.

Mr. CAIN.—For which he is paid rent. He will make no contribution whatever to the fund, which will be contributed to by a different set of people.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—There could be insurance of sties.

Mr. CAIN.—That is another matter altogether. Compensation for the owners of sties could possibly be dealt with by means of insurance, but not in this Bill. The draughtsmen and the Attorney-General point out that the people who own these properties are not contributors to the fund, and that, following parliamentary procedure, and the principles of British justice generally, they would not be entitled to compensation out of a fund to which they had not contributed. After all, the fund may, or may not, be in a depleted state. I think, judging from the calculations of the officers of the Department, that it is safe to say that the fund will probably be larger than is required, after we have wiped out the retrospective compensation, but it may not be so. There may be an extensive outbreak of disease, and the fund may be depleted. Then it might be necessary to increase the contribution to the fund from 2d. in the £1 to 3d. in the £1, because of our paying compensation to owners of buildings, although they had not been called upon to contribute to the fund.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Could'nt the Attorney-General argue the matter out with other legal members?

Mr. CAIN.—I am satisfied that the Attorney-General would be quite prepared to argue the matter with any legal member of the Opposition. He is backed up in the argument which he has submitted to me by our draftsmen, who are very capable officers, and have been employed in the service of the State for a number of years. While some of us may complain about the phraseology of our draftsmen, it can safely be said that to a large extent their law has been sound, and has been able to stand the tests of the courts from time to time. I have pointed out to honorable members, who are pressing for an amendment, the difficulties in the way.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—Could those difficulties be got over in another way—by an insurance fund, for instance?

Mr. CAIN.—They could be got over in that way. That is a matter for further consideration. There is nothing to prevent an insurance system being inaugurated under which the buildings would be insured against destruction. I submit that that is the proper way of dealing with the matter.

Mr. GLOWREY.—Do you admit the necessity for such a provision?

Mr. CAIN.—Yes; there is justification for it, but there are difficulties in the way.

Mr. SLATER (Attorney-General).—I feel that it is a matter of very great doubt whether the amendment suggested by the honorable member for Mildura really comes within the ambit of the measure. In confirmation of what the Honorary Minister has said, I may say that some considerable time was spent, yesterday, by myself and two of the draftsmen in trying to draft an amendment which would just meet the position that

was sought by the honorable member for Mildura. When we examined the question we found that it was full of very great difficulties. The suggested amendment opened up many aspects of real property law, and it would be very difficult to meet quite a number of contingencies that would inevitably arise if the idea of the amendment were given effect to. There would be the position of the owner of a sty, the position of a tenant farmer, and the position of a mortgagee to consider. A very elaborate amendment, making provision for all the contingencies that might arise, would have to be drafted. The matter could not be dealt with in the small compass suggested in the amendment indicated by the honorable member for Mildura. When we were discussing the proposed amendment yesterday we considered quite a number of contingencies that would quite likely arise. Take the case of a tenant farmer who acquires a farm on which, at the time, there are no sties. He erects sties, and they become part of the freehold, unless there is a covenant to the contrary in the lease. Those sties are destroyed because of infection. The question would arise as to what the lessee's position was. It could be claimed on behalf of the land-owner that the sties formed part of the freehold—that they were appurtenant to the property, and were the land-owner's. The lessee would have no compensation rights at all, although it was his money that was responsible for the erection of the sties. That was one difficulty in our way, but there were other difficulties. In the case of the destruction of a sty, what would a mortgagee's rights be? The more we examined the situation, the more difficult it became. Whilst I will not suggest that it is not possible for an amendment to be drafted that would meet all possible contingencies, I think that such an amendment would have a serious overloading effect on the Bill. As I have said, the amendment would touch on very many points of the law dealing with property. I suggest to the honorable member for Mildura that he reconsider the matter, because it would be very difficult to draft an amendment that would protect all the interests affected.

The SPEAKER (the Hon. O. R. Snowball).—I did not like to interrupt the Minister's explanation of the reasons why the Government was not prepared go on with the proposed amendment of the Bill, but there are other reasons why such an amendment could not be included in the Bill, and they are matters of moment. Such an amendment would be out of order as being entirely beyond the scope and the framework of the Bill. That, I think, is quite clear. The measure originated in a resolution agreed to in Committee of the Whole authorizing the imposition of certain stamp duties "upon statements on sales of pigs and carcasses of pigs," and the whole scope and framework of the Bill brought in on that resolution, and as read a second time was the creation of a fund to provide compensation for the owners of pigs. To the extent that the stamp duties would fall short of the amount required for compensation, the Bill provides for a charge on the Consolidated Revenue. Under the Constitution Act this latter charge required a Governor's message recommending it. The message read—

> In accordance with the requirements of section 57 of the Constitution Act, the Lieutenant-Governor recommends to the Legislative Assembly that an appropriation be made from the Consolidated Revenue for the purposes of a Bill to provide compensation for the owners of pigs in certain cases and for other purposes.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Not compensation for pig-sties?

The SPEAKER.—No. It would be quite improper for the House to permit such a fund, created and authorized by the message referred to, to be appropriated for the purpose of compensating some one who might not be the owner of a pig at all.

Mr. MURPHY.—Would not that come within the words "other purposes"?

The SPEAKER.—No; those words are really of no meaning at all. An amendment must be for purposes relevant to the scope of the Bill as expressed in the Bill itself. Honorable members might say that an amendment came within the meaning of the term "other purposes," but those purposes would have to be indicated in the measure which the House on the second reading sent to the Committee for consideration in detail. The proposal after the third reading of the Bill is to go further afield, and to provide compensation out of the Swine Compensation Fund for the purpose of compensating owners of pig-sties.

Mr. MURPHY.—Would not a pig and a sty be in very close relationship?

The SPEAKER.—They would be, but I should be compelled to rule an amendment of the kind indicated out of order if it were proposed, and I think honorable members will see the good reason for that. The House has seen fit to pass the Bill up to this stage for the purpose of providing compensation for the owners of pigs out of a fund contributed by the owners of pigs. I think it would be manifestly improper to allow other persons to come in who are not going to contribute to that fund at all. The payments to such persons might possibly absorb a large portion of the fund created. That was not contemplated in the Bill as framed, and passed on to the Committee for consideration. An amendment on those lines would be quite out of order. The only way to deal with the matter would be by bringing in another Bill for the purposes desired.

Mr. ALLNUTT (*Mildura*).—I am very disappointed that the amendment I have suggested cannot be proceeded with. It goes to show once more to what extent the primary producer is at the mercy of injustice. I should like to ask the Honorary Minister if he will consider bringing in a Bill at an early date to meet the requirements of the owners in the way I have indicated.

Mr. CAIN (Honorary Minister).—By leave, may I say that the suggestion the honorable member for Mildura now makes is quite another matter, and I think is one that could be considered. It would be a matter of setting up an insurance scheme to provide for the protection of owners of pig-sties. They, of course, would make contributions. I undertake to have the matter submitted to Cabinet with a view to its being discussed.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK (*Allandale*).—I think the suggestion the honorable member for Mildura has just put before the Honorary Minister is a fair one. No one wants to see anybody's property destroyed without compensation being paid, but an amendment to provide compensation for the owners of destroyed pig-sties would not come within the scope of the Bill, and I agree with your ruling, Mr. Speaker. As I understand the position, in order that compensation might be paid in regard to destroyed pig-sties, another fund would have to be provided and the owners of the sties would have to contribute to it. The position of the Honorary Minister is unassailable, but I think we are all agreed that sympathetic consideration should be given by the Government to the suggestion now made by the honorable member for Mildura. I do not believe in talking when every one is in favour of a proposition, but I rose to say that in my constituency the Bill has been discussed and generally approved of. A meeting was held there in connexion with the measure, and, as a result, I wish the Honorary Minister to take into consideration two questions with a view possibly to having amendments moved in another place. It has been pointed out by those interested in my constituency, and in the Premier's constituency, that contagious pneumonia is not included amongst the diseases in respect of which compensation would be payable.

Mr. GLOWREY.—I mentioned the matter, and was given the assurance that that disease was covered.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—There is a fear in the Premier's constituency, and in my own, where a great deal of pig-raising is done, that that disease is omitted.

Mr. CAIN.—It is covered by the term "swine plague."

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—That meets the fear which has been expressed. I also wish to raise a point concerning the payment of the stamp duty of 2d. in the £1. When the present trouble is over, the fund will become a large one. We want the Government to take into consideration the question of making a reduction in the stamp duty when the fund is built up. Those are the two points that I was asked to bring before the House.

Mr. DUNSTAN (*Korong and Eaglehawk*).—I desire to express regret that it was not possible to have an amendment to cover pig-sties that may be destroyed in consequence of an epidemic of swine fever. I appreciate the legal difficulties that were mentioned by the Honorary Minister, and by the Attorney-General. We usually encounter those legal obstacles, and we recognize that they are hard to overcome. It is well known that the building in which the pigs are housed is just as much an asset as the animals

themselves. It is necessary that there should be some fund to compensate the owners when the buildings are destroyed. There might be an outbreak of swine fever, and an owner may have a pig worth only £2, but the sty may be valued at £20. Yet there is no provision whereby there would be compensation for the loss of the £20, but there is for the loss of the £2. I am glad that the Honorary Minister has taken a sympathetic view of the question, and has assured the House that he will look into it, and, perhaps, bring in a Bill in the future making the provision desired. When an insurance measure is submitted, it means further contributions on the part of some people. The stamp duty of 2d. in the £1, will, I am sure, more than provide compensation to pay all the necessary insurance for the pigs and the buildings. The question of reducing the stamp duty can be given consideration when the occasion demands. I am satisfied that the discussion, which has centred around the question of the insurance of pig-sties, has served a useful purpose.

Mr. WETTENHALL (*Lowan*).—While I see that, in the circumstances, it is not possible to include a clause at this stage providing for compensation in respect of destroyed pig-sties, I am interested, Mr. Speaker, in your ruling, that the reason such a clause cannot be put in now is that, when the Bill was agreed to at the second-reading stage, it was not included then. Had we included the necessary clause before the second reading was agreed to, it might have been made relevant to the Bill.

The SPEAKER (**the Hon. O. R. Snowball**).—It would have been out of order then.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—It might have saved a great deal of time, and, perhaps, misapprehension, had we had the ruling when we first discussed the matter.

The SPEAKER.—It was first discussed in Committee. On the second reading, the matter was only casually mentioned. It was when the Bill got into the Committee stage, and the Speaker was not in the chair, that honorable members tried to discuss the question of compensation to the owners of pig-sties, otherwise the ruling would have been given earlier.

Mr. WETTENHALL. — Had the amendment which has been suggested been definitely mentioned prior to the second reading as conditional to the passing of the Bill when it got into Committee, it might have been incorporated in the measure.

The SPEAKER.—No. It is not an amendment that could have been authorized by an instruction from the House, because it is outside the scope and frame of the Bill altogether. No instruction to the Committee would have been in order to enable it to add a clause of that kind to the Bill. It is one of the amendments that could not be dealt with by an instruction.

Mr. EVERARD (*Evelyn*).—I suggest to the Minister that, if a piggery is destroyed in consequence of an outbreak of swine fever, the Government should lend the owner money at easy terms for a long period. I am opposed to the insurance proposal. A man might pay insurance for many years, and no outbreak of swine fever might occur.

Mr. CAIN.—He pays insurance on his life.

Mr. EVERARD.—That is a different matter. I ask the Honorary Minister to consider the proposal that, if a piggery was destroyed, the Government should advance the owner a certain amount of money at a low rate of interest. That was done in connexion with the thrips trouble, when the previous Government lent certain amounts of money which have to be repaid over an extended period. If that plan could be followed in regard to the piggeries, it would be a great boon to the people. There may not be another outbreak of swine fever, and it would be ridiculous if the pig-owners had to pay all the time and got no return. I do not think that these epidemics would occur if proper methods were adopted by the owners of pigs. If the Department of Agriculture sent out experienced officers to deliver lecturettes in the pig-raising districts, that would be an important step in preventing an outbreak of swine fever.

Mr. BODMAN (*Gippsland South*).—A simple interjection of mine seems to have given rise to a lot of discussion. Behind

that interjection was a desire for information whether an ordinary fire insurance premium would cover the destruction of piggeries when that destruction had been ordered by a Government official. It it does not, the owner of the pigsty is not covered in any way. That state of affairs would be most unfair. The owner, who has to cover himself by an ordinary insurance policy, is in an invidious position. He has to risk the money invested in the pig-sties, with no possible chance of recouping himself if they are destroyed as the result of an order of a Government official. The Honorary Minister should try to get over that difficulty in some way. I am in accord with the principle that there should be some protection for the owner of the pigsty as well as for the owner of the pigs, because the one is just as important to the industry as the other. I ask the Honorary Minister to consider the question carefully.

Mr. CAIN (Honorary Minister).—By leave, I wish to remark in regard to the question raised by the honorable member for Gippsland South, as to whether an ordinary fire insurance policy would cover the destruction of a building condemned by an officer of the Department of Agriculture, that I should say it would not. I do not think that the ordinary fire policy would cover such a case. No company would accept that risk. The only way in which we can meet the position raised by the honorable member for Mildura, and other honorable members, is by establishing a Government insurance scheme based on a small contribution. An outbreak of swine fever may not occur again. The possibilities are that the insurance scheme could be built up by small contributions. If a man owns £200 worth of pig-sties, he would pay four times as much as the man with £50 worth would pay. That is a better method of handling the problem. The man would get something in return for his payment. The contribution would be small, and it would be reduced from time to time, if necessary. Parliament could review the contributions for the insurance of piggeries in the same way as honorable members have asked it to review the stamp duty of 2d. in the £1.

Mr. BODMAN.—The payment of the contribution need not be mandatory.

Mr. CAIN.—I think that the scheme should be mandatory. If we put it on a voluntary basis, chaos would result.

Mr. LIND.—You would not get sufficient money in the fund.

Mr. BODMAN.—You cannot force a man to insure if he does not want to do so.

Mr. CAIN.—We compel a man to insure every head of cattle in certain circumstances. If Parliament wishes, it can compel people to do anything. It is not a matter of what honorable members can do, but of what they will do. I promise honorable members that the matter will be considered, and if a workable and feasible scheme can be evolved it will be submitted to the House. Then, if honorable members desire it, it will be a matter for them to decide. The question raised by the honorable member for Evelyn will be given consideration. The honorable member for Allandale submitted a letter from a firm in Ballarat. A communication also has been submitted by the honorable member for Ballarat in regard to contagious pneumonia. According to the experts, that disease is swine plague, and it is provided for in the Bill. I do not think there will be any difficulty on that score. I take this opportunity to thank honorable members for the assistance that they have given the Ministry in the passage of this measure. I am confident that the effect of it will be satisfactory to those persons engaged in the pig-raising industry and to the State generally.

Mr. HJORTH (*Grant*).—With other honorable members I regret that it has not been found possible to include in this measure provision for the payment of compensation to the owners of pig-sties destroyed as a result of the outbreak of swine fever. The destruction of pigs in my electorate has not been so serious as in northern districts, but I know that a number of pig-owners in my electorate have had a hardship inflicted on them by the destruction of their sties. Although the fund that will be raised under the authority of this measure from the contributions of pig-owners will compensate owners for the loss of pigs because of disease, they will not be compensated for the losses incurred by the destruction of their sties. This matter is of great importance, and pig owners throughout the State are waiting for the Government to

introduce some means of compensating them for the loss that they have sustained by the destruction of their sties. I hope that the Ministry will bring in a Bill at the earliest possible moment, if legislation is necessary, to provide compensation to pig-owners for the loss of their sties. It is not difficult to realize that pig-owners who have lost animals through swine fever, and are having a hard job to obtain a livelihood out of the industry, cannot afford to replace their sties without incurring hardship.

Mr. LIND (*Gippsland East*).—I am somewhat pleased that the Minister has found, as a result of your ruling, Mr. Speaker, that it is not possible to load this Bill with a provision for compensation to owners whose pig-sties have had to be destroyed owing to outbreaks of disease amongst their pigs. I am in accord with the honorable member for Mildura in his desire to help those owners who have suffered as a result of the departmental officers' instructions that buildings used for the housing of pigs should be cleaned up. It is well known that many of the buildings were of such a type that it was in the best interests of the pig-raising industry that they should be destroyed. I agree, however, with the honorable member for Mildura that everything should be done in the future to protect the people engaged in the pig-raising industry. My fear was that if provision for compensation for the destruction of buildings had been included in this measure the Swine Compensation Fund would have been drawn upon heavily for this form of compensation before the owners of pigs who have suffered direct loss by the death or destruction of the animals would have obtained any benefit from the fund. Applications for compensation for destroyed buildings would have been received on account of all sorts of make-shift pig-sties, and the fund would have been swamped. I congratulate the Ministry on the passage of this measure, and I hope that no time will be lost in paying compensation to those persons who are struggling in an industry which is worthy of all the support that the Government can give it.

The motion was agreed to and the Bill was read a third time.

The House adjourned at 9.55 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, September 29, 1927.

The SPEAKER (**the Hon. O. R. Snowball**) took the chair at 11.11 a.m.

MACHINERY MONOPOLIES RESTRICTION BILL.

Mr. BLACKBURN (*Clifton Hill*) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to prohibit and restrain certain monopolies and attempts to monopolize the trade in machines and machinery, and parts and accessories of machines and machinery, and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

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

ELECTIVE MINISTRIES.

Mr. TOUTCHER (*Stawell and Ararat*).—I move—

That, in the opinion of this House, the time is ripe for the abandonment of the Cabinet system of Government and the establishment of an elective executive, individually responsible to Parliament, and with a definite tenure of office.

I am not insensible of the task that I have set myself in trying to show how to combine an efficient executive with democratic institutions. That problem has engaged the minds of political and constitutional students all the world over. I shall endeavour to demonstrate that it has been solved effectively by that wonderful little country in Europe, Switzerland; and I trust that, after the arguments that I shall adduce in favour of the change which I am proposing, I shall have, if not a victory, then, very nearly one. The question may be regarded as academic, by some members, and by numbers of people outside this House; and, therefore, to some extent, there will be required educational propaganda in the interests both of honorable members and of those who send them to this place, before they can be expected to understand the virtues appertaining to the system of an elective executive. I am happy to state that, from the educational point of view, an important advance has been made by the Australian Natives Association. At its recent conference that organization endorsed the

principle of the elective system of government. In the past the Australian Natives Association has played an important and, indeed, a great part, in our history. More especially has it done so in connexion with the federation of the Australian Colonies. In those days immediately prior to Federation, I was actively identified with the Australian Natives Association, and I took every possible opportunity to present and make known the attitude of the organization. During my term of chief presidency I had the very distinguished honour of outlining the attitude of the association towards the scheme of Federation, at the Conference at Bendigo. That was the occasion when the Board, and, subsequently, the Conference, endorsed the Constitution which was about to be presented to the people for their acceptance or rejection. Consequently, I say that the Commonwealth to-day is indebted largely to the Australian Natives Association for the wonderful enthusiasm that was displayed by the people when they voted to bring about Federation, which enthusiasm for the Federal system has been maintained consistently ever since. Now that the association has decided to give its official support to this project for the establishment of an elective executive, I need only say that if it rises to the same heights and can engender among the people the same enthusiasm for this principle, it is bound to be put into practice, and to be as marked a success as has been Federation itself. There is no reason why the Australian Natives Association should not follow the good example which it set itself in the days just prior to Federation, and why it should not very greatly assist to accomplish the much-desired reform which I am now advocating. Naturally, I am somewhat at a disadvantage to-day, because one who undertakes to set aside a custom which has become almost mossgrown in the history of our Empire, and who seeks to substitute for it an entirely new system—eliminating, to a very great extent, party divisions within the Parliament—assumes, indeed, a difficult task. At the same time, I recognize that if I were to present the case as its merits deserve, by drawing upon material as I have done in the past, and as others have done in the Commonwealth Parliament, I should find myself in a difficulty. I should be occupying a great deal of time, so depriving others of an opportunity to state their views. Then, probably, we should arrive at a position which I have reached before, namely, the position of being unable to obtain a decision of the House. For this reason, I do not intend to call for aid from much material that is at my command. I do not propose to reiterate a good deal of the appropriate arguments that I placed before the House almost exactly twelve months ago, namely, on Thursday, the 30th of September, 1926. On that occasion I brought to bear on honorable members the undoubted influence of certain quotations, from the utterances of leading and able constitutionalists. When one comes to examine the various works pertaining to the subject of Cabinet government in England, one realizes that there are many first-class authorities which could be quoted to support the argument that the system of Cabinet government has served its time. I shall give a bird's eye view of the system of Cabinet government, and the reasons why I think it should be replaced by a common-sense system which I believe will commend itself to the public when it is thoroughly understood. The elective system of government will eliminate all class and party distinction, and fulfil the idea of the writer who spoke of the time when none was for a party and all were for the State. With the present position of this House, I ought to have a better chance of stamping upon the minds of honorable members the importance of the elective system of government and getting a vote in its favour, than I have ever had before. When Mr. Watt was a member of this Parliament, in 1905, he presented the case for elective Ministries, and at that time there were not so many parties as there are to-day operating their policy from different points of view. At the present time the largest party in this House comprises 28 members, and it has Ministerial responsibility, although it is in a minority when all the other members are counted. There are four members belonging to the Country Progressive party sitting in the Ministerial corner, and they have announced that they are going to support the Government upon its measures, without regard to men or party. That is an eminently desirable position to take up. When I was submitting this motion twelve months ago

I quoted the opinion of Freeman, the well-know historian, who said "True men should owe allegiance to measures and not to party." The four members of the Country Progressive party to whom I have referred, have declared that they will support the present Government so long as it brings in measures which commend themselves to their judgment, and in their opinion will be for the good of the country. I think that is a reasonable position to take up. Although I am not sitting in the Ministerial corner, I am quite willing to take the same stand as those members do. On every occasion when the Government presents measures which, in my judgment, are calculated to advance the welfare of the community, it can depend upon my vote, irrespective of party considerations. I am seeking to bring about a similar attitude on the part of all the other members of this House. I believe that with the system of elective Ministries, there should be what is the case in Switzerland—provision for the referendum, initiative, and veto. The right to take a referendum on any particular question clearly demonstrates to the people that in the last resource they can pronounce on proposals which should be the subject of legislation. That is a great instrument of democracy, and if there is any change in the direction of establishing the elective system of Ministries, those other things should be provided for. If we could bring about a system of elective Ministries, I think the present Government and its supporters would soon see there is much more wisdom in that method of government than in the one we are working under at the present time. We have in this House various parties. There is the National party, the Labour party, the Country Progressive party, the Country party, and many others. The honorable member for St. Kilda is quite an independent member, and so are the honorable member for Caulfield and the honorable member for Gippsland South. Each of these honorable members constitutes a party in himself.

Mr. EVERARD.—You are a Liberal.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I am, and I hope I shall always remain one.

Mr. EVERARD.—Then you are not a Nationalist.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I am not going to argue that point to-day. I do not propose to quote any constitutional authority in regard to the Cabinet system of government, because that would take up a great deal of time. I know that honorable members have read a good deal on this question and are well-informed in regard to it. They can see some of the defects in the present system of government, and it is with a view to giving them the fullest freedom of action and of conscience that I am submitting the motion to-day. I am not the only member who has dealt with this particular subject. Many able men have advocated the elective system of Ministries as a guide for future political action. In the early conventions which were held for the establishment of the Commonwealth, the late Sir Henry Parkes tried to engraft this principle upon the Commonwealth Constitution. The late Sir Samuel Griffith pointed out the dangers of responsible government under the present system, and it was his contention that the present Cabinet system could not work satisfactorily. In later years in the Commonwealth Parliament, Mr. Stewart, who was formerly a member of this House, submitted a motion in favour of the elective system of Ministries. Prior to that, the late Mr. Edwards, who represented a New South Wales constituency, also discussed the matter in the Commonwealth Parliament, and Mr. Fowler, who represented a Western Australian electorate, also brought forward the subject. The late Sir Richard Baker, and other eminent members of the Federal Convention, also advocated its adoption. A good many years ago Sir Robert Best was instrumental in getting a committee appointed to go into this question. Interesting information about the evils of party government in various parts of the British Empire was obtained. This committee threw illuminative rays over the whole question, but I am sorry to say that the members were not unanimous, and, consequently, their labours came to nought. In New Zealand the question was not merely an academic one with some people, but a real one. The Hon. Major Steward, who afterwards became Sir William Steward, submitted to the New Zealand Assembly a Bill affirming the general principle of an elective executive. This was after a committee had inquired into and reported upon the matter. A

vote was taken on the Bill, which suffered defeat by only eight votes, the numbers being 36 against and 28 for. If I remember rightly, the very powerful influence of Mr. Richard Seddon was brought to bear against the elective system of Government, and consequently Major Steward did not witness the great achievement for which he had hoped. I am instancing this to show that the subject is by no means new. It has engaged the minds of legislators in various parts of the world. For nearly a century the system has been in operation in Switzerland. In that country are parties whose differences are perhaps even more marked than is the case in Australia. There are differences of race and religion, and when those two interests are brought into consideration one can naturally understand that there must be wide divergencies of opinion. Notwithstanding these facts, the parliamentary machine and the instrument of government in Switzerland work smoothly and with the best possible effect. This is very largely attributable to the fact that the electors, although of different extractions—they consist of French, German, and Italian people, living almost on the borders of the countries which gave them or their forefathers birth—are far more attached to little Switzerland than they are to their motherlands. Notwithstanding differences in race, accentuated by strong religious differences, there is a fine combination in respect of political matters. The history of the people of Switzerland is most fascinating. If time permitted I would show that, notwithstanding the differences to which I have referred, the people display a close patriotism for their country. Their considerations are much more for their country than for their parties, and the problem of education for the people has been solved wisely. Their education, like ours, is universal in character, and they have also found a solution of the problem of religious instruction in schools. This shows that they can come together and put aside party feelings, and perhaps party obligations, in order to rise to a higher and more sublime patriotism—a love for their country and their country's institutions. I do not want to pose as a man who is desirous of airing his knowledge; but let us take a bird's-eye view of the Cabinet system of government, in order that people who read *Hansard*, and have not the time to probe political questions, may be informed. The foundation of the system was laid in a crude fashion, in the time of Charles II., when that monarch formed a government—a body of men to advise him. Strange to say, that the first letters of the names of the Ministers—Clifford, Ashley, Buckingham, Arlington, and Lauderdale, made up the word Cabal. In the minds of many people that is a synonym for Cabinet, as it operates in various parts of the world, including Victoria. William III. selected as advisers men from two parties, the Whigs and the Tories. As the Whigs predominated and the Tories were too critical of the Whigs, William III. could not obtain the guidance that he desired. So Sunderland, one of his Ministers, advised him to form a Government purely of Whigs, and that led to the name of the Whig Junto. I think that in the time of George I. there was established the form of responsible government as we know it to-day. Being a German and not understanding the English language, George I. took little or no interest in the proceedings of the Cabinet. The result was that he absented himself from meetings of the Executive Council. The strong man at that particular time became Prime Minister, and he conveyed what was done in Cabinet to the King, from whom he carried messages back to the Cabinet. Then the matters were taken by the Cabinet to Parliament. As we hear so much about the power of capital and of capitalists, may I ask honorable members, particularly those who belong to the Labour party, which assumes to be the most democratic party in this State, this question: Is there any capitalist or any body of capitalists having the power that is vested to-day in a Prime Minister, especially when that Prime Minister is also Treasurer? Not only does he hold the power over Parliament—because he can bring about a penal dissolution on his mere *ipse dixit*—but he controls the power of the purse. He can at any moment submit the resignation of his colleagues without their knowledge or concurrence. Altogether, the power of a Prime Minister in Cabinet government and so-called responsible government is autocratic. If honorable members, conscience-bound, as they ought to be, to the truth, felt that a measure was wrong, and voted against a Prime Minister—knowing that probably some trouble would ensue—they might

have to face a penal dissolution. They would have to go to the country on what they believed at the time when they recorded their votes was a vital issue. The party in power gets its whips to work, musters its men, and yet may find itself facing the country on many occasions. I desire to free honorable members from obligations of that character, and to enable them, if they think a measure is wrong, to vote against it without any consideration whether they will suffer from a penal dissolution or not. I am not making any reflection on anybody, because it is human nature for a man to vote for a measure against his conscience rather than face the difficulty and disadvantage attached to an election. I am trying to place before honorable members the evils of party government. I have quoted from Goldwin Smith, Freeman, and others. Herbert Spencer, that old philosopher, was against party government. I will give only one local example. The late Mr. David Syme, in his fine work *Representative Government in England*, condemned party government. He was as well versed in politics as any man, if not better than many who had operated the machinery of government. He was free, and was able to judge from without Parliament. He had a long acquaintance with political institutions, especially with those in this State, where he played such an important and practical part in forming administrations. He gave no service to shams and shibboleths. Uninfluenced by personal considerations, he judged measures. It is such men we have to thank to-day for having laid the foundations of strong political institutions. They were men who gave no consideration to persons, but eliminated personal considerations, and stood far and above them. Those men preferred principles to persons. That spirit actuates me in submitting this motion. We should put principles before persons, and before party. The well-being of the State should be the highest consideration; the well-being of men and of parties should not be the first consideration. In considering both men and parties we forget what is best for the community. I have given a bird's-eye view of the Cabinet system of government. I shall cite a few facts from Sir Francis Adam's *The Swiss Confederation*. Switzerland, of course, goes back many centuries, but the constitution of 1848 is practically the one under which the country is working to-day. That constitution was amended in 1874, when some of its defects were remedied. I recognize that in the consideration of Switzerland it is difficult to get an up-to-date book. The latest authority that I consulted is by a member of the British House of Commons, Sir John A. R. Marriott. His volume, which was written in 1927, is entitled, *The Mechanism of the Modern State*. Its information corresponds almost to a word with the work of Sir Francis Adam, which was published about 32 years ago. There are two political powers in Switzerland—the Federal Assembly and the Federal Council. The Federal Council is the Federal Ministry. The Federal Assembly consists of two bodies—the National Council, which corresponds, may I say, to the Commonwealth House of Representatives, and the Council of the States, which corresponds to the Commonwealth Senate. The National Council emanates from the people, and the Council for the States from the cantons. The National Council consists of the deputies of the Swiss people, and is elected on the basis of one member for every 20,000 voters. Fractions above 10,000 are counted as 20,000. The Council of the States is in most cases chosen by the legislative bodies, and in some cases by the people. The members are elected for three years. During that term no power can dissolve either the National Council or the Council of the States. There is no differentiation in the franchise for the two bodies. The cantonal Parliaments are elected on the widest franchise. Of course, the National Council is superior in numbers to the Council of the States. The seven Ministers are elected at a joint sitting of the Houses—the first for foreign affairs, the second for interior affairs, the third for justice and police, the fourth for the military, the fifth for finance and Customs, the sixth for industry and agriculture, and the seventh for post and railways. The Ministers are all co-equal. They can speak in either Chamber, but cannot vote. After the Ministers are appointed they elect the President and Vice-President. The President and Vice-President have no more power than any ordinary Minister. Of course, I shall be

met by the Chief Secretary with the remark that, so far as the presentation of the Budget is concerned, there cannot, in the case of an elective Ministry, be that unanimity, cohesion, and solidarity which obtain in a Cabinet. There is no solidarity, because it is a non-party Government. The Swiss machinery has stood the test of time. To avoid an attack in regard to the Budget and finance, no Minister under the Swiss system would think of submitting to the Treasurer proposals that outrun the amount allotted to his particular Department. Speaking recently to Mr. Watt, M.H.R., I asked him how he proposed to solve the problem. He acknowledged the difficulty that no detailed information could be found in any work in regard to how the Treasurer acted towards his colleagues when a financial dispute occurred. Mr. Watt thought that the trouble could be met by the institution of a finance committee, consisting of the Treasurer and probably two of the ablest financial Ministers in the seven, and that they would be able to come to a conclusion which would probably be beneficial.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—They would be able to control the other Ministers. What is the good of an elective Ministry when the Ministers are not going to be independent?

Mr. TOUTCHER.—So far as my reading goes, I have not found that to be the case. A writer on the Constitution of the Swiss Federation points out that most Cabinet decisions in Switzerland are unanimous. Sir Francis Adam states that this is a peculiarity in Swiss politics, from the point of view of the English visitor, especially at times when party feeling runs high. Occasionally, two Ministers of State will take opposite sides in the House.

Mr. EVERARD.—And vote according to conscience.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Yes. Each presents the case for or against a legislative proposal from his point of view. Afterwards, in the evening, in all probability, states Sir Francis Adam, these Ministers may be found in a café discussing, in quiet and amicable terms, the political turmoil of the day, and, on the following day, they will sit side by side in Cabinet quite unruffled by their former differences. Common-sense is uppermost, and party factions are largely disregarded by Ministers under the elective executive system. As was demonstrated during the Great War, nations can best succeed when the people are united. Parties must come together for the purpose of winning great reforms. We all know the old dictum: "Divide and conquer." Where the best interests of the people are concerned, however, it should be our aim to unite. The less the people are divided the greater will be their enthusiasm and the more hopeful the outlook. By the adoption of the elective Ministry system we should get better results. The fruits of legislation would become fuller and riper. There are a number of new members in this House—a greater number than for many years. They have brought fresh minds to bear upon our political problems. I hope that they will see wisdom in my arguments and vote accordingly. Men who have been members of this House for many years can hardly be expected to escape from their party environment. They have party instincts; they are members of party factions. Party considerations necessarily weigh with them. I hope that the newer members, at least, will take a broader view of the situation. I say, without hesitation, that if Ministers were elected on the principle I am advocating, we should have a freer, a less biased, a less prejudiced political atmosphere. We should not be nailed down in the way we are now nailed down by party considerations and party obligations. Outside influences would not affect the mental outlook and actions of Ministers. Each Minister would be free and unfettered in the expression of his views. We should get from him the best that is in him. The individuality of each Minister would be clearly outlined. There would be continuity of office, and a greater sense of responsibility. In Switzerland Ministers remain in office from Parliament to Parliament. Some men have been Ministers for 30 years. Formerly the Central party, the Liberal party, was very powerful in the Swiss Parliament. As with Liberal parties in other countries, the Liberal party in Switzerland has, largely, undergone an eclipse. There are only a handful of Liberals of the old school left in that Parliament. However, the point I wish to make is, that two Ministers, who were elected when the Central, the Liberal party, was powerful, remain in office, notwithstanding the fact that a young party of progressive democrats has

now an absolute majority in the Parliament. The young party has never sought to interfere with the two old members of the Federal Council. The members of that party recognize that those old Ministers have done great service to their country. Having been in office for many years, they have a wonderful grasp of public affairs, and stand out, head and shoulders above ordinary men, as administrators. Looking around this Chamber, I see honorable members who would do great things for the State if they were members of an elective executive, and had continuity of tenure. What a difference it would make if honorable members who attained to office to-day could be quite sure that they would not be displaced from office to-morrow. They would bend all their energies to the task of discharging the legislative and administrative functions devolving upon them with credit to themselves and benefit to the country. They would be out at all times to serve the truest interests of the State. To-day when a man attains office he never knows when he may have to walk out of it, perhaps through a chance division in the House. He has not the incentive to work that he would have if the position were a stable one.

Mr. CAIN.—Do you not think that the very reverse would be the case? When a Minister feels that he is insecure in his office, surely he has the necessary stimulus to bring out the best that is in him—a greater incentive to effort than the man guaranteed continuity of office would have.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I do not think that that is the case. Experience teaches. To a Minister of great experience it comes natural to live up to the high and honorable distinction conferred upon him. Ministers in Switzerland, although they are shockingly recompensed for their labours, devote themselves to the task of government with an assiduity and success worthy of all praise. To them the honour conferred upon them is more than £ s. d. They bend their energies to the great tasks allotted to them, and find their reward in the admirable performance of their duties. If a Victorian Minister felt that he would remain in office from Parliament to Parliament, with of course the concurrence of his colleagues in the House, and subject to re-election from time to time by his constituents, he would have some assurance that he would be able to leave his mark on the legislation of the country. The stamp of his genius would be upon it. Such a man would adorn this Legislature. Measures would bear the impress of his individuality. The well-being of the people would be his care. Within the limited time at my disposal, I have endeavoured to present the case for elective executives convincingly. At all events, I have done so sincerely and earnestly. As I said on a previous occasion, by the adoption of this system the choicest fruits of legislation would drop into the mouths of the democracy. After all, it is the people outside whom we should consider. They are our masters. They are the sovereign people. Under the elective executive system, we should escape any sordid intriguing for office. Our aims would be higher and nobler. There would not be the wrangling and consequent ill-feeling that now result from party differences. We could grasp hands as men of one mind in the desire to legislate in the best interests of the people. We should be united for the national good. We should eliminate personal considerations. The State alone would be sublime in our eyes; not any particular party.

Mr. ALLNUTT (*Mildura*).—I have pleasure in seconding the motion. The elective executive system is long overdue. The question has been discussed in this House on several occasions, but nothing has been accomplished. We are, I think, agreed that party Governments have long outlived their usefulness. In the past the Government that has been in power has represented the dominant party in the House. The minority have been forced into the position of being mere critics and obstructionists. Parliament does not function to-day as the people intended it should function. Under the present system of parliamentary government the business of the country is dealt with in the party room of the party in power. If that party has a majority in this House it is known before measures are introduced in Parliament that they will be enacted. The people are waiting for a lead in the introduction of a better system of parliamentary government. We must look facts in the face. The people are apathetic towards our present system of parliamentary government. At many elec-

tions in the past only 50 or 60 per cent. of the electors recorded votes. A remedy for that apathy is essentially necessary if we are to obtain better results from parliamentary government. Compulsory voting has been introduced in connexion with State elections in Victoria, but I do not think that we can look for any improvement of our present system in that direction. Compulsory voting is, perhaps, necessary under the present system, but that does not alter my view that compulsory voting is wrong. During the Great War the people of Australia were divided on the question of conscription, yet, since the war Australian Parliaments have foisted conscription on the people in the form of compulsory voting. Under that system many electors vote for men in whom they openly declare they have no faith. They vote because the law compels them to vote. That form of compulsion is wrong. Why, I ask, do the people not take more interest in their Parliaments? I venture to say the reason is that our Parliaments are working under a system which has destroyed the faith of the people in Parliaments and their members. Unless we, as members of Parliament, give the people a lead towards a better system of government, the apathy which is apparent at present will not be overcome. The people's interest in parliamentary government must be stirred, and they must be satisfied that their views expressed at the ballot-box on the big questions of the day will have adequate expression in Parliament. A system of elective Ministries is long overdue in this State. The present system of party government in Parliament is antiquated, wasteful, and inadequate for a young progressive country such as Victoria is. It is undemocratic, because it permits a minority party to hold the balance of power in Parliament. One unfortunate phase of the present system is that the Ministers are not selected for their ability. I go further, and say that too often they are selected because of their inability, or their social standing, or the influence of the interests which they represent. Under the existing system the best brains in Parliament are not represented in the Ministry. As an ordinary citizen and as a junior member of this House, I have watched with interest the work of the Railways Standing Committee. The Committee is appointed by Parliament from all sides of the House. The members of that Committee consider questions placed before it from a broader aspect than that of party politics. They do not recognize party views, but carry on their work with one object in view, the development of the railway system in the best interests of the State.

Mr. CAIN.—Do you think the success of the Committee is due to the individual capacity of its members?

Mr. ALLNUTT.—I do not say that the Committee represents the best brains of Parliament, but its members perform their work in a more business-like manner than Parliament, and the Committee in the conduct of its business has a broader view-point. While it may make mistakes, the Committee is an example of a form of elective Ministry, because its members are elected by Parliament.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—No; the members of the Committee are elected by the parties in Parliament, and they are appointed by Parliament.

Mr. ALLNUTT.—The Committee is representative of the various parties in Parliament. During the week-end I accompanied the members of the Railways Standing Committee on a tour of inspection, and I had a good opportunity of watching the manner in which they performed their work. I was greatly impressed, and I consider that the manner in which they performed their duties demonstrated the necessity for a system of elective Ministries. The members of that Committee discussed various questions altogether apart from their party views, and their one object was to do their best for the development of the State. We witness a different spectacle in this House. The Opposition sets itself out to criticize measures introduced by the Government; very often it does not criticize those measures in a constructive spirit, but it attempts to delay the passage of those measures. I shall now quote a statement which was made by Mr. W. A. Watt in this House some 22 years ago, when he spoke on the question of elective Ministries. He said—

> The chief complaint which I have to make against the system is that men are frequently

called on to vote for measures they do not believe in, either to help their party forward to office or keep the party they are supporting in office.

Mr. MURRAY.—Or vote against measures they do believe in.

Mr. WATT.—Or vote against measures which they do believe in, perjuring their consciences, twisting their convictions, distorting their moral sense, and destroying their individuality.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—That is amusing, coming from Mr. Watt.

Mr. ALLNUTT.—Those are the words of Mr. Watt, uttered about 22 years ago; and they are only too true.

Mr. CAIN.—You need to know Mr. Watt to appreciate the true significance of those words.

Mr. ALLNUTT.—He is not the only man who believes what he has expressed here. There are other Ministers of the past, both State and Commonwealth, who know it to be only too true.

Mr. GRAY.—Present Ministers also.

Mr. ALLNUTT.—I have not known the Ministers in this House quite long enough to be able to concur in that, so far as they are concerned. But we have men, under the party system to-day, who have voted against questions which they honestly believed to be in the best interests of the State. Because of their position in their party, and, owing to the party system, they have opposed proposals which they favoured, when those matters have come to be voted upon. That is not the fault of the individual, but of the party. I have known members of Parliament to speak against a certain question; and then, when a division has been taken on it, they have cast their votes with their party in opposition to the views that they have just expressed. Some time ago, in the House of Representatives, I believe that it was Mr. Lister, the representative of the constituency of Corio, who spoke against a measure which had been brought in by the Government of which he was a supporter. Mr. Anstey, the member for Bourke, seized the opportunity, on behalf of the Opposition, to move a motion of want of confidence in the Government, and to test Mr. Lister. However, if my recollection is correct, Mr. Lister stood behind the Government in that division, and he was branded in the newspapers as a fraud. Similar things have happened, I suppose, in this House. And, so long as the existing system remains, they will happen again and again. While Mr. Lister was branded as a fraud, it was not Mr. Lister who was the fraud; it was the party system that was the fraud. Our system is wrong, and not the individual. We must make some alteration. The establishment of the system of elective Ministries would assist to clean politics. It would mean that instead of the Ministerial executive controlling Parliament, as it does under the existing system, Parliament would control the executive, as it should do. We should then have each party, according to its strength in this House, appointing the best brains at its command to compete with the best brains of the other parties. Thus we should get better men to lead us, men who were free from party influences. The leader of the executive would be elected by the House, just as the Speaker is elected to-day; and every question that came before us would be discussed on its merits. Bills brought in by the executive would be threshed out on the floor of the House, on their merits. To-day Bills are brought in—and this applies to all our Australian Parliaments—and the Government knows that it has the numbers. Our Parliaments sit on from day to day, and the Oppositions are being paid to be nothing but mere critics of the legislative programmes. That is not in the best interests of the country. We should have constructive criticism, but we do not get it.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX.—We get a certain amount of it.

Mr. ALLNUTT.—There is not enough of it. If there were more, there would be better legislation. In the past, have we not always had the spectacle of the Opposition of the day setting itself out to obstruct the Government's programme of legislation, not because it believed that that programme was not right in principle, but because it did not want the Government to continue in office? As an outsider, I have watched the parliamentary machine and have noted how the Opposition at all times has sought any and every opportunity to move a motion of no confidence, so that it might oust the Government of the day. That state of affairs is not as it should be. Parliament is not working

as it was intended to work. The system of elective Ministries is not, perhaps, what we may desire. It would not bring about the abolition of party politics. Personally, I think that we should be better off without party politics at all. But we have class distinctions to-day, and we have to set about finding the best means of altering the unsatisfactory conditions that now exist. To bring about a system of elective Ministries would be the first step towards a very desirable end. The existing parties would contest elections as they do now. All the parties would go before the people on their merits. Then, on the floor of Parliament, the elected members would discuss legislative matters just as the Railways Standing Committee discusses the subjects referred to it. That Committee draws up a report, and presents it to Parliament, and its recommendations are practically final. They are accepted as definite decisions. With few exceptions, the Railways Standing Committee has done excellent work. Why should not the same system be a success if it governed the working of Parliament itself? In the Commonwealth Parliament they have a Public Accounts Committee, which works on the same lines, and I understand that on many occasions it has been the means of saving the Commonwealth hundreds of thousands of pounds. That shows that these committees can do useful work, and save money. A similar body could prepare work for Parliament, and in all probability would prevent long sittings. There would be the additional advantage that the Cabinet would last for a set term. At the present time it is within the power of the Leader of the Government to terminate a session at any time, and also to bring the Parliament to an end, involving the people in an expenditure of thousands of pounds in the conduct of an election. We know that the system by which we are at present governed is wrong. We are sent here, as the representatives of the people, to legislate in the best interests of the State. It has been urged that the people are not clamouring for this change to be made, but it must be recollected that they look to Parliament to give them a lead, and they are waiting for that lead to bring about an alteration of the present system. I hope the Government will give more consideration to this question than it has evidently received in the past. If it did it might mean that we would have legislation in the interests of the public rather than that which is most likely to keep the Government in power.

Mr. GRAY (*St. Kilda*).—This is the first time I have had the privilege of hearing the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat speak on this subject. On previous occasions I have read abbreviated reports of his speeches, and have been impressed with the wisdom which has fallen from his lips in dealing with this matter. I want to take advantage of the opportunity to-day to congratulate him on the thoughtful, interesting, and eloquent speech he has just delivered. There is no doubt he has a wonderful grip of the subject, and I cannot understand why his advocacy of the virtues of elective Ministries has not convinced members to a greater extent than seems to have been the case. Evidently the reason why he has not been successful on previous occasions is because of what I may call the juggernaut of modern politics—the party machine. Following the last election, this Parliament had the greatest opportunity ever presented to it of forming a pure and unsullied elective Ministry, which would have represented every party in this State, and which, I feel sure, would have been able to secure much better legislation than even the present Ministry has been able to place before us.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—If you had to select the team, whom would you choose?

Mr. GRAY.—I do not want to be personal. I heartily support the motion which is now before us. I support the system of elective Ministries on three distinct grounds. First of all, I think it is a common-sense idea. Then I think it is logical, and, perhaps the greatest reason of all, it is democratic. It is a common-sense idea, because it would ensure the best brains in the House being gathered together to carry out the responsible duties of government.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—You have a tremendous lot of faith if you think that the best brains in the House would be elected.

Mr. GRAY.—The present Ministry—and I am looking towards the Minister of Railways, who has just interjected—has undoubtedly men of great talent in it.

It will compare very favorably with the Ministries we have had in the past.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—More than favorably.

Mr. GRAY.—Still, able as the Ministry is, it does not include all the best talent in this House. It is true there are a number of unoccupied seats in the chamber just now, but when this House is full I have noticed members sitting on both sides who would strengthen any Ministry that could be formed. During great crises in our national history we have had splendid examples of the suspension of party government. During the Great War, for instance, parties in many countries put their sectional differences on one side, and under compulsion the best brains and the best talent of various assemblies were united to carry on the Government of the day. If such a system is desirable in times of stress, why should it not be a good method under normal conditions?

Mr. CAIN.—Extraordinary things are done in war time which would not be justified in times of peace.

Mr. GRAY.—I am talking just now about the principle of elective Ministries, and of selecting the most capable and talented men to conduct the affairs of State. In the Federal arena some of the finest brains in the Labour party, as well as of other parties, were got together to form a National Government during the Great War.

Mr. CAIN.—Surely you are not saying that Sir George Pearce was one of the finest brains of the Labour party?

Mr. GRAY.—It is but common sense to use the best talent available at all times to promote the welfare of the people and manage the affairs of the State. To substantiate that statement, we need only refer to what the Minister of Public Works (the Hon. J. P. Jones) said a few days ago when he was interviewed by a representative of the *Argus*. In my opinion, he advanced a fine case for the establishment of an elective Executive. He inferred that it was necessary to get the very best men in Parliament to administer the affairs of the State. The best business brains were required. He added that less politics and more business was what the country needed. Referring to the many important and pressing problems that were awaiting solution, he said—

> Instead of fighting over them on political issues, I think that we should endeavour to get together to solve them in the interests of the community.

There he advanced a splendid argument for an elective Ministry. He went on to say that he desired that his proposals should not be regarded as those of a Labour Minister, but as those of a business man. He added—

> My proposals may be wrong. If they are, I want them to be discussed impartially to find out what is the right position. I do not believe in holding up a job because of some particular point of party politics, and if the job cannot be done my way I am perfectly ready to have it done in the way favoured by the community above the plane of politics.

That is a very strong statement.

Mr. JACKSON.—And a very sensible one.

Mr. GRAY.—Yes. It comes from a man who was elected to his office by the operation of a party machine. I desire, also, to support his statement by a reference to the Country party. I notice that on the 28th of May—after the general election—a meeting of the Kyabram Council of the Country party was held in that town, and the honorable member for Rodney, the leader of the party, was present. The meeting carried a motion practically supporting the principle of elective Ministries. Although the honorable member for Rodney was vague on the subject, he appeared to support the principle. The chairman of the meeting said that the present system meant a scramble for place and power, whereas with elective Ministries the members would work for the good of everybody.

Mr. CAIN.—You are not quoting the honorable member for Rodney.

Mr. GRAY.—No; I am quoting Mr. H. Hanslow, the president of the Kyabram Council of the Country Party. He moved a motion—

> That the Council bring up the question, and do its best to secure elective Ministries.

In replying to the debate that ensued, Mr. Hanslow said—

> Politicians did not want elective Ministries. Under the present system no measure was introduced until the heads had been counted. He would consent to alter the motion that the Central Council be asked to gain all possible information with a view to securing elective Ministries in our Parliament.

The amended motion was carried unanimously. I suppose that many members of the Country party, apart from the honorable member for Rodney, were present. I support the motion of the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat, because it is sound logically. I claim that elective Ministries are logical, because this Parliament has, in its wisdom, prescribed the system of preferential voting, which ensures as nearly as possible that every section of the people has representation. After members are elected to Parliament on that basis, the party system begins to operate. The weaker side of the House is practically disfranchised so far as Cabinet matters are concerned. It seems to me quite logical that when men are returned to Parliament they should adhere to the system on which they were elected, and create a Cabinet representative of every section in the House. The system of elective Ministries is democratic, because under it a member of the House would have the opportunity of voting for the appointment of any other member to a Ministerial position. That is a sharp contrast to the method now in operation.

Mr. JACKSON.—Would every member be free to vote as he liked?

Mr. GRAY.—I claim that he would be.

Mr. CAIN.—It is quite possible, under such a system, that all the Ministers could be members of one party.

Mr. GRAY.—I think that that would be impossible, because I contend that members would vote more intelligently.

Mr. CAIN.—You are pointing out a difference.

Mr. MURPHY.—The honorable member for St. Kilda has a mountain of faith.

Mr. GRAY.—I say, Hear! Hear! to that.

Mr. CAIN.—If there were a majority of Labour representatives in this House, I am quite satisfied that under the system of elective executives there would be, in effect, a Labour Government. If a non-Labour party were predominant, that party would, in effect, be placed in power.

Mr. GRAY.—I do not think so. If an open vote were taken in this House, as at present constituted, we should not have a Labour Ministry in power.

Mr. ALLAN.—That is very definite.

Mr. GRAY.—We should have the best men in the Ministry from both sides of the House. As the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat has ably pointed out, the present system of electing Ministers is surely an old and worn out one. With the advance in democratic electoral methods, it is surprising that honorable members, once they are returned, continue the present unprogressive system of appointing Ministers. It seems to me that the people are prepared to liberalize the electoral system, but once members are returned, they are not prepared to support the democratic system by which they are elected. Honorable members will recall the lines in Macaulay's historical word picture—

> Then none was for a party,
> Then all were for the State.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—That is a long time ago. Those people are dead.

Mr. GRAY.—It looks as though we have not advanced much since then.

Mr. CAIN.—Even the people in St. Kilda have advanced. They have changed their member.

Mr. GRAY.—Perhaps they did that because I advocated elective Ministries. Macaulay depicted the unity of the city fathers in their desire to preserve and serve their country. Well might we consider the placing of the State and the people before a party. Under the present system there is a constant battle for office, and that is a hindrance to progress.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—In the old days they battled for the leadership of the army to wipe out their opponents.

Mr. GRAY.—Those days were also the golden ones of literature, art, and politics. Many of the laws that we pass to day are based on laws which were framed in those times. No doubt, even then there was intrigue, but it will be absent where men's ideals are really high, and where they desire to serve the State truly. I acknowledge that there have been many fine Ministries in this Chamber, but I refuse to believe that any of them thoroughly represented this House or the people as a whole, nor did such Cabinets give that measure of service that would have been given by a Ministry elected by the popular vote of the members of the Legislative Assembly. To-day simply because they belong to one party or the other men oppose measures that are calculated to advance the welfare of the people. We live in the days of the political hack. When the whip starts to crack many politicians must stride the

old party hack, and ride where it goes. Much good legislation has accordingly to be scrapped. Many measures that are for the interests of the people have to be thrown on the political scrap heap. How many Bills introduced and debated here ever become live measures? Many are valuable, but they are not carried. Why? Simply because they are dealt with on party lines. One party obstructs the other. If we had elective Ministries, the measures would be treated free of party bias, because they would be practically considered in Committee. We should get compromise measures that would be in the interests of all parties, and of all the people.

Mr. TUNNECLIFFE.—You mean measures in which all the principles have been compromised.

Mr. GRAY.—No. The finest principles would be conserved in those measures. I conclude by thanking the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat for his fine speech this morning, and I hope that the House will support him.

Mr. CLEARY (*Benalla*).—Like the honorable member for St. Kilda, I desire to congratulate the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat on his exposition of the elective executive system. I feel that he has fully elaborated the many good qualities of that system. He has also exposed the weakness of the Cabinet system of government. He has proved that the elective system has operated satisfactorily in Switzerland. There is no reason why it should not be equally successful in this State. It has been stated that the Cabinet system is functioning well in this Parliament. That is because we are not witnessing the obstruction that has occurred in previous Parliaments. The reason for that is that the party system of government has been broken down considerably by the constitution of the present House. In place of having the two extreme parties—the Government and the Opposition, or the anti-Labour Party and the Labour party—we have a Parliament composed of several parties. There is the Labour party, which occupies the Ministerial benches. Sitting on the same side of the House is the party with which I am associated —the Country Progressive party. The main objective of our party is the support of measures, not men. We have, on the other side of the House, the Nationalist party and a fairly strong Independent element. The reason why the present Government is not meeting with such obstruction as many previous Governments have had to face is that the Independent element in this Parliament has become so strong. When the honorable member for St. Kilda was speaking, honorable members interjected that under an elective executive system all the executive positions would go to one party. That is not so. Under such a system every party in the House would be entitled to representation proportionately to its numbers. Such a system would go far to break down the bitter party feeling that operates in Parliament at the present time. In the last Parliament we had the spectacle of one party attempting to pass legislation, and another party almost equal in strength doing its best to prevent the enactment of that legislation.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—The trouble with the previous Government was that it was a composite Government.

Mr. CLEARY.—The last Parliament was barren of legislation. We should inaugurate a system whereby such a state of affairs would no longer be possible. If the best brains of Parliament were brought together in the Executive, our legislation would be framed in the interests of the people as a whole. It has been stated that the system of elective Ministries is not perfect. The honorable member for Stawell and Ararat would not claim that it is perfect. But, to my mind, it would undoubtedly be an improvement on the present system. In Parliament we should have majority rule. We have not that to-day. Before a proposal is brought forward by the Government, it is first considered in the party room. It may very well happen that in the party room only a small majority of members of the party approve of the proposal to be brought forward, though a united front may be shown in the House. If the opponents of the proposal in the party room were to combine forces with other opponents of the proposal in the House, the Government would be in a minority, yet the proposed legislation is put through. That is not legislation by majority in any true sense of the word.

Mr. DUNSTAN. — It is government by minority.

Mr. CLEARY.—That is what I am endeavouring to point out. Whilst the

system advocated by the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat is admittedly an imperfect one, still, it would be a considerable improvement on the present party system of government, and is well worthy of a trial. I support the motion for two reasons. In itself it is meritorious, and the party with which I am associated has made it a plank of its political platform. I can assure the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat that, as far as the Country Progressive party is concerned, he will get 100 per cent. support. I notice that some honorable members are smiling. Our 100 per cent. support will mean exactly four votes. But we are a growing party. At the last election we increased our strength in this House 300 per cent. If we do as well at the next election—and there is no reason why history should not repeat itself—we shall be a party of twelve. When the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat launches the same motion six or nine years hence, he may command a majority for it. To-day, he can hardly expect to do that. It is not an easy thing to break up a system of government that has operated for centuries among British peoples. But I advise the honorable member to keep on trying.

Mr. LINTON. — The honorable member for Stawell and Ararat may not be here six or nine years hence. Your party might capture his seat in the meantime.

Mr. CLEARY.—Whilst he is a member of this House, he will, I am sure, do his best to obtain a majority for his motion. So far, honorable members have not directed attention to whatever weaknesses there may be in the proposal before us. Honorable members who have spoken favour the scheme. I want the case for the other side to be presented. I am out for education. What I am afraid of is that the question will be decided by a large silent vote. I am a young member of this House, and I want to hear older members thrash out the pros and cons of the question. I want those who think the scheme an unworthy one to state why it is unworthy. I hope that the scheme will yet be given a trial. If there are among us honorable members who can explain the weaknesses of the scheme, I hope that they will do so.

(At 12.56 p.m. the sitting was suspended until 2.6 p.m.)

Mr. GLOWREY (*Ouyen*).—The more experience I have of Parliament, the more concerned I am in regard to the procedure adopted by that institution in its deliberations. That procedure would not be tolerated in a shire council. It is remarkable that Australians, who claim to belong to one of the most progressive sections of the British race, adhere to a system of parliamentary government which has been handed down from their ancestors in the Old Country. It is one of the proud boasts of Australian Legislatures that they have initiated progressive legislation of an advanced form; yet, in the conduct of their business, they follow the old traditions and customs which have endured for centuries. Under our system of parliamentary government in Victoria, practically one member of the Ministry can dominate this House. Let us suppose that the Minister of Lands desires the introduction of a particular measure. He has the Bill prepared, and he takes it to Cabinet. He is conversant with the details of the measure, and the reasons for its introduction. Aided by that knowledge, he is able, as the current phrase has it, to "put it over" his colleagues, and prevail on them to accept his view that the introduction of the measure is desirable. The Bill is introduced in Parliament with the seal of the Cabinet. When the measure is considered in the House, honorable members, perhaps members of the Ministerial party, may point out to the Ministry that the passage of the Bill is not in the best interests of the State. If the Minister in charge of the Bill has sufficient persuasive power and eloquence, he can crack the party whip, not only over the Cabinet, but over the members of his party who do not see eye to eye with him, and compel them to support the measure in Parliament. If the other members of the Cabinet do not agree with the Minister, he has the right of resigning his position. The situation is more serious when we consider the domination of the House by the Premier. If a Government measure is not acceptable to the House, the Premier has the right to submit his resignation to the Governor, which means that his Ministry goes out of office. In that way, the Premier can defeat the will not only of the House, but of his colleagues in the Ministry. Suppose a similar practice were applied to the deliberations of the Melbourne City Council, and

that the Lord Mayor, in the event of his recommendation to the Council being rejected, could resign his position and compel the whole Council to dissolve and face the ratepayers. Would the people tolerate such procedure for twenty-four hours? No. Would this Parliament tolerate it? No. I venture to say that Parliament would not delay in passing amending legislation which would put an end to such procedure. The municipal councils are really miniature parliaments in our local government sphere, but they would not, in any circumstances, tolerate the conduct of their business according to the procedure adopted in this Parliament. That is all the more reason, I contend, why we should improve our system of parliamentary government. Parliament should be the model for all systems of local government. I am somewhat concerned at the attitude which some honorable members adopt in this matter, and I am surprised that they do not realize that our present system of parliamentary government is out of date. It should be our proud boast that, in our system of parliamentary government, we have cut ourselves off from the ancient traditions handed down through the generations, and have instituted a system which, although advanced, is practical, and gives true expression in Parliament to the will of the people. I remember that the Labour party in years gone by had, as one of the planks in its platform, the introduction of the system of elective Ministries. I should like to know why that plank has been removed. I am going to offer my opinion why; but I shall be drawing only my own conclusions. The present form of government gives great power to organized sectional interests. If we turn to the Nationalist benches in this House, we do not find the leaders of that party advocating this change. Why is that so? It is for the reason that the National Union, which provides the funds to enable the party to function in this Parliament, knows that under the existing system it has the key to the situation. It knows that it can get the ear of one of the members of the Ministry, if not of the leader of the Ministry—that is, when the party is in power—and can enforce its will on that Minister, through him on the Government, and ultimately on Parliament itself. The same comments hold good of every organized political section. If we are to give the people the best form of government, we should first do away with the existing system. The honorable member for Stawell and Ararat is to be congratulated on having presented his motion so that honorable members might have an opportunity to show whether they are progressive or unprogressive. Some members have said that the system of elective Ministries would be unworkable. There is no definite procedure laid down in the motion. It affords an opportunity, however, for the discovery of some more acceptable means of conducting the affairs of the State. The objections that have been raised to the motion are neither sound nor logical. It has been said that if there were 33 Labour members of this House they would elect the whole Ministry.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—They would, indeed!

Mr. GLOWREY.—But the motion does not state that the Executive shall be composed in proportion to the strength of the different parties, or by the vote of the members of this House. I am amazed at the attitude of the Labour party. Its members assert that they are progressive and democratic. The principle contained in the motion, therefore, should be one of their main planks. They want to give the people the best means that can be devised for the legislative expression of the will of the people. Yet they are adhering to the most conservative procedure known, which prevents the people from accomplishing their objective. The members of the Labour party know that. If the motion were agreed to, the Government would be given an opportunity to go into ways and means of adopting an improved procedure. It could bring down to this House and carry out whatever methods it thought best, in consonance with the terms of the motion. It has been mentioned that the Railways Standing Committee is a body which functions on similar lines to an elective Ministry. The Public Accounts Committee of this House and of the Federal Legislature function similarly.

Mr. JACKSON.—But only in a limited degree.

Mr. GLOWREY.—If members of this House were determined to bring about an

improved system, they would have a basis to work on by agreeing to the motion. The Railways Standing Committee investigates different matters, and makes recommendations which are almost always unanimous, and are invariably sound.

Mr. JACKSON.—But there are no matters of political policy involved in its recommendations.

Mr. GLOWREY.—We desire that the will of the majority in this House should prevail. Can the Chief Secretary say that the will of the majority prevails today in respect of every clause in every Bill that comes before us?

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—Certainly!

Mr. GLOWREY.—I am sure that a majority of members will not endorse that, and the fact that they will not do so exposes the weakness of the existing system. We should accept this opportunity to bring about a system of government that would give expression to the will of the majority of the people. In any Bill that came before the House today there might be nine clauses out of ten which would find favour with the majority of members; but, because the majority disagreed with the tenth clause, the Bill might be rejected. Thus, the will of the people, as expressed in the nine acceptable clauses, would be thwarted.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—In practice, that would not be so. The objectionable clause might be negatived, but the whole Bill would not be jettisoned.

Mr. GLOWREY.—Frequently when the House cannot agree upon some vital principle contained in a particular clause the whole Bill is thrown into the waste-paper basket.

Mr. JACKSON.—This House will need to be shown that an elective system is workable.

Mr. GLOWREY.—The time will come to deal with the details of the system when the principle itself has been endorsed, and the Government has brought down a measure suggesting the form of procedure. This House will not be doing its duty if it rejects the motion. If it accepts it, it will not bind itself. It will have given an expression of its dissatisfaction with the existing system. I repeat that it would not be until the Government had brought in the necessary Bill designed to set up an elective Executive that the details underlying the principle would need to be considered. I am afraid it will be useless for me to further debate this subject. I have made clear my personal views, and I hope that if the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat does not succeed in getting the motion carried to-day, he will bring it forward again.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—It has been before the House four times already. It was twice defeated by large majorities, and on the other occasions it was withdrawn.

Mr. GLOWREY.—What the honorable gentleman has said may be quite true, but if he has studied political history he will recall many instances of proposed advances in the way of legislation being frequently defeated. That does not necessarily mean that the proposals are without merit. I hope that members will deal with this question now from a different stand-point from that from which it has been viewed on the four previous occasions to which the Chief Secretary has referred. It is a subject that should receive more respectful consideration than it has received in the past.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX (*Upper Yarra*).—I congratulate the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat on the able manner in which he has placed his motion before us. Notwithstanding the caustic remarks of the Chief Secretary, the question of elective Ministries should appeal to our democratic instincts. There is no doubt that the present system of Cabinet Ministries has not functioned well in the past. Take the case of the Government which was previously in office. It is well known that the party which now occupies the Ministerial side of the House, and which was in opposition in the last Parliament, openly blocked the business of the Legislature. Members of that party wasted the time of the country which paid them, and prevented the passage of legislation for which the people were crying out. It is generally recognized that the members who now sit on the Ministerial side of the House are past masters in the art of opposition. They have had many years of practice, and I feel that when those who are now opposed to the Government have a little more experience they will be able to make their opposition more effective than it is at the present time.

Mr. WEBBER.—The honorable member may not know that in one session of the

last Parliament more time was occupied by the speeches of members sitting on the Ministerial side of the House than by those on the Opposition side. A record was taken of the space occupied by members' speeches in *Hansard*, and more space was taken by members supporting the Government than by those in opposition to it.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX.—I thank the honorable gentleman for the information he has given me. I may say, however, that I desire to address my remarks to you, Mr. Speaker, and possibly the Honorary Minister will enlighten the House on the subject later. Under the strict party system of government we have at the present time members of the minority have no possible chance of giving effect to their ideas in the legislation of the country. No member whose views differ from those of the Government has much opportunity of having them put into practice in the legislation of the country, and under our present system the Opposition for the time being can deliberately waste the time of the House and the country by blocking legislation by party tactics. It must also be remembered that there is strict discipline under the party system. I know, for instance—and I am not disclosing anything confidential—that there is a diversity of opinion amongst members sitting on the Ministerial side of the House in regard to the totalizator. It will surprise me if any member of the Labour party votes against that proposal when it is submitted to us in the way of a Bill.

Mr. HOLLAND.—Opposition will be expressed to that Bill. It is not a part of the policy of the Labour party.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX.—It will be a Government measure, and I presume that the whip will be cracked, and all the members of the Labour party will well and truly come to heel. Under the present system of Cabinet government it is impossible to get the best brains of the House in a Ministry. Under an elective executive system men of ability and of courage and of far vision would naturally be selected, because they would have the respect of members on all sides of the House.

Mr. JACKSON.—You will have to abolish parties outside of the House just as much as inside.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX.—I am addressing myself just now entirely to the differences between government under a system of elective Ministries and under the party system. As a new member of this House—and I know that there are other new members who have the same feeling—I want to legislate in the best interests of this country. We may not altogether agree with the proposals which the Government submits to us, and if we want to put into the laws of this country our own ideas on certain subjects, we have no opportunity of doing so. I understand it is the practice of the Labour party to elect the members of the Ministry, but they will not concede that the plan they carry out for themselves is good enough for the Parliament of this country. The Chief Secretary has referred to this motion as a "hardy annual." It is quite possible that the motion will be defeated on this particular occasion on the ground that it is only the ideal of idealists. The time of this House is occupied far too much with deliberating on minor details, but when it comes to a big reform like the one now proposed comparatively little time is given to its discussion, and the proposal is either defeated or it lapses. I congratulate the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat on his brilliant speech and the enlightenment this House has received from his study of this proposal. I do not think there is much hope of the motion being carried, but every time the idea is ventilated a step is being taken in the right direction.

Mr. BLACKBURN (*Clifton Hill*).—I have listened to two debates on this particular subject. One was last year, and the other was in 1915. It has been discussed on many occasions in Australasia. The matter was brought before the New Zealand Parliament in 1888, and it has been the subject of examination by Select Committees on two occasions. Motions on the subject have been before the House of Representatives—once in the early days of Federation, at the instance of the late Mr. Edwards, and later, at the instance of Mr. Stewart, the member for the Wimmera, and by Mr. Fowler, when he was Federal member for Perth. It is a matter of extreme interest, and I have made a study of

it. At first I was in favour of elective Ministries, but after examination I came to the conclusion I now hold—that it is unsuitable to countries which live under the British system of government and to countries in which there is strong party sentiment. The Swiss system has been the process of development. It is altogether different now from what it was when the first elective Ministry was constituted. In the Swiss Federal Parliament there are two Houses—the Council of the States and the National Council. The Council of the States is like the Senate. The National Council is like the House of Representatives—the representation is according to the population in the various cantons. When those two Houses are elected, they meet together, and at the joint sitting proceed to elect Ministers. When those Ministers are elected, they cease to be members of the Houses. One of them is elected by the Houses to be the Foreign Minister, and is really the head of the Ministry. Although he does not select his fellow Ministers, he is, so to speak, the spokesman for them. The present position is that the Ministry does co-operate, but the decisions are given, not as decisions of individual Ministers, but as decisions of the Council as a whole. No two members of the Council can come from the same canton. One honorable member has said that it was predicted in the 90's that Federation would kill responsible government, or responsible government would kill Federation. The reason why that was said was that it was conceived that the cantons would insist in equal representation in the Ministry, and that if that were done, it would be very difficult to work the Cabinet system. However, the cantons have not been so insistent upon equal representation as was originally anticipated, and we see the Cabinet system in full force under the Federal scheme. Members of the Federal Administration may not sit in either House, but they can appear and introduce proposals. They have no vote. In the cantons, there has been a big move against elective Ministries. That move was for a straight-out adoption of the American system. The Swiss Constitution of 1848 was based upon the American system. The Swiss Council of States corresponds with the Senate, with equal representation. The National Council corresponds with the House of Representatives, but instead of having a President, as is the case in the United States of America, and allowing him to appoint his own Ministers, and instead of having a Government as is done in the individual American States, where the Ministers are elected by the people, the Swiss people decided to have their Ministers elected by the Legislature. A big move was made in Switzerland before the war to adopt the American system straight out, so that Ministers should be elected by the people. Since the war a compromise has been reached by which the American system is adopted in the cantons. The canton Executive consists of Ministers directly elected by the people, but the Federal Executive is still functioning as I have described it. I would add that the Federal judiciary is also elected by the Swiss Legislature. I think that the Federal judges are elected for six years, while the President and the Vice-President are elected by the Legislature for a shorter term. In Switzerland, it is well known that the party ties are not nearly so strong as the cantonal ties. It has been remarked by observers of European Legislatures that in the Swiss National Council members sit together by cantons. A clerical representative of, say, Freiburg, sits next to a socialist representative of Freiburg, and next to the socialist representative sits a conservative, and so on. The tendency is to regard cantonal loyalty as the primary test, and party loyalty as something quite secondary. The whole Swiss system tends to minimize the importance of parties in the Legislature, because there is not only the Executive which is outside the Legislature, but there are also the initiative and referendum by which the people themselves can bring forward measures, and make them law without the consent of the Legislature. The people can also reject measures which the Legislature has passed.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Do you not think that if we had an elective Ministry, there would be a better chance of winning a referendum than under the present system of Government?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—I do not think so. In America, there has been an elective Executive, but that did not help on the initiative and referendum. That has come in spite of elective Executives. I can understand men who are new to this House saying that they are disappointed with the system obtaining here. At present, there are no real party issues in this House. We have on one side the Government, and on the other side an Opposition which consists of two parties, and some strays.

Mr. BODMAN.—That is the best compliment I have had paid to me since I came here.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—The policy proposed by the Government is not a Labour policy. It is one to which I suppose 80 per cent. of the people would subscribe. It is neither distinctly Labour, nor distinctly National; nor is it a Farmers Union policy.

Mr. GRAY.—Why is that?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Probably because a lot of the things people need have been left undone for years. The policy proposed by the Government is also a safe one. The tendency is for members not to look at that policy through party spectacles at all. At present, the party system is not functioning in this House, but we note over and over again that the smoothness and calmness of the scene do not——

Mr. JACKSON.—Show the under-current.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Possibly. It is possible that the scene may become tempestuous and stormy at times. I believe that the normal condition of life in Australia is a struggle between two parties which stand for two different sets of principles; they have different ways of looking at social problems. If that is the normal state of life here, I fail to see how we can expect to acclimatize in this country a system of government which works in circumstances where party feeling is not strong, and where the people have control all the time. Neither in this country nor in England do the people have control. It was said by Rousseau that in England the people were free only once in seven years, and that was at election times. Under a system of representative government, the people are not in direct control, and it is only through parties that people have any indirect control. The experience in England teaches us that it is only through party organization that the people have come into their own. In that country there were at one time Legislatures controlled by great land-owners and a rising capital class. But about the time of the Stuarts there was a division. The King made certain concessions until he reached a certain point, and said, in effect, "I will not give any more." Some said that the King had not given enough, and should give more, while others claimed that he had given enough, and could give no more. That was the beginning of the party system. Out of it we got Whigs and Tories and Liberals and Conservatives. The party cleavage went right on. It was because of the split between the two sections of the governing classes in England that the people were admitted to a share of the power. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the two sections of the governing classes were struggling, a Reform Bill was brought in to extend the franchise. Why? Because the party that as a rule was underneath, but was temporarily on top, said, "If we bring in another class of voters, we shall be able to rule." The Liberals came in, and ruled for many years. A new generation grew up, forgot about the Whigs giving them the franchise, and voted with the Conservatives. In the 60's Gladstone believed that the artisan, being a reasonable man, would vote for the Liberals. Disraeli thought there was a great well of Conservatism in the working class that had remained untapped. In 1884, the Liberals enfranchised the country labourer in the belief that it would mean more votes for them. It did, and the labourer voted for the Liberals at the first election, but afterwards he voted for the Conservatives. The extension of power has not been made out of love for the people, but it has been made through a desire of one of the two sides of the governing classes to bring in a set of people who would bestow power perpetually on those who enfranchised them. If we did not have the party system in Australia, the people would not rule.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX.—Don't they rule in the municipal councils?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Our experience in Melbourne has been that it is only

since the advent of the Labour party in the municipal councils that the people have had any real control. In Switzerland the people are in control of Parliament all the time. That is the difference between Switzerland and Australia. Switzerland has the initiative and the referendum, and the people have control of Parliament, which is only a committee of the people. The Swiss Parliament has not the final voice. If Parliament passes a law, and a minority of the people say, "We do not believe a majority is in favour of this," it can demand a popular vote by referendum. If the Swiss electors find that Parliament will not pass a law that they want, they can demand a popular vote by initiative.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Both the referendum and initiative are good things.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Yes, they are. Unless we get them in Australia, we shall not be able to describe ourselves as a self-governing people. The representative system is not democratic. The people's control is only at second-hand. If we did not have the party system in this House, the people would have no control over us at all. When a thing that the members want comes before us, what control have the people? Take, for instance, the question of an increase in parliamentary salaries. The members on both sides of the House may favour that, whether it is right or wrong, and the people would have no control. The only way in which the people can get control of Parliament is by putting out the ruling party, and putting in the Opposition party. I think that if we had elective Ministries we should degenerate just as Victoria did under the Coalition Government which ruled under Gillies and Deakin. That was a time of the greatest corruption that Victoria has known. The absence of a real Opposition precipitated the boom trouble. An active and vigilant Opposition is necessary to the working of a Legislature such as ours. The Opposition is just as important as the Government. The weakness of this House is that there is no Opposition. Until an Opposition does develop out of the welter that is on that side of the House, there will not be any satisfactory government in this Chamber. I believe that the people need two well-matched parties in the Victorian Parliament.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—Is that what you are going to tell the people of New South Wales?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—I shall tell them that I believe a strong Government and a strong Opposition are necessary in the New South Wales Parliament. I am not prepared, like the chameleon, to change my complexion because I change my ground. The honorable member for Ouyen spoke of the system of elective Ministries as if it were a reaction against something that was very old. The present Cabinet system is not very old. It is something that has developed slowly to what it is to-day. It is subject to a great number of abuses. I agree with the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat in his opinion regarding some of those abuses. A stand ought to be made against them. They can be got rid of without introducing the system of elective Ministries. Last year the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat quoted from a report of a Parliamentary Committee which sat in New Zealand in 1881. That Committee said, *inter alia*—

> The rule that the Ministry must be unanimous in all its decisions, that each member is responsible for the actions of the whole, and the whole for the actions of each member, is calculated to destroy independence of thought and action, and not unfrequently results in the exclusion of valuable men from the Ministry.

That is an evil which is inseparable from the Cabinet system. I believe that no reform is a net gain, but that along with every change we get advantages and disadvantages. We can regard a reform as a gain if its advantages outweigh the disadvantages, and as a loss if its disadvantages outweigh its advantages. There are certain things that cannot be done without Cabinet solidarity. I cannot imagine any Government responsible to Parliament getting on without solidarity. The Budget is expressive of Cabinet solidarity. The Budget does not contain administrative measures, but the Government says, "This is what is necessary for the expenditure." Each Minister is anxious to get as much as he possibly can for his Department. If each Minister were allowed to say, "I want so much, and I move that a certain sum be appropriated to my Department,"——

Mr. JACKSON.—What chance would the last fellow have?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—He would have none. I believe that Cabinet solidarity is exaggerated, and carried further than is necessary.

Mr. MURPHY.—Are Ministers in Switzerland responsible for the Budget?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—The House can reject the Budget; the Ministers are responsible to each other.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—What about the betting tax that was proposed here last year?

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Another place rejected the Budget, and this House continued the Ministry. It has been said that Cabinet solidarity has existed since the ages. In 1839 and 1841, Macaulay was a member of Lord Melbourne's Cabinet. He had to defend a position in which certain members of the Ministry voted on one side in regard to a proposal that was not a Government measure, and certain members voted on the other side. He said—

> I rejoice to see that we are returning to the wise, the honest, the moderate maxims which prevailed in this House in the time of our fathers. If two men are brought up together from their childhood; if they follow the same studies, mix in the same society, and exercise a mutual influence in forming each other's minds, a perfect agreement between them on political subjects cannot even then be expected. But, governments are constructed in such a manner that 40 or 50 gentlemen, some of whom have never seen each other's faces till they are united officially, or have been in hot opposition to each other all the rest of their lives, are brought all at once into intimate connexion. Among such men unanimity would be an absolute miracle. "Talk of divided houses!" said Lord Chatham. "Why, there never was an instance of a united Cabinet! When were the minds of twelve men ever cast in one and the same mould?"

He pointed out that in regard to certain measures there must be solidarity, and explained the rule that had been laid down. He proceeded—

> Within the memory of many persons now living the rule was this, that all questions whatever were open questions in a Cabinet, except those which came under two classes:—measures brought forward by the Government as a Government, which all the members of the Government were, of course, expected to support; and motions brought forward with the purpose of casting a censure, express or implied, on the Government, or any Department of it, which all the members of the Government were, of course, expected to oppose. "Let Hon. Gentlemen," said Macaulay, warming to his theme, "run their minds over the history of Mr. Pitt's Administration:" and honorable gentlemen were reminded, or, not impossibly, informed, how, on parliamentary reform, Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas had voted against Lord Mulgrave and Lord Grenville; and how, on the question of the slave-trade, Mr. Dundas and Lord Thurlow had voted against Lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt," and so on through the Law of Libel, and the impeachment of Warren Hastings, and the dropping of the impeachment of Warren Hastings until the names of Mr. Pitt's Cabinet had been presented to the view of Hon. Gentlemen in every possible variation, and every conceivable combination. "And was this the effect of any extraordinary weakness on the part of the statesman who was then Prime Minister? No. Mr. Pitt was a man whom even his enemies acknowledged to possess a brave and commanding spirit."

The biographer of Lord Macaulay, his nephew, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, M.P., states—

> To this day there remains unanswered Macaulay's protest against the cruelty of needlessly placing men in a position where they must be false, either to their personal convictions, or to a factitious theory of Ministerial obligation.

I believe that we have a factitious theory of Ministerial obligation. I believe that Ministers should insist upon a greater measure of freedom than the practice of the past has conceded to them. A Committee that was set up in New Zealand to consider a similar proposal to the one we are discussing reported strongly against the system of party government as it obtained in that country. The Committee condemned the practice by which Ministers forced their supporters to vote for certain Bills. I think that that practice ought to be condemned. We ought to insist that Ministers shall not have the power of forcing their supporters to put measures through to which they object, under threat of a dissolution or of dropping the measure. By the way, the party with which I am associated has been so constructed that that objection does not obtain so far as our party is concerned.

Lieut.-Col. KNOX.—You are free agents?

Mr. BLACKBURN. — Outside the platform to which we are pledged we are free agents. A Labour Ministry cannot say to us, "You must vote for a certain measure," under threat of dissolution, because the Ministry is subject to the organization of which we are all part and to whose platform we are all pledged. In the same way it cannot say that it will drop a measure if it cannot have its own way. The Ministry cannot force us to do anything outside our pledged proposals. The honorable member for Upper Yarra stated that he would be surprised if he found Labour members voting against the Government on any matter. Well, I think he will be agreeably surprised, or possibly he may be disap-

pointed, because I can assure him that, wherever Labour Governments have been in power, there have always been Labour supporters who have voted against measures that have been brought in, in cases where the measures have been outside the party platform. The honorable member has only to read the New South Wales *Hansard* containing the record of debates in the last Parliament to assure himself that such opposition by Labour supporters to a Labour Government's proposals has taken place. A number of labour members insisted that certain proposals brought forward by the Lang Government were not part of the Labour platform, and they refused to support them.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—And Mr. Lang insisted upon having a number of his Ministers tossed out of the Ministry.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—If he did do that it was for the reason that Mr. Lang was endeavouring to carry out the policy that he was pledged to. The whole struggle in New South Wales has been between the people who believe in the Labour platform and who want to carry it out, and the people who, whilst affirming their belief in the Labour platform, do not want to carry it out. The public men of Australia on all sides of politics ought to revise certain traditions and assumptions of Cabinet Government. They ought to stand for the principle that so far from Cabinet solidarity being the rule, it should be the exception; that men should never be asked to vote against their convictions; and that their supporters should not be asked to vote against their convictions.

Dr. ARGYLE.—They always have the privilege of resigning.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—That is quite true. But a Minister ought not to be placed in the position that he must either vote against his convictions on a minor matter or walk out of the Ministry. It is absurd that that should be the rule. Where a minor matter is in consideration, why should a dissenting Minister leave the Ministry? Of course, where a major matter is concerned, a Minister, if he cannot see eye to eye with his colleagues, may have to walk out. Cabinet solidarity should not be carried to extremes. The compelling of all members of the Cabinet to vote one way ought not to be allowed. When six o'clock closing of hotels was introduced, men who were members of the Government—the Peacock Government I think it was—were reproached by organizations with which they were connected for voting in a certain way. They explained that they thought they had been unfairly treated, but that Cabinet had insisted that they should take up the attitude they did take up. That was wrong. On a matter like that Ministers should have been free to vote as their consciences dictated. We shall have to devise some rule for dealing with the theory of penal dissolution. The Cabinet is, after all, a committee of the House, and should not have the right of making itself master of the House, and of saying to honorable members, "If you do not vote for this measure, with which you disagree, we will place you in the unpleasant position of having to find money to fight an election for which you are not prepared." The Government has the whiphand, because it can choose its time for going to the country. It can choose the propitious moment.

Mr. DUNSTAN.—It does not always work. The Government may choose its time for going to the country, but the results may not be satisfactory to the Government.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Quite so. But it can force a dissolution at the moment most favorable to itself. It will be remembered that Sir Joseph Cook did that in 1914. He missed the bus. He thought the time propitious, and went to the country. Probably it would have worked out all right from his point of view had the war not broken out. That upset all calculations. I hope it will not be supposed that because the speeches on the motion moved by the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat have been one-sided, there is nothing to be said against elective Ministries. On a private member's day, and on a private member's motion, the feeling is that advocates of the motion should have the fullest opportunity of supporting the motion. The only reason that I rose was because of the assumption that there was nothing to be said against elective Ministries.

Mr. PRENDERGAST (Chief Secretary).—Long years of parliamentary experience have taught me that those parties that are encroached upon by reason of the advancement of certain sections of the community are continually looking around for some means of holding

back the parties that are making progress. Under the present system of government a party rises to power, and rules by virtue of its majority. If members are not cognisant of the work to be done, and are not public-spirited enough to make their influence felt in the Legislature, they should not seek to change the Constitution in order to obtain power and opportunity to do that which they cannot do in the condition of parties existing in the House to-day. In considering elective Ministries, let us take, as an illustration, the question of electoral redivision, which was dealt with by this House last session. Suppose the elective Ministry system had been in operation then and that the Chief Secretary was not a member of the party which favoured that form of electoral redivision. Would the party to which the Chief Secretary belonged, and which had elected him, have been satisfied with that Minister if he had agreed to the introduction of a measure for electoral redivision which did not suit that party? The Chief Secretary would not have agreed with some of his colleagues on the subject of electoral redivision, and an attempt might have been made to introduce a measure based on compromise. The history of parliamentary government shows that measures of that kind have always been dangerous. The Federal Constitution provides for the election of a Senator by the State Parliament when an extraordinary vacancy occurs in the Senate. What do we find occurs when those vacancies have to be filled in the Senate? The State Parliaments elect the new Senators solely on party considerations. The same result would be obtained if the strongest party in the House were to meet in its party room and select the new senator.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—There have been exceptions in that case.

Mr. BLACKBURN.—Yes, in the case of the election of Mr. Hannan by the Victorian Parliament a few years ago.

Mr. PRENDERGAST. — There may have been one or two exceptions, but, usually, in the appointment of a senator by a State Parliament the selection is made on party lines, although it may result in parties voting for non-party candidates, but still for party purposes, as is done in the case of elections for the positions of Speaker and Chairman of Committees. The system of the Labour party of electing the members of a Labour Ministry in the party room is now acceptable to a considerable section of the community, and more and more people are supporting that system as the years go by. When the Labour party elects its Ministers no nominations are called. Ballots are taken until a clear majority of votes is obtained for one man, and he is then held to be selected. Therefore, the members of a Labour Ministry are elected by a vote of the majority of the party. If we have elective Ministries, with Ministers representing different parties and being responsible to the House, how are we to secure unanimity in the Cabinet? Take the case of the Minister holding the portfolio of Public Instruction, or any of the other great spending Departments. The Treasurer has control of the purse, and the Minister in charge of a spending Department must suit the wishes of the Treasurer. Suppose that the Minister of Public Instruction framed a policy which would involve considerable expenditure. If he were to seek the authority of the House for the adoption of that policy without consulting his colleagues in Cabinet, there would at once be a conflict of opinion in the Cabinet. The Minister would find himself in difficulty if the Treasurer said, "I cannot find the money you require, and I am not in favour of imposing taxation to raise that money."

Mr. TOUTCHER.—If an elective Ministry could not work better as a team than you think, it would be a wretched combination.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—How does the parliamentary machine work?

Mr. TOUTCHER.—An elective Ministry would be worked by common sense and common understanding amongst Ministers.

Mr. PRENDERGAST. — An elective Ministry could not be worked satisfactorily in that way. The Ministers would be continually in conflict. I suppose that a number of honorable members have given this subject consideration, but I have noticed, during this debate, that, with the exception of the mover of the motion, those members who have supported elective Ministries vigorously are those who are new to Parliament, and have not yet obtained a full understanding of the working of the parliamentary machine.

Mr. TOUTCHER. — Those members have come to this House with a fresh understanding of public opinion.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—Public opinion is sometimes formed on this subject without a knowledge of the circumstances which surround the working of the parliamentary machine. Motions affirming the principle of elective Ministries have been submitted in this House on four occasions. In 1905, Mr. Watt submitted a motion, which was debated and afterwards discharged from the notice-paper after a few members had spoken in its favour. In 1910 another motion met with a similar fate. When a motion was submitted, in 1915, by Mr. A. A. Billson, the House divided on it, and eight members voted for it and 23 members voted against it. Last session, another motion was submitted by the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat, and defeated by 27 votes to ten. At that rate of progress, it will probably be 150 years before a majority in favour of elective Ministries is obtained in this House. I have never been in favour of any party legislating for me if I can make my vote and the power of my party more effective. I believe in the initiative and referendum being embodied in the Constitution. I consider that Parliament should have the right to refer certain questions to the people when they desire to express their opinion on them. That system is in operation in Switzerland, and I have noticed that when Parliaments in which there were elective Ministries have referred questions to the people, the result of the referendum has been opposed to the view of the elective Ministry in nearly very case. It is a peculiarity of referendums that the vote of the people is generally different from the view of the controlling party in Parliament. In that way the system of initiative and referendum is a safeguard, and I think it should be included in our Constitution. What would occur if we had the system of elective Ministries, and 32 members were seated on one side of the House and 31 on the opposite side? Would the minority of 31 members obtain any representation in the Ministry? If the Labour party comprised the 32 members on one side of the House, I am sure they would not elect any member on the other side of the House to the Ministry, because we do not believe that a great deal of legislation that would be introduced by members on the other side would be in the best interests of the country.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—In Switzerland, the strongest party in Parliament—the Young Democrats—have not elected one of their members to the Ministry, because they believe that the more experienced men in the other parties should be in the Ministry.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—That reminds me of James Russell Lowell's opening lines in "The Pious Editor's Creed"—

> I du believe in Freedom's cause,
> Ez fur away ez Payris is.

I am not in the position to affirm or deny the honorable member's statement. As far as I can see, Switzerland has not made any remarkable progress as a result of the elective Ministry system. I know that in that country, the views of elective Ministries had been rejected by the people at referendums.

Mr. TOUTCHER. — Distance cannot annihilate experience and achievement.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—The honorable member for Mildura appears to be a fatalist in the matter of the voting rights and privileges of the people. Because he cannot get all the people to cast their votes at an election, he appears to think —if I interpret him correctly—that it is a mistake to have a voting system at all. There are some people who have never taken any interest in the parliamentary machine and have never valued the franchise. Compulsory voting is now the law of the land, however, and many more people than ever before are interested in Parliament and its doings, and are keen to make use of their right to vote. Where there were previously polls of only 50 per cent. to 60 per cent. of the electors, about 90 per cent. are now voting. Even to-day, there is really no compulsion; that is to say, people are not bound to cast a valid vote. They can render their ballot-papers invalid. In addition, there is statutory provision to exempt people who have religious scruples against voting. Provided that they have taken the proper steps to make known their objections, they are not prosecuted because of their failure to vote. It is well, however, that the whole of the people should take an interest in the election of their parliamentary representatives. Educative influences are at work to-day in the community, and more and more people are interesting

themselves voluntarily in the parliamentary institution. We may go back into history to trace this tendency from its beginnings. We may read how more and more people, from century to century, have taken greater and greater interest in their rights as citizens. I repeat that the people value their rights and privileges to-day more highly than ever before. Any one who seeks to restrict or remove the franchise rights of the people is a source of danger to the community. It is impudence on the part of any man to say that one citizen should not have the same political rights and privileges as his fellow-citizens.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Some of the members in the Ministerial corner would like to know why the Labour party dropped from its platform the principle contained in my motion.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—The members in the Ministerial corner can speak for themselves.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I should like to hear the Chief Secretary give an explanation.

Mr. PRENDERGAST. — What would be the position with regard to taxation and the expenditure of the people's money under an elective Executive? To-day, the Treasurer initiates certain financial proposals which embody the programme of the Government. Does the honorable member for Stawell and Ararat mean to tell me that any individual member of an elective Ministry could spend as much of the people's money as he wished, say, in his own constituency, and without consulting the Treasurer? Let me again mention, for example, our great education system, which is costing the country more money every year. Would the Minister of Public Instruction in an elective Ministry take it upon himself to increase the expenditure of his Department by the considerable expansion of schools without first consulting the Minister who was in control of the public purse?

Mr. TOUTCHER.—Certainly not!

Mr. PRENDERGAST. — The system advocated by the honorable member would do nothing in the direction of improving the machinery of Parliament. Its inauguration would merely make confusion worse confounded. I trust that the honorable member will not persevere with his motion.

Mr. TOUTCHER.—I certainly intend to call for a vote on it.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—If the honorable member is intent on going down to his defeat, that is his own affair. In a Cabinet, under the system ruling to-day, there may be squabbles. As a matter of fact, there has not been any quarrelling in the present Cabinet.

Dr. ARGYLE. — Do not reveal Cabinet secrets.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—But, even if there were squabbles, would it not be better that principles should be fought out in the Cabinet room among the members of the Ministry, rather than openly on the floor of the House among the members of an elective Executive chosen from the various parties? Between the members of an elective Ministry, representative of the various parties, there would be constant clashes. There would be no end to quarrelsome debating in the House over matters which should have come before members as the unanimous will of the Ministry. Whatever may be done, we cannot alter the party system.

Mr. TOUTCHER. — This is not a party matter. If the Chief Secretary had moved as I have done, he could have had my vote at any time.

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—I am sorry that I am not prepared to reciprocate. We have seen many composite Ministries formed. The last one was formed because the party in office saw that it was in danger of being turned out. It immediately entered into an alliance with another party, with the result which invariably happens in such cases—the composite Government gave us less in the way of sound legislation than any Government which preceded it. Every time a composite Ministry has come into power, it has gone out without its departure being very much regretted. We had the experience at the last general election of one party in the composite Ministry being led by the honorable member for Rodney, and the other by the honorable member for Allandale, and the result proved eminently unsatisfactory to both of them. Honorable members will recollect that when the honorable member for Castlemaine and Kyneton was the Leader of a Government, he suddenly dismissed from his Ministry representatives of the

Farmers Union, because members of that union wanted to adopt a certain course of action at the following election. Some of the members of that Ministry did not know that they had been deprived of their portfolios until they were notified by telegram, or saw the announcement in a newspaper. I believe in the referendum, and in giving the widest possible franchise to the residents of this State. With that system and the initiative, we could secure better Government than is possible under the present circumstances. Government by majority is the only way in which we can effectively work the parliamentary machine. What rights have the minority in regard to legislation? I do not think they have any. The system of proportional representation has been adopted in some countries, but we know that there is a desire to get back to some other system after it has been a little while in operation. Although a minority has no rights in connexion with parliamentary government, sometimes a compromise may lead to advantage. In the majority of cases, however, it does not. It results in the holding back of legislation.

Mr. KENT HUGHES (*Kew*).—Do you seriously say that minorities have no rights?

Mr. PRENDERGAST. — Minorities have no rights in parliamentary government, and, as I have pointed out, composite Governments invariably fail. One party in such a Government has certain views in regard to which it desires legislation, and the other party may have views of an entirely different character. They do not seem to be able to sink their differences, with the result that we do not get effective legislation at all. The last composite Government left office without carrying out legislation which the people have long desired.

Mr. BROWNBILL.—And the Opposition was willing to help them.

Several HONORABLE MEMBERS.—Oh, oh!

Mr. PRENDERGAST.—On previous occasions, when this matter has been under consideration, there has been a general desire for the motion to be defeated, and, with one or two exceptions, no man of any great influence in politics has supported it.

The House divided on the motion (the Hon. O. R. Snowball in the chair).

Ayes	...	...	15
Noes	...	...	29
Majority against the motion	...	...	14

AYES.

Mr. Allan	Lieut.-Col. Knox
,, Allnutt	Mr. Linton
,, Cleary	,, Mackrell
,, Coyle	,, Toutcher
,, Dunstan	,, Walter.
Lieut.-Col. Forrest	*Tellers:*
Mr. Glowrey	Mr. Morley
,, Gray	,, Wettenhall.

NOES.

Dr. Argyle	Mr. Jewell
Mr. Bailey	,, Keane
,, Blackburn	,, W. S. Kent Hughes (*Kew*)
,, Bodman	,, McAdam
,, Bond	,, McKenzie
,, Brownbill	,, Murphy
,, Cain	Sir Alexander Peacock
,, Cotter	Mr. Pollard
,, Frost	,, Prendergast
,, Hayes	,, Reid
,, Hjorth	,, Slater
,, Hogan	,, Tunnecliffe.
,, Holland	*Tellers:*
,, A. Hughes (*Hampden*)	Mr. Lemmon
,, Jackson	,, Webber.

ENGINEERS REGISTRATION BILL.

Mr. WETTENHALL (*Lowan*).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

In doing so, I must first of all acknowledge the compliment paid me by the Institute of Engineers in asking me to undertake the presentation of such an important measure. I sincerely thank the Parliamentary Draftsman and the Crown Law officers who gave so much attention to a private member's Bill when they were exceptionally busy on Government measures. The Bill has three or four important objects. One is the creation of a standard to which engineers may aspire irrespective of whether they are trained in the University or in a technical school. Having attained the required standard of qualification, they must be protected from the unfair competition of unqualified persons. But perhaps the greatest feature of the Bill is the protection it will afford to the community against the baneful results that occur in all kinds of engineering work undertaken or supervised by men who have inferior qualifications. We have had a number of instances in which works have failed, and,

indeed, there are many cases in which work, although quite satisfactory to the uninitiated, could, according to experts, have been avoided with much better results for the project as a whole. The dictionary definition of the term "engineer" is "one engaged in the science, art, or profession of directing the natural sources of power and the physical resources of nature for the use of man." That is a very wide definition. Few of us realize all the aspects of the service which an engineer renders to the community. An engineer, in the true sense of the word, should be a highly trained man, capable of logical constructive reasoning in the full light of all existing knowledge of his branch of engineering. During the last 100 years or so, engineering works have to a great extent become the basis on which modern life and civilization rest, and undoubtedly advancement in material affairs is largely in the hands of the engineer. We little realize to what extent the advance made in aviation is due to engineering work. Road construction, transport—automotive and otherwise—are all engineering activities, and the progress being made in respect of them is solely due to engineering work.

Mr. CAIN.—Are shire engineers affected by the Bill?

Mr. WETTENHALL.—Yes; they are more or less protected. It is reasonable that for its own protection the community should assure itself that in these matters it is being protected by capable men, particularly so in the case of a young country like Australia, where developmental works are in their initial stages, and where we must overtake in one generation what European engineers have had a century to perform. It is a regrettable fact that many important works are, and have been, carried on by men lacking the proper training. Many works have been executed in this country which, to the lay mind, exhibit no outstanding faults, but which, carried out by fully trained men, would have been more effective or less costly, or both. The many unfortunate accidents which have occurred bear witness to the need for such a measure as this, under which only tested and proved men, hallmarked by a competent authority, shall design and be in charge of those works on which the well-being of all rests, and, as is frequently the case, in which faulty design, construction, or operation may endanger human life. World development in engineering has become so rapid that the highly trained man is essential to the proper carrying out of these innovations, to prevent great economic loss. The capable engineer is, therefore, worthy of some form of hall-mark which will enable the public to differentiate at once between the real professional engineer and the untrained and ill-equipped man, who frequently undertakes works of public importance or of a kind in which human life may be endangered through ignorance or carelessness. I have had recent experience of this. A man apparently trained got to a certain stage in a job, and then was "fuddled." We had to call in a professionally-trained man to unravel the knot and complete the work. The necessity for the recognition of professional engineers is obvious, and action in that regard has already been taken in other countries. Registration is in force, under different names, in many countries. In Great Britain the Institution of Civil Engineers has obtained registration through the granting of a Royal Charter. That type of protection, which grants registration to the members of one institute only, is obviously unsuited to Australian conditions. All the engineering institutes in Britain, including the Institution of Civil Engineers, are endeavouring to obtain a general registration Bill on the lines of this measure. An Engineers Registration Act has been passed by the New Zealand Parliament. The Bill that I am recommending to this House is based largely on the New Zealand Act. In 40 out of the 48 States in the United States of America compulsory registration in some form or another is in operation. Most of the eleven Canadian States also have adopted registration. Many foreign countries have similar forms of registration. In this State the members of all other professions and some trades are registered by the Government. That is direct evidence that their work is of importance to the country, and that the public should be protected against untrained men. Among those professions and trades are the following:—Medicine, law, architecture, dentistry, veterinary surgery, surveying, and branches of engineering, such as plumbing or sanitary engineering. There has

already been in this State some legislation affecting engineers and protecting the public. No municipal engineering works, nor any work of water supply or reclamation, can be effected except by an authorized person under the various Acts governing such matters. The Bill simply proposes the extension of existing powers so as to cover all branches of professional engineering. The enactment of the Bill will be somewhat parallel to the institution, many years ago, of an examination for marine engineers by the British Board of Trade. No shipowner may employ an uncertificated marine engineer for a senior position, and it is quite possible that there was some resentment displayed when the Board of Trade decided to test marine engineers. The operation of that measure did not, however, act to the detriment of any engineer who was reasonably equipped to carry out his duties, but, on the contrary, was beneficial to engineers and ship-owners alike, to say nothing of the passengers. It created a profession, and established a goal and inspiration for generations of engineers who were to come after. It assured shipowners of a supply of men whose qualifications were guaranteed by the Board of Trade. Though the analogy may not be perfect, it is close enough to indicate the probable effect of registration for engineers. The youth who devoted hours to study, instead of idleness, would have a surer hope of reward, and the country would be the richer by having a home-grown and ever-increasing supply of technicians on which to draw for development. That prospect prompted me to move in this question. A young friend of mine who had taken the highest degrees in engineering was deploring the fact that he had to battle with unqualified men. It is two years since the matter was first brought under my notice.

Mr. CAIN.—You are not asking for protection against competition for these men?

Mr. WETTENHALL.—No; I wish to see that unqualified men do not try to undertake work that should be done by qualified men. In the Bill I have provided amply for the protection of the rights of individuals who are practising now whether they are qualified or not, just as was done when legislation was passed in regard to the registration of dentists. The measure is in no sense directed offensively against any person or class of persons. I regret that the time at my disposal does not give me an opportunity of going further into the details of the Bill. I am also sorry that members have had so little opportunity of studying the matter. I feel that the measure is on sound lines. Those who have read the Bill will see that it follows the lines along which the registration of architects is effected. It is almost a replica of the New Zealand measure. I recommend the proposal to the serious consideration and recognition of the House.

Mr. HOGAN (Premier).—Is the honorable member prepared to agree to an adjournment? His Bill is important, and would need consideration.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—I should be glad if the debate were to go on.

Mr. HOGAN. — The Government wishes to bring in another Supply Bill. I have consulted with the Leader of the Opposition, and he agreed on the matter. The honorable member for Toorak and the honorable member for Allandale are also agreeable to our bringing on Supply. There would be very little time to do that if the debate on the Bill now before the House were continued.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—Will you give an opportunity for the resumption of the debate?

Mr. HOGAN.—The honorable member is entitled to what time remains to-day. If we encroach on that, we are in duty bound to repay him on another day. I suggest that the debate be adjourned, and that the honorable member be given an opportunity to bring the measure forward again for the further attention of this House at a later date.

Mr. WETTENHALL.—Under those conditions, I shall be willing to agree to an adjournment.

Dr. ARGYLE (*Toorak*).—I move—

That the debate be now adjourned.

The motion for the adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned until Thursday, October 20.

EVIDENCE BILL.

For **Mr. SLATER** (Attorney-General), Mr. Hogan (Premier) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend section 72 of the Evidence Act 1915.

The motion was agreed to.

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

BUSINESS NAMES BILL.

For **Mr. SLATER** (Attorney-General), Mr. Hogan (Premier) moved for leave to bring in a Bill to provide for the registration of firms and persons carrying on business under business names, and relating to the names, styles, titles, or designations under which businesses are carried on, and for other purposes.

The motion was agreed to.

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

VOTES ON ACCOUNT.

The House went into Committee of Supply.

Mr. HOGAN (Treasurer).—I move—

That a sum not exceeding £1,544,953 be granted to His Majesty on account for or towards defraying the following services for the year, 1927-28:—Legislative Council—salaries and contingencies, £89; Legislative Assembly—salaries and contingencies, £1,040; Parliamentary Standing Committee—salaries and contingencies, £111; Refreshment Rooms—salaries and contingencies, £415; Engineers and Gardeners—salaries and contingencies, £178; Parliamentary Printing—£500; The Library, State Parliament House—salaries and contingencies, £258; Victorian Parliamentary Debates—salaries and contingencies, £640; Chief Secretary's Office—salaries and contingencies, £1,176; miscellaneous, £290; pensions, &c., £9,600; grants, £100; Board for the Protection of the Aborigines—salaries and contingencies, £584; Explosives—salaries and contingencies, £644; State Accident Insurance Office—salaries, £272; Fisheries and Game—salaries and contingencies, £638; Government Shorthand Writer—salaries and contingencies, £232; The Governor's Office—salaries and contingencies, £97; Inebriates Institution—salaries, contingencies, and miscellaneous, £400; Observatory—salaries, contingencies, and miscellaneous, £359; Premier's Office—salaries and contingencies, £590; Agent-General—staff and office, £557; Audit Office—salaries and contingencies, £1,228; Auditor-General, additional salary, £13; Government Statist—salaries and contingencies, £2,640; Hospitals for the Insane—salaries, contingencies, and miscellaneous, £36,875; Children's Welfare, &c.—salaries, contingencies, and maintenance, £31,545; Penal and Gaols—salaries and contingencies, £8,630; Police—salaries, contingencies, and miscellaneous, £51,250; Public Library, &c.—salaries and miscellaneous, £3,850; Public Service Commissioner—salaries and contingencies, £333; additional salary, £20; Department of Labour—salaries and contingencies, £2,594; Education—salaries, £156,900; contingencies and miscellaneous, £20,000; pensions, &c., £14; works and buildings, £1,833; endowments and grants, £35,500; exceptional expenditure, £14; Attorney-General—salaries and contingencies, £11.900; Solicitor-General—salaries and contingencies, £7,958; miscellaneous, £42; Treasury—salaries and contingencies, £2,200; miscellaneous, £6,000; transport, &c., £280; hospitals and charities, £39,791; grants, £225; pensions, &c., 72; exceptional expenditure, £83; State Superannuation Board—salaries, contingencies. and miscellaneous, £300; Taxation Office—Administration—salaries, £274; Income Tax—salaries and contingencies, £7,946; Land Tax—salaries and contingencies, £3,052; Death Duties—salaries and contingencies, £286; Curator—salaries and contingencies, £514; Government Printer—salaries and contingencies, £13,111; miscellaneous, £807; Survey, &c., Crown Lands—salaries and contingencies, £250; miscellaneous, £12,834; Botanic and Domain Gardens, &c.—salaries and contingencies, £1,605; Works and Buildings—£500; Immigration Bureau—salaries and contingencies, £2,400; Public Works—salaries and contingencies, £5,500; Ports and Harbours—salaries and contingencies, £2,686; works, &c., £3,846; exceptional, £1,250; Public Works—works and buildings, £36,000; roads, works, and bridges, £6,500; endowments and grants, municipalities, &c., £35,000; Mines—salaries and contingencies, £2,140; miscellaneous expenditure, £2,155; State Forests—salaries and contingencies, £8,652; State Rivers and Water Supply Commission—salaries, &c., £20,355; Agriculture — Administrative — salaries and contingencies, £1,116; salaries and contingencies, £4,465; Maffra Beet Sugar Factory, £3,000; Horticulture—salaries and miscellaneous, £2,645; Stock and Dairy—salaries and miscellaneous, £6,516; Export Development—salaries and miscellaneous, £4,743; Public Health—salaries and contingencies, £17,908; grants, £792; Railways—working expenses, &c., £840,243; pensions, &c., £580; Railway Construction Branch, £1,141; State Coal Mine—working expenses, £53,281; Total, £1,544,953.

This is the motion precedent to the Supply Bill for the month of October. The amount already granted was for three months, and this period expires to-morrow. It is necessary, pending the passing of the Estimates, to obtain further approval in order to pay the working expenses of the Departments. When submitting the last Votes on Account, I stated that it was the intention of the Government to present the Budget to the House before the amount included in that Bill was exhausted, and that undertaking was carried out. In accordance with the customary practice,

provision is not made for any items other than the usual proportions for salaries and ordinary expenditure. In view of the fact that honorable members will have full opportunity in the debate on the Budget and Estimates to discuss all matters affecting State finance, I would ask them to facilitate the passage of this Bill. I do not think that honorable members will desire to debate the Bill at any length. The reason I am bringing it on to-day is that we shall have no authority to make payments after to-morrow until further Supply is granted. I understand that the Legislative Council will meet on Tuesday next. It is to meet the convenience of honorable members in another place that I ask honorable members to pass the Bill this afternoon. I assure honorable members that there is nothing unusual in the Supply asked for.

Sir ALEXANDER PEACOCK.—You do not propose to take any further business?

Mr. HOGAN.—No; this will be the last business for to-day.

Mr. WALTER (*Gippsland West*).—Did the Treasurer acquaint the honorable member for Rodney with his intention to bring on Supply to-day?

Mr. HOGAN.—I did not do so. I acquainted the Leader of the Opposition, and I thought that he would mention it to the honorable member for Rodney.

Mr. WALTER.—The party to which I belong, and of which I am Deputy Leader, was unaware that Supply would come on this afternoon. There are only two of us here.

Mr. HOGAN.—There is nothing contentious in the Bill.

Mr. WALTER.—I admit that. Had my Leader been acquainted with the intention of the Minister, I should have had nothing to say. Apparently the Treasurer neglected to acquaint him.

Mr. HOGAN.—Not exactly that. I told the Leader of the Opposition that it was my intention to bring Supply on, and I assumed that he would make my intention known to members of the Opposition.

Mr. WALTER.—If the honorable member for Rodney was informed of the position, he did not mention it to other members of the Country party.

Dr. ARGYLE (*Toorak*).—Under the heading, "Public Works—Endowments and Grants—Municipalities, &c.," I find that the Supply granted for October, 1926, was £1,000. The amount now asked for is £35,000.

Mr. HOGAN (Treasurer).—Honorable members are aware that, during the winter months, expenditure for the relief of unemployment was necessary. The municipalities were circularized towards the end of May. Applications for grants on a £1 for £1 basis were made by municipalities, and the amount set down in the printed slip is for payments of those grants to municipalities.

The motion was agreed to.

The resolution was reported to the House, and adopted.

WAYS AND MEANS.

The House went into Committee of Ways and Means.

Mr. HOGAN (Treasurer).—I move—

That, towards making good the supply granted to His Majesty for the services of the year 1927-28, the sum of £1,544,953 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue of Victoria.

The motion was agreed to, and the resolution was reported to the House.

CONSOLIDATED REVENUE BILL (No. 4).

The resolution passed in Committee of Ways and Means was adopted.

Leave was given to Mr. Hogan and Mr. Webber to bring in a Bill to carry out the resolution.

Mr. HOGAN (Treasurer) brought in a Bill to apply out of the Consolidated Revenue the sum of £1,544,953 to the service of the year 1927-28, and moved that it be read a first time.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was read a first time, and passed through its remaining stages.

ADJOURNMENT.

ORDER OF BUSINESS: BUDGET AND COMMONWEALTH FINANCIAL AGREEMENT.

Mr. HOGAN (Premier).—I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

I wish to intimate to honorable members the Government's intention regarding the order of business on Tuesday next. The Leader of the Opposition has the adjournment of the debate on the Budget for that day. Prior to the debate on the Budget being resumed, the Government proposes

that the second reading of the Local Government Bill should be moved. The next item to be taken will be the Forests Bill. I do not anticipate that that Bill will occupy much time. The Leader of the Opposition will then have the right to resume the debate on the Budget.

Sir **WILLIAM McPHERSON** (*Hawthorn*).—I suggest that the Premier consider the advisability of submitting to the House, as soon as possible, a draft of the financial agreement between the Commonwealth and the State. I understand it will be ready on Wednesday for submission to the House. The views of members on the Budget will depend, to a great extent, on the terms of that agreement, and it will be placing the cart before the horse if we debate the Budget without a knowledge of the financial agreement which has such an important bearing on the Budget.

Mr. HOGAN (Premier).—By leave, may I say that I have given consideration to the matter suggested by the Leader of the Opposition? I intend to take the course he mentioned if I can possibly do so. It will be no fault of mine if the agreement is not submitted to the House very shortly. I have not full control of the matter, however, because the agreement is being examined at present by the legal advisers of the Commonwealth and the State, and they have not completed their work. I am making every endeavour to have the agreement ready for submission to the House next week.

Sir WILLIAM McPHERSON.—Now that the Government has a month's supply, there is no urgency so far as the Budget debate is concerned.

Mr. HOGAN.—I propose to bring the agreement before the House as soon as it is ready. I will not ask the House to finalize any item of the Budget before the financial agreement is submitted.

Dr. ARGYLE (*Toorak*).—Any debate on the Budget prior to the submission of the financial agreement to the House will be beating the air, because honorable members will be debating something which depends on something else. I suggest that the Government should substitute some other business for the Budget until the financial agreement is placed before the House. Speeches made by honorable members on the Budget before the financial agreement is known to them will be futile to a certain extent, because they will need to have certain knowledge of the agreement before they can address themselves properly to the Budget. I urge the Premier to agree to the suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. HOGAN.—As I have indicated, I shall do my utmost to have the financial agreement submitted to the House next week, but I wish honorable members to understand that if it is not ready for submission and the Government is not prepared to go on with other business, it will expect honorable members to resume the debate on the Budget on Tuesday.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at 4.8 p.m., until Tuesday, October 4.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, October 4, 1927.

The PRESIDENT (**Sir Frank Clarke**) took the chair at 4.54 p.m., and read the prayer.

CONSOLIDATED REVENUE BILL (No. 4).

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works), was read a first time.

SWINE COMPENSATION BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and, on the motion of the Hon. J. P. JONES (Minister of Public Works), was read a first time.

METROPOLITAN TRAMWAYS.

ELECTRIFICATION OF CABLE LINES.

The Hon. E. L. KIERNAN asked the Minister of Public Works—

If, in view of the published reports that the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board is importing rails for the conversion to electric traction of the Victoria-street cable tramway, he will urge the Board not to further exercise its power under the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Act 1918 to proceed with the conversion of the Victoria-street cable tramway until Parliament has considered the whole