

election, and next session we would have the satisfaction of seeing the signature of the Minister to certain transactions that we must approve of. He did not wish to suggest anything wrong against any Minister, past or present; but this would put a tremendous power in the hands of the Minister, and it should not be left in the bill. He could understand the Minister being allowed to spend a certain amount of money on these operations, but under this bill the Minister could spend a million pounds on purchases without submitting one to Parliament, though it might afterwards be proved that the transactions could have been carried on at a saving of £200,000.

Clause agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments; report adopted.

House adjourned at 11.28 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 12 July, 1910.

Questions and Answers — Papers — Questions without Notice — Closer Settlement Promotion Bill — Adjournment (Increased Telephone Charges) — Testator's Family Maintenance Bill — Bridge: Macintyre River — Deserted Wives and Children — Coal and Shale Mines (Hours Regulation) Bill — Sunday Trading.

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair.

AMENDING LAND BILL.

Mr. KELLY asked the SECRETARY FOR LANDS, — When does he propose to bring in the amending land bill foreshadowed in the Governor's speech, which will give homestead selectors and settlement lessees the right to convert at existing values?

Mr. MOORE answered, — The bill will be introduced almost immediately.

TIMBER RESERVE, WEST WYALONG DISTRICT.

Mr. KELLY asked the MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, (1.) Is it a fact that a timber reserve on the Wamboyne-road, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from West Wyalong, has dead wood lying on it only fit for firewood? (2.) Is it a fact that the

forest ranger will not allow the woodcarters on the reserve to remove it? (3.) Will he give instructions that the reserve be opened to carters for obtaining this wood for domestic use?

Mr. PERRY answered, — (1.) Yes. (2 and 3.) The forest officer reports that permission to remove dead wood lying on this reserve has not been refused, and that three local fuel contractors have been removing fuel, at intervals, from the reserve for the past two years.

CROSS-COUNTRY RAILWAY LINES.

Mr. KELLY asked the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS, — (1.) Is it his intention to submit all the proposed cross-country railway lines to the royal commission now taking evidence? (2.) If so, will it be necessary for him to submit them afterwards to the Public Works Committee for investigation?

Mr. C. A. LEE answered, — (1.) The commission will decide what lines they will examine and report upon. (2.) Construction will be considered in connection with the report.

WYANGLA WATER CONSERVATION SCHEME.

Mr. KELLY asked the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS, — When will he give effect to his promise to carry out the Wyangla water conservation scheme at the head of the Lachlan River?

Mr. C. A. LEE answered, — No definite date can be fixed at present.

LAND HELD BY MR. HAWKE, INVERELL AND WARIALDA.

Mr. G. A. JONES asked the SECRETARY FOR LANDS, — (1.) In connection with the ballot for two settlement lease blocks, in parish Wonga; Warialda land district, did F. R. Hawke draw one of those blocks? (2.) Does Mr. Hawke, at present, hold 600 acres of land on Auburn Vale, near Inverell, besides having a large business at Inverell and Warialda? (3.) Were there persons applying for these blocks who had no land, or less land than Mr. Hawke? (4.) Has Mr. Hawke's application been confirmed? (5.) If so, has Mr. Hawke yet taken up his residence on the settlement lease he won at the ballot?

Mr. MOORE answered,—(1.) Yes. (2.) Mr. Hawke, who is a wool and hide buyer at Inverell and Warialda, deposed before the local land board that he bought at auction, about two and a half years ago, an area of 533 acres in the private subdivision of Auburn Vale, near Inverell, on ten years' terms. (3.) Yes. (4.) No; but the case is set down for consideration by the local land board arranged to sit at Boggabilla on the 4th August, 1910. (5.) A settlement lessee need not enter into residence until within three months after execution of the lease.

EARLY CLOSING, FACTORY, AND INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES INSPECTORS.

Mr. McGARRY (for Mr. HOLMAN) asked the COLONIAL SECRETARY,—(1.) Are the early closing and factory inspectors carrying out their duties as inspectors under the Industrial Disputes Act? (2.) How many reports does each individual inspector furnish to the Registrar? (3.) Can he furnish the names of the inspectors performing this duty who have furnished these reports? (4.) Has each inspector, individually or otherwise, been instructed to faithfully carry out the duties appertaining to their appointment?

Mr. WADE answered,—(1.) Yes. (2 and 3.) This information should be moved for in the form of a return. (4.) Yes.

PUBLIC SERVICE REGRADING.

Mr. HINDMARSH (for Mr. BROUGHTON) asked the ATTORNEY-GENERAL,—(1.) Is the quinquennial regrading of the public service due on 1st January, 1911? (2.) Is it intended to delay the regrading until long after that date?

Mr. WADE answered,—(1.) Yes. (2.) No.

WATER AND SEWERAGE ASSESSMENT.

Mr. McGARRY (for Mr. CARMICHAEL) asked the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS,—(1.) Has his notice been directed to the system of assessment for water and sewerage, as instanced by the case of J. W. Riding, of Leichhardt? (2.) Is it a fact that, owing to improvements in his pre-

mises, without any increase in the number of persons (two) in the house, he is now charged for 40,000 gallons of water, though the meter only registers 16,000, making the water rate 38s. as against 20s. formerly? (3.) Is it a fact that the sewerage charge is now 60s. as against 30s. formerly? (4.) If so, will he consider the necessity of making some more equitable basis of assessment?

Mr. C. A. LEE answered,—(1.) Yes, by Mr. Riding. (2.) Yes; but it is not known how many persons reside on the premises. (3.) He informed me of an increase. (4.) Water and sewerage rates are based upon the assessed annual value of premises served, against which every ratepayer has the right of appeal, which right, I understand, Mr. Riding did not avail himself of. Mr. Riding was fully informed by letter on the 8th instant.

WOOMARGAMA ESTATE.

Mr. McLAURIN asked the SECRETARY FOR LANDS,—(1.) Is it a fact that the lands surrendered under the Woomargama exchange are urgently needed for settlement? (2.) Will he take steps to expedite action in order that they be made available at an early date?

Mr. MOORE answered,—(1.) Yes. (2.) Steps are being taken to that effect; the land has been designed, and survey will be made shortly.

MRS. CATHERINE SCOTT'S MINING LEASE.

Mr. KELLY asked the SECRETARY FOR MINES,—(1.) What is the date and nature of the record of abandonment of private mining agreement dated 11th May, 1897, between Samuel Seberry and F. T. Winters, covering 15 acres, part of portion 7, parish Baratta, county Cunningham? (2.) Is the land, the subject of that agreement, open to the operation of the Mining on Private Lands Act? (3.) What is the value of the gold won by Mrs. Catherine Scott, under that agreement, since May, 1893? (4.) Has Mrs. Catherine Scott any title or authority to mine on 5 acres of land adjoining the south boundary of that agreement? (5.) If so, what is the nature and date of such title or authority? (6.) Was an authority to enter or a

permit issued to Mrs. Catherine Scott prior to her application for lease dated 26th October, 1909? (7.) If so, what is the date and nature of such authority to enter or permit? (8.) What is the reason for the delay in dealing with the applications for authority to enter on portion 7, parish Baratta, county Cunningham, made by H. B. Hutchinson, and dated 2nd November, 1909, and L. M. Black, and dated 30th October, 1909?

Mr. WOOD answered,—(1.) Dated 16th May, 1910. Notice of abandonment by Catherine Scott recorded by the local mining registrar, Condobolin, Mrs. Scott having acquired the title originally held by Winters. (2.) Yes; see also 4. (3.) Not known in the department. There is no legal obligation on the part of holders of this class of title to furnish returns of quantities of gold won. (4.) Mrs. Scott, as owner of portion 7, parish of Baratta, marked out and subsequently applied for a lease of 15 acres, described as "the land as fenced and known as the Alma Gold Mine," since surveyed as portion P.G.L. 4. (5.) Application for lease dated 26th October, 1909. (6 and 7.) No. Not necessary. She is owner of the land. (8.) The warden reports that the inquiries under section 51, Mining Act, 1906, in respect of these applications were fixed for 10th November, 1909, postponed to 8th December, 1909, and again postponed to 12th January, 1910, to enable applicants to rectify error in name of owner of the subject land, to serve the notices required by the act, and to mark out the ground required. Applicants having failed to comply with the requirements, or to attend in support, the applications were refused. The delay was, therefore, caused by the applicants themselves.

BANKRUPTCY OF M. L. A. HUTCHINSON.

Mr. KELLY asked the ATTORNEY-GENERAL,—(1.) What amount of money accruing since May, 1903, has been recovered in respect of the one-sixteenth share of gold won in terms of private mining agreement dated 11th May, 1897 (Alma Gold Mine) in the bankrupt

estate of M. L. A. Hutchinson, by Mr. William Harrington Palmer, official assignee, from Mrs. Catherine Scott? (2.) What has Mr. W. H. Palmer, official assignee, done with the bankrupt's share in that agreement (Alma Gold Mine)?

Mr. WADE answered,—I am informed as follows:—

(1.) None. (2.) If this refers to the interest taken by the bankrupt under the agreement mentioned, the answer is that it is still held by the official assignee.

FREE RAILWAY PASSES.

Mr. MCGARRY (for Mr. SCOBIE) asked the COLONIAL TREASURER,—(1.) Are the Railway Commissioners empowered to issue free railway passes to any of the mercantile firms doing business with country clients over the state railways? (2.) If so, how many are issued, who are the recipients, and what are the names of the firms in receipt of same, giving the number each firm receives, and if such pass covers right of sleeping-cars? (3.) Should the reply be in the affirmative, on what grounds are the privileges conceded?

Mr. WADDELL answered,—I will presently lay this information upon the table of this House in the form of a return.

PAPERS.

Ministers laid upon the table the following papers, which were referred to the Printing Committee:—

Return respecting the issue of free railway passes to firms doing business with the Railway Department.

Minute of the Public Service Board regarding the appointment of Mr. T. G. Wilson as surveyor in the Department of Public Works.

Notification of resumption of land, under the Public Works Act, 1900, for the supply of water to the city of Sydney and suburbs.

Notification of resumption of land, under the Public Works Act, 1900, for the Spit to Manly electric tramway.

Notification of resumption of land, under the Public Works Act, 1900, for the Maitland to South Grafton railway.

Notification of resumption of land, under the Public Works Act, 1900, for the Narromine to Peak Hill railway.

SPECIAL CONSTABLE AND NON-UNIONISTS.

Mr. NICHOLSON: I wish to ask the Chief Secretary how much longer he intends to pay a special constable wages to escort two non-unionists to work at the Scarborough Colliery?

Mr. WOOD: I have no knowledge of the facts of the case, and I must ask the hon. member to give notice of the question.

TRAVELLING STOCK ROUTES.

Mr. G. A. JONES: I desire to ask the Secretary for Lands, in connection with the proposal made to him by some public bodies in connection with the control of travelling stock routes and reserves within the state, will he inform the House of his intentions; and if he proposes to make any radical alteration with regard to the controlling authority over those reserves and routes, will he give the House an opportunity of expressing an opinion before the change is made?

Mr. MOORE: I am not in a position to make any statement on the subject at present; but before any change is effected the House will have an opportunity of expressing an opinion.

ABATTOIRS FOR NEWCASTLE.

Mr. ESTELL: I wish to ask the Chief Secretary, in view of the fact that friction exists between the butchers and the municipal council of Waratah, and that lately friction has been caused by taking away power from the council and by granting licenses over the heads of the aldermen, will he introduce a bill to establish abattoirs in Newcastle during the present session? It would certainly remove friction, and it would be a non-contentious measure.

Mr. WOOD: I fully realise the significance of the hon. gentleman's remarks as far as the difficulties at Newcastle are concerned, and I shall be very glad to introduce a bill this session, and pass it into law, providing the state of business will permit of that being done. There are certain Government measures which have to be dealt with and cannot be set aside for a measure of that character, but if there is any reasonable possibility of dealing

with the measure this session I shall be only too glad to bring it forward.

BONDI-BRONTE TRAMWAY.

Mr. R. D. MEAGHER: I desire to ask the Secretary for Public Works, as regards the proposed extension of the tramway from Waverley terminus to Bronte, if he will consider the advisability, in view of the large number of people to whom that line will be inaccessible, of connecting the main Bondi tramway with the Bronte extension so as to link up the two services?

Mr. C. A. LEE: I understand that the hon. gentleman suggests that there should be a connection made between the Bondi and Waverley tramway lines at some convenient point. I have no doubt that that is a question which will have to be considered at a very early date, but, of course, it has no bearing on the extension of the Waverley line to Bronte. The objection to taking the Bronte line from the Waverley line applies with equal force to taking a line from the Bondi line to Bronte. I understand, however, that the hon. gentleman suggests connecting the two lines, and that is another consideration.

CLOSER SETTLEMENT PROMOTION BILL.

Bill read the third time.

ADJOURNMENT.

INCREASED TELEPHONE CHARGES.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received an intimation from the hon. member for Orange that he desires to move the adjournment of the House to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, "The necessity for representations being made by the state to the federal Government on the question of the proposed increase in charges for the use of telephones."

Five hon. members having risen in their places,

Question proposed.

Mr. FITZPATRICK (Orange) [4.54]: I make no apology for, at this stage, taking upon myself the responsibility of directing public attention to the proposed alteration in the charges to subscribers to the telephone system in operation in

this state. I look upon the contemplated action by the Postmaster-General as a direct attempt to extort fees altogether out of proportion to the service rendered. I do not wish to discuss the kind of service that we are now getting, because that would be outside the scope of the motion. I would only say that the present system is outrageously bad. I intend to devote attention to the proposals of the Postmaster-General which will make it almost impossible for the average man who uses a telephone for his private convenience to continue to avail himself of the system. So much has already been stated in the press recently with regard to this matter that it is unnecessary for me to go into details; but I take this opportunity to bring the matter before the House, so that hon. members may express their views and thus strengthen the agitation in favour of the continuation of the old system or the introduction of a new system which will not detrimentally affect all concerned. The statements which have appeared in the press must force one to the conclusion that the proposed charges are exorbitant, and that no such fees are exacted from subscribers in other parts of the world. The Postmaster-General's contention is, that the telephone system does not pay. If this be the fact, it is undoubtedly due mainly to the service, which is so outrageously bad that one might as well do without a telephone as put up with the trials and tribulations now associated with its use. A well-known medical man in Sydney recently stated that he had discarded the telephone, for the reason that it induced him to use bad language every time he attempted to avail himself of it. No doubt this is a common experience. According to the statements which have been made by the Postmaster-General, a fixed charge is to be made for the rental of telephones, and there are to be no free calls. Under present conditions an ordinary subscriber in the city or suburbs pays £2 10s. per half-year by way of rental, and has the right to make 2,000 calls per half-year free of any further charge. It is now proposed that almost the same amount shall be paid in the shape of rental, and that subscribers shall be charged $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per call. This is nothing but an outrageous imposition.

Mr. G. A. JONES: Are not those who cannot afford to pay rent charged 1d. per call at the present time?

Mr. FITZPATRICK: Yes; but that is because they have not any rental to pay in a lump sum. I am a subscriber to the telephone system in the country town in which I live, and I realise that it will be almost impossible for the average man in the city or country who uses a telephone for his private convenience to continue to do so under the proposed new system. I have here a statement made by two accountants—Messrs. Holmes and Whitton—who were appointed to examine the telephone accounts. Their representations are to this effect:

They were satisfied of the physical impossibility of insuring a correct or complete record of all calls, and the accountants were convinced that the general introduction of the toll system, under existing conditions, would lead to a hopeless breakdown in every time of strain. They would not advocate the general adoption of the toll system, except with an automatic meter placed beside the subscriber's instrument, and showing each effective call upon a dial.

This all means extra expense. In addition to the cost of making a call, the placing of the instrument in position will result in some additional expenditure to the subscriber, and the question is whether any but those who are in a position to maintain the luxury will associate themselves with the exchange. The two accountants also say:

The advocates of the old rate system spoke as though the flat-rate subscribers paid only a fixed rate each, but the fact was that many people with numerous extensions within their premises paid over £50 per annum, and a few paid more than £100.

That is, the individual who has only one telephone gets the use of it, and the system generally, at the rate of £4 per annum in the country and £5 in the city; but there are business houses in the metropolis which have from ten to twenty telephones, and these are all paid for at the same rate. After an experience of the new system, the bulk of these subscribers will probably reduce the number of their telephones by one-half or one-third, and the revenue will fall in consequence.

Mr. G. A. JONES: This is a declaration of war against the federal Government!

Mr. FITZPATRICK: It is not a declaration of war, but a declaration of independence.

An HON. MEMBER: They will not take any notice of this House, no matter what we do!

Mr. FITZPATRICK: They ought to; but if they do not, the reason will be because this House has allowed its rights to be frittered away in the past, and they look upon us as mere puppets.

Mr. G. A. JONES: Where is the leader of the House?

Mr. FITZPATRICK: I am acting upon my own responsibility, and speaking as an individual member; and as one who looks upon the rights of the community as having been infringed, I am prepared to make one to march over to Melbourne for the purpose of bringing to their knees the despots who exercise control over the various federal departments.

Mr. J. STOREY: If they will not take any notice of the Premier they will not take any notice of the hon. member!

Mr. FITZPATRICK: They will take notice of me, because this is a matter which affects the pockets of the people, and that is a most vulnerable point. I consider this proposal to be nothing more nor less than a piece of political highway robbery. If it could be proved that the charges which have been made under the old system have not been profitable, there would be some justification for what is proposed. But it is out of reason to introduce a new system which will, perhaps, give no better service, and which is going to exploit the subscribers to the extent of, perhaps, double what they pay at present.

Mr. G. A. JONES: Would the hon. member make all telephones free?

Mr. FITZPATRICK: I would not suggest that they should be free, but that a reasonable charge should be made, like the present one.

Mr. J. STOREY: Who said it was unreasonable?

Mr. FITZPATRICK: If the hon. gentleman will read the public press for the last few days he will see letters from correspondents, who sign their names,

[Mr. Fitzpatrick.]

relating their experience of the telephone; and all these writers have protested against the new system. The least the Postmaster-General should have done was to take the advice offered to him by one of his own supporters in the federal Parliament, Mr. Webster, who is a member of the royal commission which for months past has been inquiring into the postal and telephone department. The Postmaster-General should have waited for the report of that royal commission, which will be issued during the month of September. But, in a somewhat autocratic fashion, he comes forward with the statement that, no matter what happens, the new toll system is coming into operation on the 1st September. Mr. Hesketh, electrical engineer, says:

To adopt the recommendations by the committee of accountants and revert to a flat-rate system of charging would be destructive of every hope of obtaining an efficient telephone system in the larger centres, and would stifle the proper development of the system throughout Australia.

This gentleman has been associated with the telephone department for many years, but he has not been able to prove that the present telephone system has been inefficient to the slightest extent. He says that if we extend the present system, it will continue for all time to be inefficient. But what reason have we to suppose that the statement of an officer who has been connected with this inefficient system for so many years can be borne out by fact?

Mr. G. A. JONES: He is a very capable officer!

Mr. FITZPATRICK: He may be, but there has been some flagrant incapacity on the part of the department for years past. It is scarcely possible for us to conceive of a worse condition of things than that which obtains as far as the telephone system in the city is concerned. I do not complain about the service in the country. I suppose that the drain which is made on country exchanges is not so great as that made on the city exchange. The country exchanges are, as a rule, conducted in a manner which leaves no cause for complaint; but in the city it is impossible for an ordinary man to keep his temper when he goes to the telephone and rings repeatedly, and ultimately finds it better to go direct to the person

whom he is trying to call up. The Postmaster-General has said that, under the old system, a great many non-subscribers were continually using other people's telephones; but that is no reason why those who do pay for the use of the telephone should be exploited. There is surely a means whereby non-subscribers may be prevented from using other people's telephones. A system which provided that only the inmates of a house who are really entitled to the use of the telephone should use it, would be a legitimate proposal. But it is no justification for increasing the amount to say that people who are not entitled to use a telephone do use it freely. As a matter of fact, we know that the large number of people who do not contribute towards the revenue, or towards the cost incurred by the person who is the subscriber to the telephone, use the instrument much more frequently than those who are really entitled to use it; but surely there is a means of effectively altering that, and at the same time putting an end to this scandal. Mr. Thomas, in reply to a question in the House the other night, said that if a subscriber made two calls per day, his telephone would cost him £4 10s. per annum in the city and £3 10s. per annum in the country. I would ask any hon. member who uses a telephone what he thinks of the suggestion that two calls a day are sufficient for the ordinary human being? What is the use of putting a telephone in one's house at all, if, under ordinary circumstances, he is only to use it twice a day? I do not suggest that there is any obligation on a subscriber to use the instrument for those two calls, but it is scarcely fair to set down two calls per day as the limit which should ordinarily be observed. In the case of a country subscriber who uses the telephone twelve times a week—there is no Sunday call in a country exchange, where a full-time officer is not employed—the Postmaster-General points out that he would save 10s. per annum on the present charges. But what man would put a telephone in his house if he only intended to use it twelve times a week? If it is of any utility at all, he will use it twenty times a day. The only means by which the present Postmaster-General proposes to

bring about a beneficial change is practically by doubling the charge to the average subscriber. A correspondent in one of the daily papers rationally asks, who would instal a telephone at all for one call a day; and yet it is all the Postmaster-General proposes to give in the city for the present rate. This correspondent points out:

For private subscribers, roughly, a call per day under his rates will come to 15s. 3d. per annum, so that the rates will work out as follow:—City rates: One call per day (including ground rent), £4 15s. per annum; two calls, £5 10s. 6d.; three calls, £6 5s. 9d.; four calls, £7 1s.; five calls, £7 16s. 3d.; six calls, £8 11s. 6d. Country rates, one call per day (including ground rent), £3 15s. 3d. per annum; two calls, £4 10s. 6d.; three calls, £5 5s. 9d.; four calls, £6 1s.; five calls, £6 16s. 3d.; six calls, £7 11s. 6d.

So that the subscriber, who at the present time is able to use his telephone for 4,000 calls per annum on the payment of £5, will, under the new city rates, be charged no less than £8 11s. 6d. for six calls per day; whilst the country subscriber who now pays £4 will, under the new system, pay for the same service £7 11s. 6d.

MR. EDDEN: Will the Postmaster-General guarantee two calls per day? I have been half a day without getting a call!

MR. FITZPATRICK: The system is so bad that it is almost impossible under present conditions to get a reply when you ring up.

MR. G. A. JONES: It is not the call, but the answer that we want!

MR. FITZPATRICK: I want to point out the disparity between the present charge per annum in the country and the proposed charge of £7 11s. 6d. for six calls per day. That amount, of course, includes the rent of the telephone instrument. I do not want to discuss this question at too great a length. Much more might be said on the subject. It should be the duty of the department to cheapen, as much as possible, these facilities to the public. I have only brought the matter up because I think the greater the amount of publicity given to it the greater the possibility of something definite being done in the direction of reducing the penalising charges proposed to be made.

I do not suggest for one moment that the department should run the system at a loss, or that a charge not looked upon as reasonable should be made to subscribers. But I do submit that there is something outrageously objectionable in the charges proposed to be levied under this toll system, and I think the Postmaster-General would have been well advised if he had accepted the suggestion thrown out by Mr. Webster, and waited until the report of the royal commission was presented to Parliament. The members of that commission inquired exhaustively into the question of telephone charges and administration, and, no doubt, the information they acquired will be of value to the head of the department and those of his subordinates who have to deal with such matters when they finally come to decide what charges shall be made. It seems to me an absolute waste of public money that, having appointed this commission, this departure should be proposed before their report is in the hands of the department. I think this question is of sufficient importance to justify me bringing it before the attention of hon. members upon a motion for adjournment. I hope that other hon. members will put their views forward, so that they may be conveyed in some form or other to the head of the telephonic service. Possibly the knowledge that a considerable amount of public interest is manifested in the innovation may cause the Postmaster-General to hold his hand.

Mr. G. A. JONES: How does the hon. member propose to carry the information to the Postmaster-General?

Mr. FITZPATRICK: I do not know, unless hon. members are willing to help me to carry this motion. We may possibly gain the ear of the federal authorities under such circumstances; or the fact that the matter has been mentioned in the House may have some little influence on those potentates in Melbourne, who have the power to delay the consummation of this matter until they are in possession of the report of the royal commission.

Question resolved in the negative.

[Mr. Fitzpatrick.]

TESTATOR'S FAMILY MAINTENANCE BILL.

Mr. CARMICHAEL (Leichhardt) [5.20]: On behalf of the hon. member for Sturt, I desire to move —

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot move this motion on behalf of the hon. member for Sturt. If it were an order of the day the hon. member could move it; but an hon. member cannot move a motion for another hon. member.

BRIDGE: MACINTYRE RIVER.

Mr. G. A. JONES (The Gwydir) [5.22] rose to move:

That there be laid upon the table of this House copies of all papers in connection with the special grant of £450 to the Ashford shire council, towards the construction of a bridge over the Macintyre River, at Bukkulla.

He said: On the 15th July of last year I asked certain questions in connection with the grant of this sum of £450, and I regret that the answers to those questions were not at all satisfactory from the standpoint from which I looked at this proposal. One of the questions I asked the Secretary for Public Works was:

Will he lay upon the table the papers in connection with this special grant?

The Minister replied:

There is no objection, if applied for in the usual way.

I applied for them in the usual way, by putting a motion on the business-paper, but unfortunately the whole of last session passed without my having an opportunity of procuring the papers.

Mr. CARMICHAEL: That is the usual way!

Mr. G. A. JONES: Immediately I put the motion on the business-paper, and asked for the papers in the usual way, a strenuous and effective objection was raised every sitting day during the whole of last session. Without discussing the merits of this particular vote, I should like to say that my opposition to the special grant of £450 from the public Treasury was based on the belief, which I still hold, that the money was to be expended for the purpose of benefiting only one individual, and that individual the man who asked for the special grant. I mentioned that matter in the House, and

the Minister took exception to the attitude I assumed in connection with it, by declaring that the council of the shire area in which this bridge is being constructed had asked for the construction of the bridge. In 1906, before there was any shire council in existence, the gentleman who, in my opinion, was to receive the whole of the benefit of this bridge, which it was proposed to pay for partly with the funds of the general taxpayer, had approached the Minister, and got his approval of the expenditure of public money for the purpose of erecting this bridge. On that occasion, in 1906, before the advent of local government, I offered a strong objection to the expenditure of public money for that purpose at this particular place. I want it to be clearly understood that I have no objection to the construction of a bridge across this river at any place where it would be of public utility. I have known the district for more than forty years, and I candidly confess that to me it was a great surprise to learn that this bridge was to be constructed upon a road, and I have the assurance of a man who has lived in the district longer than I have, that he did not know there was a road there, and I know that the general public of the district knew nothing at all of such a road; but altogether apart from that, the view I took then, and take now, in connection with this matter is, that the Minister unfortunately has been misled by those who applied for the bridge. They placed before the Minister statements and arguments to the effect that this bridge would serve the purpose of people living at certain places to the west of the Macintyre River, who were desirous of travelling to Emmaville and Tenterfield. In the first place, there is no business or social connection between any of the people on the western side of this bridge and Emmaville or Tenterfield. In the next place, there would be no conveniences for travelling across country to reach those two towns from that district, and there is no public demand for the use of this bridge, to travel in that particular direction. If anyone from Warialda or any of the other places mentioned desired to go to Emmaville or Tenterfield, he would go through Ashford or Inverell, which would be, one 20 miles

further up the river from this bridge, and the other 10 miles further down the river. My whole contention, and that of the people of the district, is that the public Treasury has been looted by some individuals for the purpose of advancing their own personal interests. That is why I objected to the construction of this bridge. I regret to say that my objection to its construction has not had the desired effect. I claim that when a charge is made against any public department, it is only reasonable for the Minister in charge of that department to lay the papers on the table of the House, in order that those who are interested in the subject may have an opportunity of investigating the whole of the merits of the case. The Secretary for Public Works said, by way of interjection, the last time I brought the matter before the House, that the shire council asked for the construction of this bridge. I have not any reason to doubt that the Minister spoke the truth when he said that. The hon. gentleman also said that there was no public protest. I admit that, up to the time I made the matter public, there was no public protest, for the simple reason that the general public did not know that such a proposal was being made, either by the shire council or by the Public Works Department. Had the general public known that there was any such proposal there would have been a public protest. After I had brought the matter before the House and made the matter public, I presented a petition to the Minister, protesting against the construction of the bridge at that particular point, and praying that it should either be shifted to a point lower down the river, where it would be of use to the general public, or that a vote of the ratepayers of the shire should be taken before the money was spent. That petition, of course, had no effect; and since then a number of complaints have been made to me by ratepayers and residents of the shire with regard to the matter. I pointed out that the question, as far as I was concerned, was not whether the shire council ought to have built the bridge or not—that the question I was interested in was the fact of the Minister granting money out of the public Treasury for the purpose of its being spent in the interests

of only one individual estate. That, is the ground upon which I desire to see these papers.

AN HON. MEMBER: Does the hon. gentleman say that the Minister was misled by an individual?

MR. G. A. JONES: As far as I understand it, all communications from this particular shire bear on the letterheads the following little instruction:—

All communications to the Ashford shire must be addressed to the president.

The usual instruction placed upon such letterheads is that all communications should be addressed to the shire clerk. I presume, as all communications to the shire must be addressed to the president, that all communications from the shire are sent out by the president. I have not had an opportunity of seeing the papers, but I should judge that it was the president who misled the Minister in connection with the matter. I have told the ratepayers, when they have complained to me, that this is not the matter that I am complaining about; it is a matter for themselves. If the ratepayers of any particular shire desire to elect any other ratepayer as shire councillor that has nothing to do with me, and if they spend the whole of the money on any particular estate, it is no concern of mine. But what I am concerned in is, that when the shire council comes to the Minister and asks for money out of the public Treasury, I say I am justified in raising my voice in protest against any action of that kind. It is in order that I may have an opportunity of finding out exactly how the matter stands that I move this motion. I move it simply because the Minister told me in 1909 that there would be no objection to laying those papers upon the table if moved for in the usual way. The reason why I want the papers to be laid on the table is because the matter has become, to a certain extent, a local question, and it is quite possible that, as the representative of the district, I may be called upon to defend my action. I want to see certain information contained in the papers which I cannot use unless those papers are made public.

Question proposed.

MR. C. A. LEE (Tenterfield), Secretary for Public Works [5.35]: The hon.

[*Mr. G. A. Jones.*

member has again brought before the House a one-sided statement with regard to this matter. He complained to-night that he was unable to get those papers last session. I will tell the House why the hon. gentleman did not get the papers. He made a violent, unprovoked, and unwarrantable attack on me in this House in July last. I think it was on the financial statement. It was sprung upon me when I had no papers and no recollection of the details in connection with the matter. For an hour or so he attacked me in this House. I have nothing to keep back, but I was determined that before the papers were laid on the table I should have my say, and I have kept the papers back for that purpose only. The hon. gentleman could have got the papers last session or this session, so long as I had an opportunity of giving my explanation, and I am not going to oppose this motion. I am going to have my say now, and I will put a very different construction on the affair to what has been conveyed by the hon. member. I interjected, perhaps improperly, at the time that the hon. member was attacking me, "This is a matter between you and Mr. Higgins." I say so now. Mr. Higgins and my hon. friend are out of joint, and have been for some time. It has been a case of "diamond cut diamond" between them. Now it has grown into a local squabble. That is the beginning and end of the whole thing. What I felt was that the hon. member made an allegation that I was unworthily and improperly spending public money, and that Mr. Higgins, the president of the shire, had induced me to do so, on his own initiative. That was the impression which the hon. gentleman left on the minds of hon. members. I could not answer that, because I had no opportunity until this day. I may explain in the first place that there was a sum of £450 contributed by the state. That is to say, the shire, by the commission in the first instance, was put down to receive a certain amount of revenue from the rating under 1d. in the £. They did not receive that amount by £200. It was short to that amount, as happened in the case of other shires. The difference was made up to them out of the vote given by Parliament. Consequently, when the

sum of £200 was being handed over, they were informed that, although it was not handed over to build a bridge, they could apply the amount in that way. Subsequently it was found that the low-level bridge first recommended would be of no service, and the work became a more expensive one. Eventually I made a grant of £250 towards the cost, or it may be taken as an actual grant of £250. Now the hon. gentleman would lead us to believe that the bridge is on no road, that it leads nowhere, and that the whole thing was done without inquiry. First of all, the local officer had the matter referred to him. He made his report on one of the departmental forms, and one of the questions which he answered was, "Is the work recommended?" He replied, "Yes, see remarks." His remarks are as follows:—

A cheese factory has been erected on the east side of the river within a quarter of a mile of the site, and two suppliers have to cross. From Westholme station 300 bales of wool last year were taken across. This year approximately 620 bales will be crossed. Approximately 550 acres of cultivation will be cropped this ensuing year. If a bridge were constructed an outlet for Cherry Tree and Graman to Tenterfield and Emmaville would be afforded. Between Inverell and Wallangra there is no bridge, and that at Wallangra is a footbridge. I think the river should be spanned by a low-level bridge at the site proposed. The deviation suggested by Mr. Stuart is a very long detour, and causes a bad severance.

There is the local officer's report. I must depend on someone. He says that it is recommended, but that it is not urgent. In October, 1906, I received from the residents there a petition, which reads:

The petition of the undersigned residents of Cherry Tree Hill humbly sheweth—that a bridge over the Macintyre, on the Cherry Tree Hill-Bukkulla-road, is urgently required. That we would ask that such bridge be constructed before the shire council takes over the roads.

A letter was presented on the 5th October, 1908, from the Ashford shire council, stating that a motion had been passed—"That an effort be made to obtain a sum of money for the erection

of a bridge." On this application, it was pointed out by the departmental officers that on other papers dealing with the shire's financial position approval had been given to a grant of £200 to cover shortage, in keeping with a number of other grants made where the revenue of a shire had fallen short of the departmental estimate of revenue on which the classification was based, and it was decided that a stipulation should be made in the obligation form to be sent that the sum mentioned was to be a contribution towards the cost of a low-level bridge, estimated at £425. Subsequently, in March, 1909, the Minister decided to contribute £450, being half cost of a proposed high-level bridge, and including the £200. Under date of the 8th May, the department received a notification from the Ashford shire council stating that the proposed grant of £450 was accepted, the council agreeing to find the balance required, less the sum of £100, raised by local rates, from the general shire fund. The following is an extract from the minutes of the regular monthly meeting of the shire held on that date:—

Re Macintyre Bridge, road Cherry Tree Hill to Glen Innes. There was a letter from the Farmers and Settlers' Association, also a petition from Michael Moran and others, strongly urging that the council should vote the extra amount for the erection of the bridge. The president gave the history of the original grant of £200, being granted under the Government. He represented to the Minister the necessity of the bridge, and requested him to replace the sum on the estimates, and increase it to £450, contingent on the shire voting the extra money required. Moved by Councillor Wyndham, and seconded by Councillor Sinclair, that the sum of £450 voted by the Government for the bridge over the Macintyre River, road Cherry Tree to Glen Innes, be accepted.

Since then petitions have been received in favour of the work, sixty-four persons having signed. A counter petition, asking that a referendum of the ratepayers be taken before the work was carried out, was presented by the hon. member for The Gwydir, and signed by sixty persons. Seven persons signing the latter petition also signed the petition in favour of the

work, Mr. G. Stewart, one of these, drawing attention to the matter as under:

I signed a petition sent round with a letter by S. Peacock, of Dinton Vale, which I understood from the man Thorne, who was in charge of the petition from Mr. Peacock, was a petition for a bridge over the Macintyre River at Tin Tot. I since find that this petition is in opposition to a bridge over the Macintyre River at Bukkulla. I am not opposed to the erection of a bridge at Bukkulla, nor to the sum of £450, which was granted by you for the erection of this bridge, being expended on the same. I am also in favour of a bridge at Tin Tot.

One of the signatories in the protest against the bridge signed the petition lodged in 1906 in favour of it. A letter was also received from the Dinton Vale branch of the Farmers and Settlers' Association, dated the 30th July, 1909, intimating that a motion was unanimously carried that the shire council construct this bridge. The petition presented by the hon. member for The Gwydir is dated 16th August. It appears to me that the petition and the counter petition are the result of the local squabble, and the hon. member for The Gwydir has contributed a good deal to the gathering of one petition, because that petition is dated the 16th August, and was lodged on the 13th September, while the hon. gentleman made his speech here on the 15th July. On the 11th August the hon. member also presented nine letters from different people respecting the work, and the following are extracts from some of these communications:—

I received the *Parliamentary Debates*, for which I thank you very much.

Thank you for the paper which you have, I presume, sent me.

I received your *Hansard*, with many thanks.

I have read your speech in the *Parliamentary Debates*.

I was glad to hear that you gave Mr. Higgins a shaking up. I am sure you have gained a lot of support for the next coming election.

So that it will be seen that the hon. gentleman lost no time in distributing the *Hansard* report of his speech amongst his friends.

MR. G. A. JONES: I have nothing to keep back from the public!

MR. C. A. LEE: There is nothing to keep back from the public, but there is

[*Mr. C. A. Lee.*]

no doubt that the hon. gentleman shook up his friends, and that they got up a petition. I do not say that the hon. gentleman suggested the getting up of the petition. The hon. member further said:

In 1906 the Minister agreed practically to a proposal made by Mr. Higgins, that a bridge should be built across the river at this particular point. I entered my protest against . . . building a bridge across the river at that point, where no public requirement would be met. . . . Not only did I protest against it, but I was supported in my protest practically by everyone in the district.

There were sixty-four people, at all events, as well as the shire council and the Farmers and Settlers' Association, who did not agree with the hon. gentleman.

The Minister to-night has said that the protest was made by myself. But when I made the protest I gave the department a cutting from some newspapers, or one newspaper, circulating in the district—I am not quite sure which—where it was pointed out that there was no public need for the bridge; that there was no probability of the public using it.

There was nothing but the bare paragraph put into my hands. I had the matter looked up, and found that this cutting was from the *Moree News* of 27th July, 1906, a paper which bears the impress, "Printed and published by George Alfred Jones, of Moree, and Riley-street, Sydney, journalist, for G. A. Jones and Coy., Ltd." That cutting, therefore, as an expression of public opinion by a newspaper, can have no value at all. I take no objection to the hon. gentleman, or his editor, putting it in the paper, but I do say that as an expression of local public opinion it has no value, for the reason that it evidently comes from a source which is to a certain extent prejudiced. This paper is printed at Moree, a long way from Bukkulla, and how is it that the Inverell papers, which are very much nearer, did not take the matter up? The fact of the matter is, that the bridge is of considerable convenience. It is difficult to carry out any work that will not benefit someone, but there is no doubt that

the bridge will benefit the public, and was cheaply constructed. The hon. member went on to say:

The bridge could not be reached . . . that road superintendent is like most other officers—when he gets the “tip” to give a report that might be read in a favourable way, he will do so. What does he say? If a bridge were constructed, an outlet from Cherry Tree and Graman to Tenterfield and Emmaville would be afforded. Anyone who knows the country, knows that this is a ridiculous statement, because there is not a road from Cherry Tree Hill and Graman *via* Bukkulla to Emmaville and Tenterfield.

The officer, in reporting upon this road from Bukkulla to Cherry Tree Hill, states: “This is an unclassified road.” Furthermore, a communication from the shire council shows that the road has existed for a great many years, and before Mr. Higgins purchased his property there were gangs of men working upon it.

MR. TREFLE: Does not the fact that the road remained unclassified for so many years suggest that there was no public demand for it?

MR. C. A. LEE: The hon. member does not understand the application of the term “unclassified.” In dealing with roads we have them grouped as classified and unclassified, and grant votes for roads of both classes. This road came within the category of “unclassified roads,” of which there are many hundreds.

MR. TREFLE: But they are generally considered the least important?

MR. C. A. LEE: Yes, but money is voted for them all the same. The hon. member for The Gwydir went on to say:

I say the shire council was tricked into providing the money to erect this bridge. It would never have been erected if the Government had not promised the £450. . . . It was stated that, unless the council were prepared to build this bridge across the river at Bukkulla at a cost of £450, the Minister would not be prepared to spend £4,000 on a bridge across the Severn River.

Such a statement was never made by me. The question was brought up in the shire council, and it was there denied that any such statement had been made. I do not know whether the statement was ever made—that does not concern me. The hon. member’s attack was unwarranted under the circum-

stances. Due inquiry was made before the grant was given towards the construction of the bridge. It is not unusual to make grants towards the construction of bridges, particularly in outlying localities. Here we have the signatures of over sixty persons attached to a petition in favour of the bridge, and under these circumstances it was naturally concluded that the structure would be of convenience to someone. It is situated in an outlying district, where there is not much settlement at present, but there will be considerably more settlement in the near future. There has been no waste of public money, and if the bridge has been a convenience to Mr. Higgins, it has also been of advantage to others. I will not oppose the motion. I have had my say, and have made the position clear. There is nothing in the papers to keep back, and I have no objection to their being laid on the table.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

[Mr. Speaker left the chair at 5.54 p.m. The House resumed at 7 p.m.]

DESERTED WIVES AND CHILDREN.

MR. LEVY (Darlinghurst) [7.3] rose to move:

That, in the opinion of this House, it is urgently necessary that the law relating to deserted wives and children should be amended.

He said: I do not wish to detain the House at any great length, but I do most earnestly ask hon. members to affirm the desirableness of this amendment in the law, for reasons which I shall briefly state. A little while ago the Hon. Dr. Mackellar, who has spent most of his life working in the interests of social reform, when moving the adoption of the report of the Queen’s Jubilee Fund, called attention to some very remarkable facts in connection with the defective state of the law of New South Wales in regard to deserted wives and children; and among other things, he said these words:

A most regrettable feature in the report is that no fewer than 20 per cent. of the cases relieved are those in which the husband has deliberately avoided his responsibilities and deserted his family. And he went on to say that this was quite in accordance with his experience in another phase of charitable relief. It

would probably surprise hon. members if they knew the number of cases of deserted wives and children which the state has to meet in the course of a year. I have before me a number of statistics supplied by the State Children's Relief Department, which show, among other things, that during the past twelve months no less than 611 deserted wives and 1,932 children had to be kept by the state, and the amount of money spent by the state in maintaining these deserted wives and children was no less a sum than £8,795. And that sum is, of course, in addition to the very much larger sum which is voted annually by Parliament for the support of destitute children who are boarded out with persons other than their relatives, and who, in a large number of cases, become wards of the state through being deserted by their parents. Now let me point out, with regard to the figures I have just quoted, that those are only cases in which the State Children's Relief Department have thought fit to grant assistance; and, in all cases where the State Children's Relief Department are called upon to afford assistance to deserted wives and children, they must be satisfied that a warrant has been issued in the first instance, otherwise they refuse support altogether. When you consider the numbers I have quoted, and the large number of deserted wives and children who apply to other funds, like the Queen's Jubilee Fund; when you consider the large number who apply to private or semi-private institutions, and the large number that do not apply to any private or public body for the purpose of obtaining charitable relief, it will be seen that the figures are most alarming, and call for some inquiry as to what are the reasons why so many people in this part of the world attempt to evade the obligations which nature and the law have cast upon them. One of the first reasons which may be put forward to account for the fact that a large number of men desert their wives and children is that under the present law, if a wife wishes to proceed against her husband under the Crimes Act for deserting her or her children, she has to wait not less than thirty days after the desertion has taken place. That means that a man who really makes up his mind to desert his wife

[*Mr. Levy.*

and children can prepare all his plans and get a start of thirty days before any proceedings can be taken against him. Then, after that, when the man has succeeded in escaping to another state, it becomes in most cases absolutely impossible for the woman to bring him back, because warrants which are obtained in New South Wales against men who desert their wives and go to other states, are only executed if the applicant puts down the necessary amount to pay the cost of bringing the culprit back. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred a woman who applies for the purpose of bringing a defaulting husband back from another state has not the money necessary to pay the expenses of the police, the railway fares, and other expenses incidental to these proceedings. Consequently a large number of defaulting husbands go scot-free. This state of affairs is really alarming, and the records of the State Children's Relief Department show that in a large number of cases husbands who have deserted their wives and children in New South Wales are living in comparatively comfortable circumstances in other states, but through the inability of their wives in this state to put up the necessary money to bring them back, these men escape scot-free. In a number of cases which are now being dealt with by the State Children's Relief Board these people are actually living with other women in other states whilst their wives here are dependent on the charity of the state. It is not necessary for me to labour this subject. Anybody who thinks over the matter for a moment will see that there is something defective in the law at the present day by which this state of things can be allowed to exist. As hon. members know, in the year 1896 the State Children's Relief Act was passed, under which a deserted wife can obtain a certain amount of assistance for herself and her children; but notwithstanding the existence of that act, we know that a great number of these women are absolutely dependent on the charity of the state; and in order that they should get assistance from the State Children's Relief Department a number of requisites have to be complied with which in many cases do not exist. It seems strange that the public should

regard with philosophic equanimity the prevalence of this, the meanest of all crimes, and that steps have not been taken before this to make some arrangements with the other states by which these defaulting husbands could be sent back and punished as they deserve. I do not wish to go into the whole law on this subject. I do not wish to enter into any of the technicalities of the law, nor to point out the exact difficulties of legal procedure which are in the way of bringing these people back; but I should like to submit that the time has arrived for the Government to take into their consideration the necessity of making some arrangement with the other states by which these men could be brought back. In the first place, I would like to submit that the Government should alter the law under which a woman has to wait thirty days after her husband has deserted her before she can get out a warrant against him to bring him back. In the second place, I think the Government should enter into some arrangement with the other states for the purpose of ensuring reciprocity in connection with proceedings of this kind. It has already been suggested that the Commonwealth and the Dominion of New Zealand should make a kind of arrangement under which extradition in these matters could be effected with comparatively little, if any, expense to the parties who desire the offenders to be extradited. Further than that, it seems to me it would be an excellent thing if some arrangement could be made whereby, if a man deserted his wife in this state and went to another state, and was working there and was able to support his wife in this state, he should be brought within the jurisdiction of the court of the other state, and if he was willing to consent to an order for the support of his wife in New South Wales the court should have jurisdiction over him, and should enforce the order so made. If he did not consent to an order of that kind, the law should enable him to be brought back to this state, and if the case were proved against him he should be sentenced to a very rigorous term of imprisonment; because we learn that in cases of this kind, when a man has shown himself so dishonest as to avoid his obligations, there is no

other way to deal with him except by enforcing rigorously against him the utmost penalties of the law. I admit that in many cases it would be no satisfaction to the wife that her husband should be sent to gaol, but in cases where it has been necessary to send the man to gaol some arrangement might be made whereby even in gaol he should be compelled, by working at his own industry, or in some other useful way, to contribute to the support of his wife and family outside. I throw out these suggestions; I do not intend to formulate a whole scheme for the reform of the law, but the time has arrived when we should look carefully into this matter. Owing to the large number of women deserted by husbands living in other parts of the world, and who are comparatively well off, many of them actually keeping other women and living in a certain degree of luxury, whilst their wives here are dependent on the charity of the state, the time has arrived for inquiring into the state of the law on this particular subject; and I say that the Government would be well advised if they took into their early consideration the necessity of amending the law in this direction. In order to show that my views on this subject are not solitary, I should like to make one or two quotations from the report of the State Children's Relief Department which bear out the contention I have ventured to put before hon. members this evening. On page 13 of the last report of the board I find this:

It is a matter of regret that the state, should seem to condone this serious offence of desertion, inasmuch as the Legislature defers the introduction of a measure sufficiently powerful to minimise the committal of the offence, and the social evils which inevitably arise from it. As matters stand, the administration has to rest content with measures which are altogether inadequate to secure the purpose in view, namely, the collection of a reasonable amount of money, on account of the maintenance of children, from parents and near relatives who have been shown by inquiry to be in a position to contribute. This matter has been, during the year, the subject of special correspondence between the hon. the Premier and myself, and is of paramount importance in the best interests of the state.

Later on the report goes on as follows:—

Apart from the augmented operations of the board, during the year, a largely contributing factor to the increased expenditure is the ease with which husbands may desert their wives and families, betaking themselves elsewhere, secure in the knowledge that there are several ways in which the Government is compelled, by its humanitarian measures, to keep their families, and that there is at the same time a dearth of legislation to properly cope with their crime.

I wish to conclude my observations by making another quotation from the remarks of a man who, I suppose, has had more experience in this matter than any other man in New South Wales. Speaking of the present law on this subject he says—and this man speaks with a full knowledge of the law, and of the experience of the State Children's Relief Board—

Mr. SCOBIE: To whom does the hon. member refer?

Mr. LEVY: To the boarding-out officer.

And the law, which should be a deterrent, so far from being so, appears in its present form to connive at the offence, in that it does not contain proper facilities for checking the crime, and further, to assist the offender, in that it affords so many means of escape to him. So I say, in the interests of social order, on behalf of the community in general, and of families in particular, let us together take such steps as will open the public eyes once and for all to the heinousness of this crime. Let us do our utmost to amend the law dealing with this point, so that it will no longer continue to be a protection to this class of criminal, but will operate, as it should, as universally and as rigorously as the circumstances of cases demand.

I offer no apology for having occupied the time of the House for a few minutes. I think this is particularly and legitimately one of those subject which a private member ought from time to time to bring before the notice of Parliament and the country, and I earnestly and respectfully ask the Government to take into their consideration at the earliest opportunity the question of amending the law relating to deserted wives and children in this state.

Question proposed.

Mr. WADE (Gordon), Premier and Attorney-General [7.18]: I do not need

[Mr. Levy.

to say more than a very few words at this stage with regard to this motion. I may say at once that I am fairly cognisant with the case the hon. member has made with regard to this question. There is no doubt from official figures, and from the reports of those who take an interest in this matter of deserted wives and children, that this practice of husbands leaving their wives and families without proper means of support is apparently on the increase, from one cause very likely—through the repentance which follows on improvident marriages. But the opportunity for avoiding the obligations becomes greatly encouraged now from the ease with which the defaulting husband or father can remove himself beyond the jurisdiction of the authorities in this state. I suppose that ever since the law has been in force there has been an evasion more or less by the husband who has moved across the borders to one of the adjoining states, and with the increased opportunities for transit, and perhaps the more rigorous administration of the law in this state, it does seem to be quite correct that the number of transgressors who avoid their responsibilities by going to adjoining states is on the increase. And in so far as this action on their part involves a heavier burden on the taxpayer, it is absolutely incumbent, for financial reasons, and also to make the responsibilities of married life more effective and real, to establish some penalty that will reach these people wherever they may be. This matter has been brought before the public on one or two occasions lately. The only way to bring about an adequate change in the law, to reach offenders, is by reciprocal action between ourselves and one or more adjoining states. I find by negotiations with the other states that it is not sufficient for us to ask to be granted the power by them to have defaulting husbands either returned to the state, or imprisoned there, or to be made to pay the back money in connection with maintenance charges. The only practical way, as far as I can see, of giving effect to this proposition is by reciprocal agreement between the adjoining states. Correspondence has been going on for some time between the South Australian Government and ourselves on this subject.

Before any definite action can be taken, of course, it is essential that the bill should be on uniform lines, and commend itself to the Parliaments, or at all events to the Governments in the first instance of the two states concerned. We had reached a certain stage in negotiations, and in the shaping of a bill, at the time this session opened, and, although there seems no prospect of carrying this to completion during the currency of the present Parliament, it is one of those matters that might very well be dealt with at an early date in the life of the new Parliament. The very fact that the law is incomplete, and not sufficiently far-reaching, is an encouragement to those who want to evade their obligations to do so, and every fresh case of success achieved induces many more to follow in the same steps. So far as I am concerned, I think the matter is deserving of sympathetic treatment and practical action, and I shall be quite prepared, when opportunity arises, to present this bill in the next session of Parliament, for I am afraid it is not practicable to do it during the present session. In the meantime, opportunity may be availed of to endeavour to obtain common action in respect of all the adjoining states. I need not say any more. I think this is a question on which we are all more or less agreed. I only rose for the purpose of stating that the Government have not lost sight of this question, and have taken practical steps to bring it to a condition under which these evasions can in the future be practically stopped.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

COAL AND SHALE MINES (HOURS REGULATION) BILL.

Motion (by Mr. EDDEN) agreed to:

That the Coal and Shale Mines (Hours Regulation) Bill, which was introduced in the Assembly during last session, but was interrupted before its completion by the close of the session, be now reintroduced at the stage it had reached at the time of such interruption.

SUNDAY TRADING.

Motion (by Mr. LEVIEN) proposed:

That this House will, on its next sitting day, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the expediency of

bringing in a bill to enable certain shops for the sale of confectionery, fruit, and other refreshments, to be kept open during certain hours on Sundays, and to amend certain acts relating to Sunday trading.

Mr. SPEAKER: The motion, not being seconded, cannot be put.

House adjourned at 7.26 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 13 July, 1910.

State Revenue from Bank Notes—Macken Estate Bill—Electricity Bill—Leave of Absence—Bishop Tyrrell Trust Bill—Oaths Administration Bill—Wesley College Incorporation Bill—Closer Settlement Promotion Bill—Homing Pigeons' Protection Bill—Bank of New South Wales Bill (second reading)—City Bank of Sydney Bill (second reading).

The PRESIDENT took the chair.

STATE REVENUE FROM BANK NOTES.

The Hon. W. ROBSON (for Sir JOSEPH CARRUTHERS) asked the VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,—

- (1.) What is the present revenue, if any, derived by the state from the annual composition upon notes issued by the banks?
- (2.) What is the estimated loss of revenue by the state in the event of the issue of notes by the federal Government to replace bank notes?

The Hon. J. HUGHES answered,—
(1.) £34,000 per annum. (2.) If the banks discontinue the issue of notes, the loss will be £34,000 per annum.

MACKEN ESTATE BILL.

Report of select committee presented.

ELECTRICITY BILL.

The following petitions were presented in favour of the Electricity Bill:—From the Electrical Employers' Association of New South Wales, by the Hon. W. J. Trickett; from the Institute of Architects of New South Wales, by the Hon. H. Gullett; from the Electric Light and Power Supply Corporation, Limited, by the Hon. A. Ross.

Petitions received.