

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 27 January, 1915.

Printed Questions and Answers—Papers—Minister Deceased—The Late Mr. L. A. B. Wade—Questions without Notice—Ministerial Statement (Business of the Session)—Adjournment—River Murray Waters Bill—Rural Tenants Improvements Bill—Dairy Industry Bill—Aborigines Protection Amending Bill—Weights and Measures Bill—Stock Brands (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair.

PRINTED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

RAILWAY DEVIATION, COFF'S HARBOUR.

Mr. BRINER asked the MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS,—(1) Has any decision been arrived at with regard to the request for a deviation, *via* Woolgoolga, of the eighth section of the North Coast railway, between Coff's Harbour and Glenreagh? (2) If so, what is the nature of such decision? (3) If no final decision has been reached, in what position is the matter at present, and when is it likely that the matter will be decided?

Answer,—(1) Yes. (2 and 3) To adhere to the route recommended by the Public Works Committee.

IRON AND STEEL WORKS, NEWCASTLE.

Mr. HENLEY asked the MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS,—What is the amount that has been expended on the Walsh Island iron and steel works, Newcastle, up to the end of November, 1914—(a) from loans; (b) from Public Works Fund; (c) from revenue?

Answer,—The workshops and dockyard at Walsh Island comprise the transfer, with considerable extensions, of the Government workshops formerly situated at Carrington. The large extensions and development were rendered necessary by the transfer to the Commonwealth of the Government dockyard at Cockatoo, Sydney, and by my decision to construct our own steel bridges, cast-iron pipes, tugs, punts, dredges, &c., at the establishment. The total capital invested to 30th November, 1914, was £225,197 7s., and to 31st December last, £235,572 13s. 10d.

IMPROVEMENTS TO PUBLIC SCHOOL, DRUMMOYNE.

Mr. HENLEY asked the MINISTER OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION,—(1) What were the names of the three lowest tenderers for the building of an additional storey and other improvements at the superior public school, Drummoyne, at the first time of calling for tenders? (2) What were the amounts for which each firm tendered to carry out the work? (3) Did the lowest tenderer refuse to carry out the work unless the amount of his offer was increased? (4) What was the extra amount asked?

Answer,—(1 and 2) Constructor of Building Works, £7,214; G. W. Park & Son, £7,495; R. D. Quiggin, £7,675. (3) The original tenders were submitted in March, 1913, but approval to the acceptance of the offer submitted by the Constructor of Building Works was not given until August, and on 28th October, 1913, the Constructor of Building Works reported that the wages of carpenters, plumbers, labourers, &c., having been increased in the meantime, he was not then prepared to go on with the work at his tendered price, and under the existing conditions his tender would be £8,508 15s. 9d. It was then decided to invite fresh tenders, and eventually an offer submitted by Mr. T. Quiggin, at £7,867, was accepted. (4) See No. 3.

PAPERS.

Ministers laid upon the table the under-mentioned papers, which were referred to the Printing Committee:—

Additional regulation under the Government Savings Bank Act, 1906, and the Government Savings Bank Amendment Act, 1913.

Report of the Chief Commissioner for Railways and Tramways for the quarter ended 31st December, 1914.

Notification of appropriation of land, under the Public Works Act, 1912, for railway traffic between Dubbo and Coonamble, at Coonamble.

Notification of resumption of land, under the Public Works Act, 1912, for railway traffic between Sydney and Albury by duplicating and deviating the railway between Cullerin and Harden.

Gazette notices under the Necessary Commodities Control Act, 1914, declaring highest selling prices of wines, spirits, beers, and other drinks; declaring the maximum prices of wines, spirits, beers,

and other drinks; and declaring the maximum price of bread within the counties of Cumberland and Northumberland, and within New South Wales outside the counties of Cumberland and Northumberland.

Amended regulation under the Prisons Act, 1899.

Amended regulation under the Pastures Protection Act, 1912.

By-laws of the Youendah Bore Water Trust, under the Water Act, 1912.

Report of the Stock Branch, Department of Agriculture, for year ended 30th June, 1914.

Gazette notices under the Necessary Commodities Control Act, 1914, varying and fixing the maximum selling prices of bran and pollard. Notice regarding appointment of board, under the Wheat Acquisition Act, 1914.

By-laws of the Baroma Bore Water Trust, under the Water Act, 1912.

By-laws of the Pagan Creek Bore Water Trust, under the Water Act, 1912.

Regulations under the Irrigation Act, 1912.

Notice of intention to declare that residential lease No. 1913-3, Gundagai, being portion No. 135, parish of Kimo, county of Clarendon, shall cease to be voidable.

Statement of receipts and expenditure of the Hay Irrigation Area for 1914; and of the Wentworth Irrigation Area for 1914.

Notifications of resumption of lands under the Public Works Act, 1912, for the Galong to Burrowa railway; for the Moree to Mungindi railway; for the Newcastle to Tighe's Hill tramway; for the Manly to Brookvale tramway; for the Forbes to Stockinbingal railway; for the Cooma to Bombala railway; for harbour improvements at the port of Newcastle; for the Combogolong bore; and for the Burrinjuck dam.

Notification of resumption of land, under the Local Government Act, 1906, for a pound site at Gosford.

Notification of resumption of land, under the Public Works Act, 1912, for the Moree to Mungindi railway.

Addendum to the Twenty-sixth Annual Report of the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage.

Alteration in by-laws made by the council of the municipality of Cobar respecting water supply.

MINISTER DECEASED.

Mr. SPEAKER reported the decease of the Hon. John Louis Trefle, late Minister for Lands and member for Castlereagh.

On the motion of Mr. J. H. Cann, the Castlereagh seat was declared to be vacant.

Mr. J. H. CANN (Sturt), Colonial Secretary [4.30], moved, by consent, without notice:

That Mr. Speaker be requested to communicate to Mrs. Trefle the profound sympathy and sorrow of the members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales at the untimely death of her distinguished husband.

He said: I am sorry to have so soon to invite the House to again place on record its sympathy at the loss of a member and colleague. During the whole period of my public life, I have never met one whom I could so readily classify as a friend. I watched his life, and although he was of a different faith, I always found the faith that was in him influenced his life for good, and showed marked improvement in his conduct as a man. I can say without the slightest hesitation that I do not know a man who had better social relations in his domestic life than the late Mr. Trefle. As a churchman he was loyal and true to the faith that was in him; as a citizen he was always earnest and zealous to act according to his convictions, and as a member of this House and a friend I can sincerely say that I deeply lament the loss.

Question proposed.

Mr. WADE (Gordon) [4.37]: I rise to second the motion as a tribute of respect to the late Mr. Trefle, and at the same time to voice the combined sympathy of the whole of this side of the House, not only with the family of the deceased, but with the Government and members of the party with whom he was so long associated. It is a melancholy tribute to the ravages of public life, that we are again called upon as the very first act on resuming our work this session, to put on record the loss of another gentleman who has played an active part in the public life of this state. In the course of the last few years we have had to put similar records before the House of active members of the Governmental party, and it only brings home to one and all that there must be something radically wrong with our departmental and parliamentary methods when those men who are called upon to bear the brunt of departmental or parliamentary work have to pay the penalty either in broken health

or an early decease, very often attributable to the inroads of overwork in their departments. What the remedy is I am not prepared to say, but I do think that it ought to make one and all unite in common sympathy to make the work of public life in this country a little less extensive, a little less arduous, and at the same time, perhaps, a little less strenuous. I join with the Acting-Premier in expressing personal regret at the loss of Mr. Trefle to public life. The Ministry and the members of their party had better facilities for realising his social and personal qualities than those who were opposed to him in public life, but if it is any help to them I can assure the Government that in this hour of trial and personal grief which they must feel, they can be buoyed up by the sympathy of all members of this side, and I only trust that this will be the last occasion on which we will be called upon to move a vote of condolence respecting any member of the House.

Hon. members rising in their places,

Question resolved in the affirmative.

THE LATE MR. L. A. B. WADE.

Mr. J. H. CANN (Sturt), Colonial Secretary [4.35]: Before the House proceeds to business, I desire to say that it is not usual to move a motion in this House respecting the matter to which I am about to refer, and I therefore do not propose to establish any precedent, but I beg to tender to the leader of the Opposition the sincere sympathy of the Government in the loss which he has recently sustained by the death of his brother. So far as the Government were concerned, we did not look upon the deceased gentleman as a man holding an official position. We frequently had occasion to come into close contact with him. He presided over a comparatively new department in the state, and it was necessary to consult him on many occasions, and we had grown to look upon him more in the light of a colleague than an official when we were consulting him on official matters. We had always the most sincere and best relationship in our official contact with that gentleman, and I therefore have special reason for tender-

ing to the leader of the Opposition the sincere sympathy of the Government in the loss which he has sustained.

Mr. WRIGHT (Willyama) [4.37]: I wish to supplement the remarks of the Acting-Premier by saying that I had the honor to meet the deceased gentleman about three weeks ago, and I formed the opinion that he had most sincere sympathy with the people with whom he was dealing. I concur with the remarks of the Acting-Premier, and I further desire to say that I never thought the late Mr. Wade would be dead before I was. I think he was sincere in his desire to benefit the people of the state.

Mr. McGARRY (Murrumbidgee) [4.38]: I just desire to say one word in support of the reference of the Acting-Premier to the late Mr. Wade, for the reason that the deceased gentleman dealt with some thousands of my electors for many years. It will be understood that a member taking an active interest in his constituency, such as I have done, comes very often in conflict with officials. Before I left Sydney on the 6th January I spent an hour in his company in very hot debate on many matters relating to the Yanco settlement. No one received a greater shock than I did when the death of the late Mr. Wade was recorded. I do not wish to say any more than that on every occasion on which I had to come into contact with Mr. Wade in dealing with questions relating to his department, I found him to be a gentleman in every sense of the word.

Mr. C. A. LEE: I most cordially support the observations which have fallen from the Acting-Premier, in expressing sympathy with the leader of the Opposition in connection with the death of his brother, Mr. L. A. B. Wade. Few men in this state had the same opportunities as myself of judging the high calibre, efficiency, and straightforwardness of the late Mr. Wade. It was during the long period in which he was engaged in the initiation of the great Murrumbidgee irrigation scheme that his health was taxed to an inordinate degree. Indeed at one time I found it necessary to send Mr. Wade away so that he might have an opportunity of recuperating. If ever an officer devoted himself thoroughly to his work it was the late Mr. Wade. He was

thoroughly acquainted with all the details relating to the work which he had to perform, and I look upon his loss to the community as very great indeed. He had the advantage of a thorough knowledge of the whole of the details in connection with the initiation of the great irrigation scheme, with which his name will always be honorably associated, and I am sure that it will be almost impossible to fill his position by appointing an officer of equal experience and capacity. I looked upon the late Mr. Wade as a friend. His heart was thoroughly in his work, and he was faithful and honest to all Ministers who were associated with him, no matter what phase of politics they represented. I join most cordially with the Acting-Premier in tendering to the leader of the Opposition the deepest sympathy of hon. members on this side of the House, and I believe, I may say, of every member of this Parliament.

Mr. SPEAKER: On behalf of the Acting-Premier, and of hon. members generally, I desire to communicate to the leader of the Opposition their deepest sympathy with him in the loss he has sustained by the death of his brother, Mr. L. A. B. Wade.

Mr. WADE: I deeply appreciate the courtesy that has prompted this expression of sympathy towards myself. I am afraid that I cannot adequately respond to the sentiments that have been expressed by hon. members; but in as few words as possible I would like to say that I think that in my late brother the state had one of the best types of public servants. His zeal was unlimited, and his enthusiasm for his work increased rather than diminished as time went on. He performed his work under both Liberal and Labour administrations, and had the proud record of securing the confidence of all those with whom he was associated. I am very much afraid that his enthusiasm for his work was the means of undermining, perhaps unconsciously, his physical strength, and whatever may be the regret felt at his premature decease, at a time when he ought to have had almost a lifetime of useful work still before him, and whatever regret we may feel that he was not able to live to complete the monuments of engineering under his charge, his family

[*Mr. C. A. Lee.*

have the proud consolation of knowing that he has left behind him an absolutely honored name.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

WHEAT.

Mr. J. C. L. FITZPATRICK: I desire to know whether the Minister for Agriculture can state what is the latest date upon which appeals against the price of 5s. fixed for wheat will be received and dealt with by the Wheat Commission?

Mr. WADE: I desire to ask the further question, whether in view of the statements that have been made that some appeals could not be lodged in time owing to the want of the necessary forms, the Minister will extend to every person desiring to appeal the right to do so, if through no fault of his own he could not lodge his appeal within the time specified by the statute?

Mr. ASHFORD: The time for receiving appeals has been extended, but at the moment I am not able to mention the exact date up to which appeals may be lodged. I will inform the hon. member for Orange to-morrow. With regard to the question asked by the leader of the Opposition, I may say that no technical difficulties in the way of lodging appeals will be taken advantage of by the Crown Law Department, and that every facility will be given to appellants to lodge objections.

Mr. BAGNALL: I wish to know whether the Minister for Agriculture is in a position to make a statement with regard to the grave situation which has arisen in connection with the important industry of poultry farming? Is the Minister aware that it is practically impossible for poultry-farmers to obtain supplies of food for poultry, no matter what prices they are willing to pay? Is he further aware that the situation has been growing in acuteness during the last few weeks, and that the public look to his making a statement with regard to the position without delay?

Mr. ASHFORD: The Wheat Board has taken steps, at my suggestion, to frame regulations controlling the prices of bran, pollard, and chick-wheat. The other day the prices of bran and pollard

were fixed by the commission, which are at present trying to fix that of chick-wheat so that the poultry-farmers may obtain it at a reasonable price. Every effort is being made, in view of the importance of the industry, to prevent extortionate prices being charged.

Mr. MCGARRY: I wish to know whether the Minister for Agriculture is aware that some farmers are now placed in a very unfortunate position, owing to their wheat which was stored having been seized at the time of the first seizure by the Government and afterwards having been released to the agents who made certain representations with regard to the wheat having been sold under contract? Is the Minister aware that complications have arisen, as the outcome of which the agents refuse to pay 5s., or any other price, for the wheat, and throw on the Attorney-General's Department the responsibility of fixing the price to be paid to the farmers, who in the meantime are being kept out of their money?

Mr. ASHFORD: I am not aware of the exact position set out by the hon. member, but, under the Wheat Acquisition Act, agents should pay 5s. for the wheat acquired on behalf of the Government. If the hon. member will inform me as to the facts, I will have the matter inquired into as one of urgency.

Mr. JAMES: Is the Minister aware that in respect to the wheat which has been placed in the hands of the agents the agents say that they are not liable and will not pay, whilst the Government say they are not liable and will not pay, with the result that the farmers have not received the money to which they are entitled.

Mr. ASHFORD: I will have urgent inquiries made and will give the hon. member information on the subject tomorrow night.

Mr. BURGESS: I wish to know whether the Minister for Agriculture is aware that the Wheat Acquisition Board have been allowing two different rates of commission to purchasing agents, namely, 1½d. to agents and millers who purchased direct from the farmers, and only ¾d. to millers who purchased prior to the proclamation and had the wheat stacked at railway sidings? What is the reason for the differentiation between one

lot of wheat which is the property of the King and another lot of wheat which is also the property of the King?

Mr. MCGIRR: I desire to ask the Minister whether it is a fact that, while the wheat which is being seized cannot be sold at a greater price than 5s., the millers who are grinding that wheat into flour are exporting it at a price greater than the equivalent of wheat at 5s. per bushel?

Mr. ASHFORD: I shall obtain the information asked for by the hon. member for Burrangong. In reply to the hon. member for Yass, as far as my information goes no flour is being exported from this state at present, excepting that which is being exported by the Government.

ALLEGED PAYMENTS TO MINISTERS,

Mr. COCHRAN: I desire to ask the Minister for Agriculture whether his attention has been drawn to a statement in the last issue of the *Sunday Times* to the effect that in connection with the seizure of wheat three Ministers of the Crown are alleged to have received £1,000 each, and that the matter has been referred to the Inspector-General's Department for inquiry? Can the Minister furnish the House with any information on the subject?

Mr. ASHFORD: The statement to which the hon. member has referred has been brought under my notice. It is a lying statement. Further action is to be taken, and I hope to be in a position to place the House in possession of information in the course of two or three weeks.

PARRAMATTA-ROAD WORKS.

Mr. COHEN: I desire to ask the Minister for Works what is the cause of the inordinate delay in completing that portion of the Parramatta-road between Taverner's Hill and Battle Bridge? I desire to know further whether he considers that he is meting out fair treatment to the residents in the locality, and whether he has not received a letter from me complaining of the delay?

Mr. ARTHUR GRIFFITH: I have not seen any letter from the hon. member. Such a communication may have arrived at the department and I will

cause inquiries to be made. I admit, frankly, that the particular piece of work referred to has occupied a very long time, and that persons interested have the right to complain. The difficulty of obtaining an adequate supply of metal has been the principal cause of delay, and other causes have also operated. I have informed my officers that I regard the work as urgent and wish it to be expedited.

SUPPLY OF FODDER.

Mr. BURGESS: I desire to ask the Minister for Agriculture whether all possible efforts have been made by his department to supply fodder to necessitous farmers in the country? Has he got fodder in readiness to be supplied to them when they make application for it?

Mr. MCGIRR: On the same question, is the Minister aware that at the present time Sydney firms are sending produce, such as bran and chaff, 300 or 400 miles into the country to supply necessitous farmers? Is he aware that in the districts to which such produce is being sent there are farmers who hold produce themselves and who could sell to their neighbours? Will he take into consideration the urgent necessity of appointing local agents in those country towns, who can make a deal between the farmer who has the produce and the farmer who has not, instead of using the railways of the state and purchasing from large firms in the city, as is now being done?

Mr. WRIGHT: On the same subject, will the Minister assure me that he will see that poultry-keepers around the city will have wheat delivered to them at the same price as it costs the Government, plus the cost of distribution? He did not answer my previous question, and I know that a number of people have been ruined through having to pay 7s. 6d.

Mr. HUNT: On the same question, I would ask the Minister, if he intends to help the farmer in the direction suggested by the hon. member's question, whether he is prepared to help other men who are employed in tilling the soil, like fruit-growers?

Mr. ASHFORD: In reply to the hon. members for Burrangong and Yass, I desire to say that fodder has been purchased, and is now being distributed to the farmers as rapidly as possible. It is

[Mr. Arthur Griffith.]

being purchased in the districts where it is needed, and is not being sent from Sydney. In reply to the hon. member for Broken Hill, every effort has been made to supply poultry-farmers with wheat as cheaply as possible. In reply to the hon. member for Camden, I desire to say that fruit-growers in this state are in a very fortunate position this year, and it is the necessitous farmers that the Government are trying to assist.

INCREASED PRICE OF MEAT.

Mr. EDDEN: I desire to ask the Acting-Premier if he does not think the time has arrived when the Government should take some action in connection with the supply of meat to the public of New South Wales? I further desire to ask if the Government have considered the present high price of meat, and the fact that it is rising day by day; if not, will the Government inquire into the question? If they do make inquiries they will find that the price is fully 45 per cent. higher than it was six months ago.

Mr. J. H. CANN: The Government referred the increased price of meat to the Necessary Commodities Commission as far back as the 21st December last. The commission is still making inquiries, and the Government has not yet received a report from it on the question. As soon as the Government get the report hon. members will be made aware of its contents.

ANNOYANCES ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

Mr. G. BLACK: I desire to ask the Acting-Premier if he is aware that on Christmas Eve and well into Christmas Day Sydney and suburbs were paraded by bands of strolling musicians with brass instruments, barrel organs, tin whistles, kerosene tins, and other instruments of torture, and that it was impossible to get sleep under the circumstances? Is he aware that these people went from door to door expecting to be paid—

An HON. MEMBER: To go away!

Mr. G. BLACK: To go away, and not inflict further additional torture in respect of want of sleep on the unfor-

tunate people who came within reach of their abominable performances? I further desire to ask the Minister if these matters have not come under his personal observation he will instruct the police that in future performances of a like character shall be prevented?

Mr. WRIGHT: I desire to ask the Colonial Secretary if he does not think it is just as well that the old customs which were in existence when the hon. member for Namoi and myself were youngsters should be allowed to continue, and that the police should be instructed to stop thieves and not harmless amusements?

Mr. J. H. CANN: On account of some conduct that happened some time ago, I think, in Martin-place, the police on both Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve have been called upon to practically do double duty. Though a man may be in a merry mood and make a noise in the street, it is not invariably the case that he breaks the law. The police are pretty cautious not to go beyond the limits of the law. If a man is creating a public disturbance and becomes a public nuisance he is taken in charge by the police, but unless he is doing that the police do not interfere with him.

MR. JUSTICE HEYDON AND THE ARBITRATION ACT.

Captain TOOMBS: In the absence of the Attorney-General I desire to ask the Acting-Premier, has his attention been drawn to the utterances of Mr. Justice Heydon some little time ago with regard to the suspension practically of the Arbitration Act and again recently to the utterances of the same judge with regard to what might be termed a partial operation of the act? Does he consider that Mr. Justice Heydon is the authority to say whether any law shall operate in New South Wales or not? Seeing that the purchasing power of money paid in wages to employees is decreasing, and to make up for that decreased purchasing power arbitration was brought in, does the Minister not think it is time that Mr. Justice Heydon was asked to put the act in full operation and so allow every citizen an opportunity to have his case heard and receive the justice that he is entitled to under the act, and thus let the

court and not Judge Heydon decide whether citizens are entitled to be heard or not?

Mr. ESTELL: The question should be addressed to me as I have control of the Department of Labour and Industry and also of the Arbitration Court. On the 30th November last Mr. Justice Heydon made a serious pronouncement with regard to what he considered was the duty of the boards during the present war crisis. Since then I have received deputations, and I have promised them that if it is possible the Government will see that each case is tried on its merits. If the hon. member for Hurstville had seen the amended pronouncement made by Mr. Justice Heydon in the court on Monday he would have known that Mr. Justice Heydon had backed down on his early pronouncement and that each case which is before the boards at the present time will be tried on its merits.

MEDICAL EXAMINATION OF RECRUITS.

Colonel ONSLOW: I wish to know from the Acting-Premier whether instructions have been given to police and Government medical officers to examine recruits for the military forces; whether the Government officer at Manildra is a German or a German who has become naturalised, and whether the medical and surgical degrees and diplomas held by such officer are British or foreign?

Mr. J. H. CANN: The Government have offered every facility to the federal authorities in connection with recruiting for the Expeditionary Forces. I could not say anything with regard to the individual to whom the hon. member has referred. There may be a German medical officer at the particular town named, and if the hon. member will give notice of that portion of his question, I will obtain information for him.

UNEMPLOYED AT DUBBO.

Mr. THROWER: I desire to know whether the Minister for Public Works is aware that there are a large number of labouring men in the Dubbo district who are unable to obtain employment? Is he also aware that a few days ago forty men were brought from Broken Hill to Dubbo and provided with work on the railway

under construction from Dubbo to Werris Creek, and that forty Dubbo men were discharged in order to make room for them? Will the Minister inquire as to the accuracy of this report, and if the facts are found to be as I have stated, will he see that local workmen who have wives and families to support are given preference?

Mr. ARTHUR GRIFFITH: I am perfectly sure that no local men were discharged to make room for men from Broken Hill. Some months ago a number of men were brought over from Broken Hill and were put on railway construction works in addition to the men already employed on such works. None of the men were discharged, but I was compelled to shorten the working hours in order to provide wages for the Broken Hill men. With regard to recent events, when work was commenced on the railway from Condobolin to Broken Hill, I undertook to find work at the Condobolin end for 200 married men from Broken Hill and fifty local men. A special train was arranged for, but we could not get 200 men from Broken Hill. We could only get 167, and I understand these men are now at work. They have not displaced any other men. I am not aware of any men from Broken Hill having been sent to Werris Creek, and in any case I am sure that local men have not been displaced in their favour.

HURLSTONE PARK-SUMMER HILL TRAMWAY.

Mr. W. E. V. ROBSON: I wish to know whether the Minister for Public Works is aware that the tramway recently constructed from Hurlstone Park to Summer Hill has been built entirely without loops, and as a consequence will certainly prove inadequate to carry the traffic. Will the Minister see that this oversight is remedied?

Mr. ARTHUR GRIFFITH: The hon. member must know that no Minister can carry in his head the details in regard to such works as he has mentioned. I will have inquiries made as to whether the position is as stated by the hon. member and will let him know as soon as possible.

[*Mr. Thromer*

SUNDAY OBSERVANCE ACT.

Mr. DUNN: I desire to know whether the Acting-Premier recollects a promise made by him to the hon. member for Macquarie and myself that he would bring in a bill to amend the Sunday Observance Act with a view to bringing about uniformity of practice in the city and country?

Mr. J. H. CANN: The bill referred to is one of the measures mentioned by me this evening. It is now in the Legislative Council, and has, I believe, reached the second-reading stage. I understand my hon. colleague there proposes to push on with the bill so that it may be dealt with by this House.

SITTING DAYS.

Mr. C. A. LEE: I desire to ask the Acting-Premier whether, in view of the season of the year, and the heat of the Chamber, he will consider the advisability of reviewing the sessional order which fixes the sitting days at five in each week?

Mr. J. H. CANN: I am not prepared to do so in the absence of the Premier. I expect that the Premier will be in his place next week, and I shall then submit the hon. member's suggestion to him.

REDHEAD TO BELMONT TRAMWAY.

Mr. EDDEN: I desire to ask the Minister for Public Works whether he is aware that for years I have been trying to get an extension of the Redhead-Belmont tramway, but owing to the apathy of the Government the work has not been done, and the Redhead Company have now surveyors at work surveying a line to enable the company itself to put down the tramway? If that be so, has any application been made to the department for permission to construct the line, and what is the attitude of the department on the matter?

Mr. ARTHUR GRIFFITH: I am aware that the hon. member has, for a long time, been agitating for that line; I am not aware that there has been any apathy on the part of the Government—the delay has simply been a matter of finance; I am not aware of the proposed action of the Redhead Company, but if the hon. member will give notice of that question I shall obtain the information.

SHOOTING ON SUNDAYS.

Mr. FERN: I desire to ask the Acting-Premier whether he is aware that the law which prohibits persons from shooting on Sundays is a great deterrent, especially in country districts, to young men who desire to join rifle clubs, and who can get their rifle practice only on Sundays? That being so, will he consider the advisability of suspending so much of the act as prevents young men who desire to join rifle clubs from putting in their shooting on Sundays?

Mr. J. H. CANN: The law referred to by the hon. member is the law of the land, and the Government do not interfere with the administration of any law. A law being on the statute-book becomes automatically operative, and though Parliament has power to amend the law, the Government could not possibly interfere with a view to countermanding its enforcement.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

BUSINESS OF THE SESSION.

Mr. COHEN: I desire to ask the Acting-Premier whether he proposes to make a statement with regard to the business of the session?

Mr. J. H. CANN: I do not propose to add anything to the statement already made by the Premier just prior to the House's rising.

Mr. WADE: That statement was made in November. It was understood that the Premier would make a further statement!

Mr. J. H. CANN: Our proposals now are similar to those which the Premier put before hon. members. We do not propose to enter into what may be termed strongly controversial measures for the remainder of the session, but there are a number of what are practically machinery measures with which we desire to go on. Some of them have been hanging over for a great number of years in the different departments, being pushed aside probably for more important policy measures. They are urgently required for the purposes of good administration. We therefore propose to take those measures. In some of them there may be details provocative of differences of opinion, but we shall

take those which may be classed practically as departmental machinery measures.

Mr. BALL: What are they?

Mr. J. H. CANN: In the Chief Secretary's Department, for example, there is the Aborigines Protection Bill, Public Health Bill, Weights and Measures Bill, Gun License Bill, Motor Traffic Bill, Birds and Animals Protection Bill, Dentists Amendment Bill, Sunday Trading (Refreshment Rooms) Bill, Closing Level Crossings Bill, and the Inflammable Liquid Bill. In the Department of the Minister for Public Works it is proposed to take four measures to certain stages so that they may be before hon. members. The Minister desires to have them introduced, and naturally they will be taken to the second-reading stage so that hon. members will have an opportunity to peruse them during the recess. There is the Local Government Franchise Bill, Valuation of Land Bill, Murray Waters Bill, which will be completed, and Greater Sydney Bill.

An HON. MEMBER: That's a big measure!

Mr. J. H. CANN: It is intended to introduce it and carry it to the second-reading, so that hon. members will have an opportunity to peruse it. The Superannuation Bill will be introduced by the Minister of Public Instruction. The Attorney-General will have the Crimes Act Amendment Bill, the Publication of Evidence Bill, the Public Works Committee Payments Bill, the object of which is to amend an obvious error in consolidation, and the Courts Powers Act which is a war measure enabling a Supreme Court Judge to postpone foreclosure during war time. He will have also the Temporary Government Servants Bill. The Minister for Lands will have the Control of Land Agents Bill, the Crown Lands Amendment Bill, Crown Lands Purchases and Leases Validation Bill, New Lambton-Hartley Vale Colliery and Australasian Coal Company's Resumption Bill, and the Bega and Wilberforce Labour Settlement Bill. The Minister for Labour and Industry will have amendments to the Early Closing Act, and in the Agricultural Department the Minister will have

the Dairy Produce Bill, Stock Brands Bill, Fertilisers Bill, Veterinary Surgeons Bill, Apiaries Bill, and Registration of Stallions Bill. The Premier will have the Jervis Bay Surrender Bill. None of these measures really involve party principles or raise party issues. If hon. members of the Opposition were on this side of the House they would have to go on with these measures in order to relieve departmental administration. If hon. members will attack the work with a view to getting it out of hand the chances are that we shall not need to sit so very long. I regret that the Premier is absent on account of ill-health, and that my colleague, Mr. Hoyle, is confined to his bed through ill-health. The Attorney-General has not yet returned from New Zealand, and so unfortunately we are working short-handed.

Mr. WADE (Gordon) [5]: I should like to be allowed to say a few words upon the forecast of business for what is apparently meant to be the rest of this year. I am somewhat at a loss to know whether the Minister is in a humorous vein or not, in the recital of these measures, because, supposing they go through the House under the condition of not being supposed to be contentious, the proper investigation of these alone will keep us here at the very least to the middle of the present year. Even the machinery portions of the Local Government Bill, though not open to fault in the same way as the franchise clauses are, contain within themselves column after column, page after page, of matters on which people are divided almost hopelessly, and on which there must be discussion, if we allowed it, lasting into weeks.

Mr. J. H. CANN: It is not to be concluded!

Mr. WADE: It is going to be discussed.

Mr. J. H. CANN: It is only going to be introduced!

Mr. WADE: What "conclusion" means it is impossible to say at this stage. Whether conclusion means through committee to the third-reading stage, or whether it means the third reading we have not been told. At any rate there are the germs of discussion here suffi-

[Mr. J. H. Cann.

cient to occupy an enormous length of time. Other measures which have been mentioned are also open to the objection, that even were their discussion based on matters which are supposed to be not "strongly controversial," they would occupy a very large amount of time in absolutely the very worst season of the year. I would make this appeal in all good faith to the Ministry again: at the inception of our work, not to impose on hon. members obligations to which they are not equal, or else they will find their sick-list increased beyond two Ministers, for which I now express my regret. It is not humanly possible to stand this inordinate strain at this time of the year, when there is no really urgent need for this obligation to be cast upon us. As I am reminded, private business is now superseded, and we are called upon to sit every day in the week until the work of the session is finished. Now I ask, in common sense, what man is there in this House at this moment, however keen he may be in his work and duties, who is prepared to sit here night after night and day after day in an atmosphere which would kill the strongest of us in a few months' time? It is not fair to Ministers themselves, it will do the public no good, and it is manifestly unfair to the whole of the House.

I want to go beyond that if I may be allowed, Mr. Speaker, and make one more reference to this question of controversial measures. The Minister tells us that he is going to bring forward some measures which are not "strongly controversial." What that means I do not know, and I suppose nobody does. It is a term so elastic as to include possibly from their own point of view in all good faith the most rabid and extreme measures that figure on the platform of hon. gentlemen opposite. If the Wheat Acquisition Bill was only mildly controversial, what may we expect in regard to measures which are spoken of as being not "strongly controversial"? But the ground on which I make this protest now—the same ground as I took some months ago—is that this is no time to close our eyes to the grave national crisis—the Empire crisis—overshadowing us, and to think for a moment of trying to gain some party capital or political prestige by

forcing through Parliament some measures which might secure a few more votes on polling-day. The public here, I regret to say, do not realise the situation in European centres to-day. We are blessed, thank goodness, with an open sea traffic so far. We have not felt the pinch of the war to any large extent in any section of the community; but I think that, with the opening of this new year, the loss of the circulation of the wool money and the wheat money will be felt in Sydney, and will react throughout the whole of the states, and we will then realise that, after all, this war is going to be brought to our doors in a commercial sense, although it did not arise from here. But apart from that, I say in all seriousness that we, who have been blessed with this 16,000 miles of sea space between the old country and Australia, do not realise the seriousness of the grave crisis and the situation of great danger that the Empire is in to-day through what is happening on the Continent. After six months of strenuous exertion, the sacrifice of some of the best blood that ever flowed in a white man's body, we find ourselves not yet having driven the Germans out of French territory, and facing the fact that the Germans are occupying foreign territory on their eastern borders. It is inevitable that we cannot hope or expect any marked change in those conditions without an enormous sacrifice of both blood and treasure on the part of the Empire, and I say that our foremost thought, our only thought, should be the concentration of all our efforts to try to bring this war to a termination as soon as possible, and to place beyond all doubt the supremacy of our Empire.

Mr. WRIGHT: Let you and me go to the front!

Mr. WADE: It is not a question of idle taunts as to who will go to the front. Every man can play his part in this crisis, whatever his age or size may be; and whilst the youngest and best can give their active strength, endurance, and skill in the fighting line, those more advanced in years can help in a variety of ways, and I say that we in Parliament can help in a way that will bring strength and unity to the Empire at large by holding out our hands in a truce

for the time being, and foregoing all these paltry questions of party benefit, and making our sole and only purpose the strengthening of the Empire in what I say is without doubt a period of grave national crisis. We can help in the movement for recruiting; we can help to stimulate the minds of our young people with the gravity of this period, and make those who to-day are frivolous realise that there are more important things to be done than to engage day after day in personal amusement, or even in party politics. I make this—I do not say protest alone—I make this appeal to the Ministry to put first and foremost at this period the only question of importance for our well-being—the protection and the solidarity of the Empire and her dominions. Where would we be if, through some mischance, a German fleet should make an escape from the North Sea, and even one or two cruisers should manage to make their appearance on the Australian coast?

Mr. WRIGHT: That is a federal matter!

Mr. WADE: What is the good of party talk on the Labour platform if we are assailed and utterly ruined by the ravages of hostile cruisers?

Mr. WRIGHT: I rise to order. The point of order is that the leader of the Opposition is speaking on federal matters of which this House knows nothing.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. the leader of the Opposition is in order.

Mr. WADE: I mention this to point out to hon. members, who do not yet realise what the meaning of "country" is, that it is no time for frivolity, and it may be that the joy of to-day becomes the sorrow of to-morrow, if through some mischance only one German cruiser is let loose on the Australian coast. Therefore it is that we should use our best efforts to consolidate the strength of Australia, not only for Imperial help but for home defence as well. If we do that, even if Parliament is idle for the next five or six months, there will be nothing lost to the great body of Australian nationality and Imperial solidarity. I say this, not because I want to make any capital, but because I and my party have been consistent on the question right through the piece—from the time war was first declared. When the Ministry

in view of this overshadowing question of the safety of the Empire, proposed, at all events until some decided change took place, to postpone all controversial work, we agreed. I went so far, relying upon the spirit of their statements, as to make a voluntary offer, seeing that whilst party wrangling was unseemly inside, it would be equally unseemly outside Parliament, and we proposed that at any rate until some fixed period at the beginning of May, in the case of by-elections we would leave to them the right to retain without contest any seat vacated by a member of their own party. They were to give us the same representation and rights. I was prompted, as everybody understood and believed, by the understanding that if there was a truce inside the House there would be the same outside. No one can for a moment suggest, in view of the work of last session, that in fact there has not been a great departure at any rate from the spirit of the understanding on which I made my proposal with regard to by-elections. I frankly admit that the letter which I wrote to the Premier might, taken by itself, seem to be of an unqualified nature; but when we are brought face to face with this proposed by-election for Castlereagh—although I cannot help feeling we have not had, nor has the Empire had, any measure of fair treatment with regard to controversial questions during the past six months—whatever the result may be to us politically—either in the shape of a win, or of criticism, or even of castigation, we would far sooner lose the opportunity for personal or party gain than be accused on our part of going back on the compact we made in the Empire's interests. It would be better for us to forego our claims to be called the Liberal party than to try to captivate votes or secure a seat on such lines; and it would be better for the Ministry to emulate us and sink all controversial matters in the interests of those far higher and far more enduring than the mere question of who is to be the member for Castlereagh, or for anywhere else. These questions may arise again—one cannot tell in these times of stress what may develop, but I do say that it is not fair of the Ministry, in view of the compact we have made, and which we are quite prepared to keep in

[*Mr. Wade.*

what we conceive to be its real spirit, and to stand by even at our own loss, politically speaking. I think it is only fair to devote our time, during these last days of the session, to work of a purely urgent character, devoid of all controversial features. Who will be the worse for it?

Mr. BAGNALL: Surely the programme outlined is not of a controversial character!

Mr. WADE: The view I hold is the view of my party as well as of myself. I have made no party capital from the day war was proclaimed. Not one public speech based on party issues has been made by the Liberals, nor has there been one parliamentary statement in the press that could excite controversy. I trust hon. members on all sides will rise to the occasion and put aside anything which might rouse party feeling, party prejudice, or class passion. Let them say, when we end the session, "We are all united for the one purpose—for the consolidation of our own Empire and the destruction of the Germans."

ADJOURNMENT.

CURTAILMENT OF RAILWAY SERVICE.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received a notice from the hon. member for Wagga Wagga that he desires to move the adjournment of the House to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, "The curtailment of the railway service of the state by the present administration by the commissioners."

Five hon. members having risen in their places,

Question proposed.

Mr. BOSTON (Wagga Wagga) [5.51]: I feel that I am justified in bringing before the House the very serious consequences that may follow the announcement of the Railway Commissioners' intention to reduce the train service in the country districts to a tri-weekly service. This, I understand, will affect most of the branch railways in New South Wales. Other hon. members will probably deal with the matter as it applies to the particular localities they represent. I will confine my remarks to the effect in regard to the railway from Cootamundra to Gundagai and Tumut. A portion of the line goes through the Cootamundra and

Wagga electorates, and into the Yass electorate. Although the Government are not directly responsible for this drastic alteration in the railway service, the country newspapers are blaming them for it, and are availing themselves of the opportunity of branding the Government with the charge of extravagance in administration, and saying that they have taken this step because they regard it as absolutely necessary to prevent the railway system from breaking down. The *Wagga Express* made the following comment:—

At last it would appear that the Labour Government is brought to realise what their policy of extravagance is meaning to the state. It was inevitable that sooner or later their policy of finding positions in the Government service, and raising the salaries of those already there, to say nothing of encouraging the Government "crawl" which used to be "stroke," must bring disaster upon the state. It is not at all to be wondered at that the railways do not pay under the present costly and ridiculous system of management.

I contend that that is a very misleading statement, for, although I suppose the majority of the people think that the administration of the railways is directly under the control of the Government, we know perfectly well that the Railway Commissioners are working under a law passed not by the Labour Government but by the Liberals when they were on this side of the House. Statements of that kind naturally mislead the public and are injurious to the administration of governmental affairs. The *Gundagai Times*, a paper published in the Cootamundra electorate, says:

It must be patent to even its followers that the Holman Government, after several years spent in the pleasant task of sowing the wind, has now entered upon the equally unpleasant task of reaping the whirlwind. The railways have been in the past run, to a large extent, in a manner dictated by the city trades-unionist, but it has been left to the countryman, worker and capitalist alike, to foot the bill. And it would be hard to imagine any more absurd, futile, and, above all, unjust form in which retrenchment should possibly have been applied.

In various parts of the country indignation meetings are being called, and rightly so, too. The railway from Coota-

mundra to Gundagai was opened in 1886 exactly twenty-nine years ago, and the railway to Tumut in 1903, twelve years ago. Those towns enjoyed a daily mail service long before they had railway communication. In my opinion it is a scandalous thing that a town which has had the advantage of a good railway service for twenty-nine years should have that service curtailed to a tri-weekly one. I hope that the Government will not allow the commissioners to carry out their intention. If they do, they will be deserving of censure. If the branch lines are not paying as much as we should like them to pay why not carry out a proper businesslike method the same as would be adopted if those lines were being run by private enterprise and make the charges for freights and fares sufficiently large to cover working expenses?

Mr. PERRY: Or reduce the staff?

Mr. BOSTON: If it could be proved that there are more men working on the railways than are necessary, that would be sufficient ground for us to censure the Chief Railway Commissioner and his staff. But, even if it could be proved that there is a slight surplus of men employed, there is not much in that. The main fact is that these lines are not paying because of the present drought, which has naturally caused a falling off in the revenue. It would be a simple matter to increase the charges for freights and fares, and I am sure that people would rather pay increased freights and fares for the time being than have the railway service cut down to a tri-weekly one. I wish to enter my emphatic protest against the Railway Commissioners' proposal. I am sorry that the Minister for Railways is not present. I understand he is on a bed of sickness. Had he been here he might have been able to throw a little light on the subject. I am also sorry that the Premier is not in the House to-night, because this matter affects his electorate as well as my own. As I have said, indignation meetings are being called in various parts of the country, and I think that the people have some justification for protesting against this absurd proposal. When the construction of the railway from Gundagai to Tumut was advocated the landowners

right along that line promised to put more of their land under cultivation, and I understand that the line was built on the understanding that the betterment principle should be applied in connection with it, and that should there be a deficiency on the working of the railway the people of the district were willing to make up the deficit. I believe that that principle has not been put into operation. I do not altogether believe in the betterment principle, but should like to point out that along that line, the same as other lines, there are vast areas of land which could be more closely and better cultivated, but which are in the same barren condition as they were in when the railway was constructed.

[Mr. Speaker left the chair at 6 p.m.
The House resumed at 7 p.m.]

Mr. BOSTON: When the House rose I was endeavouring to show to hon. members the necessity for the continuance of a daily service on the various lines throughout country districts. I find that the first-class fare from Tumut to Cootamundra is 8s. 6d., while the second-class fare is 5s. On the coach which runs to meet the train the charge for a distance of 7 or 8 miles is 2s. 6d. No one complains, and nobody walks. People pay the fare willingly.

AN HON. MEMBER: Would you rather travel in the coach than in the train?

Mr. BOSTON: I do not say that. We know that country coaches do not run as nicely as motor-cars, but they meet people's convenience. In this instance the coach carries you 8 miles for 2s. 6d. The distance from Tumut to Cootamundra is 65 miles, and yet the fares are only 8s. 6d. and 5s. first and second-class respectively. I do not think people would be up in arms against the Government, or against the commissioners, if the fares and freights were increased slightly. No doubt some would complain, because a few always do; it would probably be an excuse to the business people for increasing the prices of their goods, saying they had to pay more for freight.

Mr. ARTHUR GRIFFITH: Would not increased fares be a much greater hardship to a district than a reduced train service?

[Mr. Boston.

Mr. BOSTON: It would not be a hardship. No Government should tolerate such a curtailment of service to a country district which has been used to a daily service for twenty years. If this Government intend to stand behind the Railway Commissioners and allow this thing to go on, I feel that they are deserving of the utmost censure the House can give them. But I do not know whether the Government is responsible, or whether it is the Railway Commissioners. If it is the commissioners who are responsible, then it is the bounden duty of Ministers to say to the Railway Commissioners, "You are not doing a fair thing to the country districts." As a country member, I stand in my place here and protest against it, and there are other country members, and probably city members as well, who will protest with me. I do not come armed with a lot of statistics as to what is taking place on country lines, and I frankly admit that the Tumut line has been worked at a big loss—I understand that it has been showing a loss of something like £13,000 per annum. It must be remembered, however, that while we are losing on that line we are at the same time feeding the main lines of the state. While country branches feed the main lines, if on the whole our railways pay, I think we should not penalise country districts. It has always been our boast that we are out for the development of our country. It has been the ambition of every Government that has been in power to develop the country, and this could not be done better than by increasing the railway service. During the regime of the present administration we have built railways in various country districts, notwithstanding that we knew from the evidence placed before the Public Works Committee that those lines must show a loss for a number of years. Without fear of contradiction by any hon. member, I say that any man would vote for a line where he thought there was a reasonable prospect of its being a paying concern in the near future; but if we had always looked at everything from the paying aspect we should never have had a line of railway in New South Wales. I remember reading in connection with the opening of a new railway

many years ago that the inquiry board appointed stated in their report that it would probably be advisable to extend our railways as far as Goulburn in the south and Bathurst in the west; but they added that it would never be possible to send those lines further into the interior than those places. To-day we find our railways extended into every part of New South Wales. North, south, and west we have our railway extensions, and whether the Minister likes it or not, I strongly protest against any curtailment of the service on those lines. If the Government or the Railway Commissioners find that our railways are not paying, there must be something wrong. If our railways were in the hands of private individuals, would they curtail the services? No; they would increase the freights and make the public pay. If a private individual can do that, may not our Government do the same thing?

Mr. J. H. CANN: It would be no use moving the adjournment of the House if the railways were in the hands of private individuals!

Mr. BOSTON: I am glad to think that our railways are not in the hands of private individuals, because they would put the fares up, and make them pay not only bare working expenses but huge dividends. The state is not looking for dividends, but to give the people, and especially those in the backblocks, some reasonable train communication. I do not wish to speak further on this question; I leave it to hon. members. I ask the Government to confer with the Railway Commissioners, and if the present Railway Commissioners are not capable of managing our railways, and cannot give an adequate service to our country districts, let the Government appoint fresh commissioners. If the Railway Commissioners are not fit to manage our railway system, what is the use of having them there? I understand that the hon. member for Mudgee the other day introduced a deputation to the Chief Railway Commissioner, who emphatically declared that it was no use bringing a deputation to him, and refused to allow them to put their case, telling them that it was the policy laid down by the commissioners, and they intended

to go on with the curtailment of the services on the various lines of New South Wales. It is for that reason that I have moved the adjournment of the House. It would be of no use for me to go to the Chief Commissioner when he has already told one of our members that he would not accede to the request of any deputation.

Mr. EDDEN: Where did the hon. member get that information?

Mr. BOSTON: I got it from the hon. member for Mudgee himself. He told me that the Chief Commissioner refused absolutely to hear the deputation. I have been written to by various people in my own district regarding the indignation meetings that have been held, and asked to request the Chief Commissioner to receive a deputation; but what is the good? If the hon. member for Mudgee introduced a deputation and was unsuccessful, what is the use of my wasting time? This is the place to ventilate our grievances, and if an injustice is being done to my electorate, I feel that I am entitled to bring the matter before the House. I hope the Government will take notice of the indignation that is felt throughout the length and breadth of New South Wales, and before they allow the Railway Commissioners to curtail the services they should, if they have the power, go into the matter thoroughly. I am not sure who rules this country—the Railway Commissioners or the Government.

Mr. J. C. L. FITZPATRICK: The Trades Hall!

Mr. BOSTON: It is all very well for the hon. member to talk about the Trades Hall. I am as free as any man in this House; I am not dictated to by the Trades Hall or anybody else. More influence is brought to bear on the hon. member for Orange down at the Union Club than is exercised upon me by the Trades Hall. It has no influence whatever over me. I am sent here by a country constituency to see that justice is done to it, and without further comment I leave it to the House to say whether or not it will allow the Government to adopt the proposal to curtail the country railway services.

Mr. J. C. L. FITZPATRICK (Orange) [7.14]: It is very interesting to hear the

hon. member denouncing the Railway Commissioners, the Ministry, and all and sundry, because, in view of circumstances over which apparently they have no control, it has been found necessary to curtail the railway system as it applies to various parts of the state. The hon. member is scarcely fair to the hon. member for Mudgee, who, as I understand, introduced a deputation one day last week to the Chief Railway Commissioner asking that no change of a drastic nature should be made with regard to the Mudgee railway. The hon. member, if correctly reported in the press, after hearing the statement made by the Chief Commissioner, went away perfectly satisfied with the explanation of that officer, saying that he was convinced that the proposed alteration was absolutely imperative. Not only did the hon. member express his personal satisfaction—I am speaking from memory—but he went so far as to say that it was the sentiment of the deputation. If Mr. Dunn told the hon. member that the Chief Commissioner said that he was predominant, and that it was no use bringing a deputation to him, he must either have made a mistake, and forgotten the incident altogether, or deliberately misled the hon. member and led him into the pitfall in which he finds himself to-night. So far as the railway system is concerned, we have always understood that since the passage of the original Railway Act, the Chief Commissioner and his colleagues are the controlling influences. What has happened since? The change that was recently effected may have made a difference. The gentleman who previously carried out the duties of Chief Railway Commissioner, amidst a perpetual fire of bombs from all quarters of the community, would not be dictated to by anyone. Mr. Tom Johnson had a way of his own, and, like the man with the yellow ribbon in one of Max O'Reil's books, he did what he pleased, ate and drank what he liked, and did not care a damn for anybody. He had a will of his own, and felt that he could do as he pleased so long as he conformed with the principles of the act he was charged to administer. What the Government are doing now with the new commis-

[*Mr. J. C. L. Fitzpatrick.*]

sioners heaven only knows! But whether the Railway Commissioners are performing their duties in a perfunctory way, or as their predecessors performed them, the fact remains that they have been compelled, by circumstances over which they have no control, to make these alterations. Personally, I do not think it is a good advertisement for New South Wales to find the Railway Commissioners making these sweeping and drastic alterations in the system which has been operating for a considerable length of time. Nor do I think that, if we are to form our estimate from what we hear from time to time, this course of action is absolutely warranted. According to a statement recently made—it has relation to the last quarter of 1914—7,000 more people travelled on the railways than ever before, and the railway revenue was little short, if at all short, of what it had been in the past. The revenue from the tramway system, I admit, fell off very considerably, but it is a mistake for the Railway Commissioners to bring about such a drastic alteration as they propose in relation to a number of railways in New South Wales.

Mr. FINGLETON: The tramway revenue increased during the last quarter of 1914!

Mr. J. C. L. FITZPATRICK: Yes. I was referring to the number of people who travelled on the railways. Fewer people travelled on the tramways in the last quarter of 1914, but the revenue was an increase on the corresponding quarter of the preceding year. It is a mistake to make these alterations in the railway services. Even if we are in temporary trouble, as probably we are, so far as railway revenue is concerned, there is no necessity to put the travelling community to all the inconvenience which must be entailed by the proposed change. On the Western line there are two day trains—the direct train from Sydney to Coonamble, and the direct train from Sydney to Bourke. They expect two trains to carry all the passengers which four trains previously carried. The Coonamble line, to all accounts, has proved a paying concern, though if we are to judge the importance of our railway system by those lines which have

proved profitable from the jump, very few railways would be constructed at all. It is a bad argument in favour of the construction of new railways if after three or six months of experience such as we have been going through we are to be told by the Railway Commissioners that it is necessary to curtail the railway service to the extent proposed at the present moment. It is an error of judgment on the part of the commissioners, With all due respect to those gentlemen, whilst they are entitled to exercise their own discretion in a matter of this kind, it appears to me that, with all the possibilities of securing increased revenue from the increased freights and fares recently brought into operation, there must be something radically wrong with the condition of things which necessitates such a drastic change as is now proposed. The public ought to be considered to some extent. They are the people who furnish the funds, and although the ordinary railway traffic has, to some extent, diminished by reason of the drought, and the fact that the wool is not being carried owing to the restricted market, though it will come down later on, that is no reason why the present services should not be maintained in their entirety, or at any rate until some greater justification for retrenchment crops up than exists at the present moment. I sympathise to some extent with the hon. member for Wagga Wagga. I do not wish to see the hon. member's constituents compelled to walk home over bad roads, or to have resort to the old bullock dray system. I want to see them travel by train, and to live under civilised conditions. But I would advise the hon. member to level his attack against the Government rather than against the Railway Commissioners. To all intents and purposes, it is the Government who are responsible for the present trouble just as they are responsible for a number of the ills from which we are just now suffering. Let the Government say, in the interests of the community, that the system must be maintained, and whatever loss accrues by reason of any diminution in the revenue they will make good, in order that the interests

of the people may be protected, and their convenience served as in the days gone by.

Mr. MCGIRR (Yass) [7.24]: I feel in duty bound to say a few words on the subject which has been raised. Whilst, generally speaking, I am not prepared to pay much attention to indignation meetings, I think that this is an occasion which in a measure, justifies the indignation of the people in the district affected. After all we must give consideration to property-holders in country districts. Generally we are charged on this side with having no respect for the sacred rights of property, but we have a certain amount of faith in those rights, and we feel that people who hold property along the route of this railway are entitled to receive consideration at the hands of the Railway Commissioners. Such a move as is now contemplated is seriously in the direction of depreciating the value of property all along the line from Cootamundra to Gundagai. When one takes into consideration the sweeping nature of the change proposed to be introduced, he is led to consider not only the particular line referred to by the hon. member for Wagga Wagga, but the wisdom of the commissioners' action as it affects the whole state from a financial point of view. The Chief Commissioner for Railways has boasted that he has saved 12,000 miles of railway construction. That is almost a criminal statement to come from a man holding such a position. If the Commissioner for Railways can boast that he has saved the construction of 12,000 miles of railway, why should we, as a Government, endeavour to build hundreds of miles of railways in other parts of the state, not so prosperous, and lacking the rainfall and the productive capacity of the district I represent. The financial aspect of the move on the part of the Railway Commissioners, if looked at fairly and squarely, must fail to appeal to any man with a sense of justice. For example, the 65 miles of railway connecting Cootamundra with Tumut cost something like £260,000 to construct—that is, taking the low estimate of £4,000 per mile. If that line is to remain idle for three days a week, it means that property to the value of £260,000 will not be earning interest;

and after all the expense of running a train is small as compared with the loss which will be incurred if the whole length of line is to remain idle for so many days per week. It is a false financial policy to reduce the train service and allow property of that value to remain idle.

Mr. J. H. CANN: Even if the trains are run at a loss?

Mr. MCGIRR: Even if the trains are run at a loss, the policy is wrong from a financial standpoint. But, admitting that these branch lines are losing propositions, it must be remembered that they act as feeders to the main lines, and at the present moment we are expending a very large amount in the duplication of our main trunk railways in order to enable them to cope with the traffic which the branch lines are turning on to them. At the present moment something like 2,000 men are employed on the duplication of the Cullerin to Harden portion of the main Southern line. Yet we now learn that branch lines, which act as feeders to that portion of our railway system, are to be shut down. The reason advanced is that the branch lines are not paying. If that is the case, we may deduce that the duplications are not needed.

Mr. J. H. CANN: The prevailing droughty conditions in the Tumut district are most exceptional!

Mr. MCGIRR: That is a reason for allowing the line to remain open and the trains to continue to run. It must be recollected that the Tumut district has proved the salvation of the pastoralists in the Condobolin, Parkes, and Forbes country.

Mr. J. H. CANN: I was in the Tumut district the other day, and the country was as bare as this floor!

Mr. MCGIRR: My contention is that the Tumut country has proved the salvation of the stock-owners throughout the whole of the Riverina, inasmuch as they have been enabled to move their starving stock and depasture them in the mountainous country in the Tumut, Gundagai, and Cootamundra districts. Stock-owners have been able to save their stock, and they are now moving portion of them to their own districts.

An HON. MEMBER: The stock trains are still being run!

[Mr. McGirr.]

Mr. MCGIRR: Yes. This district has always proved a stand-by in time of drought, and even though the line may not pay under existing conditions, the fact that it serves such a prosperous district is an argument in favour of giving the very best service possible. If we do not maintain a direct railway service to this district how can we expect fruit to be sent away in that quick form of transit which it requires? The Minister for Labour and Industry will remember that, when he was at Tumut, a deputation waited on him and asked him to give a good railway service from Cootamundra to Tumut. The train at present crawls along at the rate of 5 to 6 miles an hour. It pulls up at every little siding, and it is sometimes shunted back for miles. It takes from five in the morning till one in the afternoon to travel the 65 miles. We waited on the Minister and showed him that the existing form of conveyance from Cootamundra to Tumut was not of a character to make that line pay. We pointed out that people, instead of using the line to travel by, would prefer to make use of motor-cars or coaches. We urged that a more up-to-date service should be given to the people of Tumut. The Minister promised to do his best, but what has been done is not his best. If a better system were provided on the branch lines, and less time wasted at sidings, the line would pay better. In the district between Galong and Burrowa the people, rather than send the mail by a slow train, send it direct by motor-car. The mails, instead of being sent by train as in the past, will be carried by private individuals, and the people of New South Wales will suffer the loss. If there were a better service on the branch lines we would obtain better results. I hope to hear the reason why this high-handed action on the part of the Commissioner for Railways has been taken without consulting this party or Parliament. The district affected has a better rainfall than any other, and the people are more intelligent than those in any other part of New South Wales. It is absurd to deprive such a district of a daily train service, and at the same time endeavour to open up fresh lines of railway. If the commissioners cut this service down

to three times a week I do not know how they expect such a railway as that from Tullamore to Tottenham to pay. I hope the Minister will take into serious consideration the urgent necessity for giving a daily service, especially when he takes into account that in the towns affected there are business men whose interests must be served. The present system is unfair to those men, seeing that they have paid their quota of the general taxation. I appeal to the Government to intercede with the Railway Commissioners to do their best on this portion of the railway.

Mr. J. H. CANN (Sturt), Colonial Secretary [7.36]: I regret that the hon. member who has moved the motion of adjournment should have taken such a step. The reason may be that the hon. member is new to the House, and does not know the courtesies usually extended to a Minister. If my reply to the representations he has made is scant, and does not contain the information he seeks, the fault is his and not mine. I regret to say that the Minister who presides over this department has been in bed for some weeks past, as hon. members know. I have been trying to relieve the situation as far as his duties are concerned. I have been trying to help a sick man. But it is impossible for a Minister to carry all the details of a department in his head. If the hon. member had told me of the step he proposed to take I would have tried to glean for him the information he wishes to have.

Mr. BOSTON: And you would have asked me to see you in your room!

Mr. J. H. CANN: If the hon. member does not want information I have no argument to offer him. If he did really want to know the true facts of the case, and to bring them before the House and the public, he would have given me an opportunity to obtain the information. As it is, I have had no chance to make inquiries from any department as to why this step has been taken. I can only depend upon my own knowledge of the departments. With regard to the last speaker, I may say that about a fortnight ago I travelled through the hon. member's electorate, and no one regrets more than I do what I saw. That district was in a more drought-stricken

condition than I have ever seen it. Round about Gundagai there are many hills which have been regarded as a feeding ground for starving stock ever since I have been in public life, but to-day they are as bare as this floor. Further down towards Tumut there are areas which have always been looked upon as feeding grounds for starving stock, but to-day there is scarcely a blade of grass on them. Under such circumstances are the Railway Commissioners to be called upon to administer their department in any other way than in the best interests of the community? If there is no traffic for more than three days a week, what is the use of the hon. member finding fault with the commissioners? Are they to run the trains at a loss because it would be to the convenience of the business men on the line? What are the facts? I have not had much opportunity to look them up, but I casually picked up our finance sheet, and I find that, in connection with all our services, including the Harbour Trust and the Water and Sewerage Board, for eleven days of this month they have gone down to the extent of £47,000.

Mr. HOLLIS: Is that in comparison with last year?

Mr. J. H. CANN: Comparing this year with last year they have gone down to the extent of £47,000. Am I to tell the Chief Commissioner who is trying to meet the situation that he must not do so? Let hon. members take into consideration what it means. I am not crying wolf. I do not want to make people believe that this country cannot stand what it is going through and will not recover. I believe the hon. member has had rain in his district since I was there.

Mr. BOSTON: Not much!

Mr. J. H. CANN: Unfortunately it has not been much, but other districts have also suffered. We have to face facts and deal with things as they are. I have no doubt that the commissioners will try to cope with the traffic. If it will justify trains four days a week, or even five days a week, the district will get them. The commissioners' desire is to collect freights, but if there is no traffic what can the commissioners do? I do not agree with the hon. member that you can put up freights and fares

and thus give a daily service, although the traffic will only warrant a service of three days a week. I think you would find that you would have to pay for your whistle a great deal more heavily under a condition of that kind.

Mr. MCGARRY: And you would not get much sympathy either!

Mr. J. H. CANN: No. If you asked a man using the railway to pay double so as to allow of a daily service as against paying a fair amount in order to enable him to get his produce to market, I think he would look at you very sadly. It is not within the power of the Government to review what the Railway Commissioners are doing.

Mr. BOSTON: The country press are not telling you that!

Mr. J. H. CANN: I cannot help what the country press are telling us. Take, for instance, the complaint about the actions of the late Chief Commissioner, Mr. Johnson. I admit that Mr. Johnson probably administered his department with a high hand and very little consideration. I mean to say that although he might have been a good administrator and have done good work, people had reason to complain of the way in which he did it, with the result that he raised a great deal of hostility; while if another man had been administering the department at the time he would probably have been the most popular person in this state. Mr. Johnson, in the last period of his office, paid in wages alone about £1,750,000 per year more than he had been paying two years previously. Let me have patronage to that extent. If you allowed me to administer a department in which I paid in wages £1,750,000 more than in the previous year, I undertake to say that I would be the most popular man in New South Wales.

Mr. BALL: Mr. Johnson was not!

Mr. J. H. CANN: No; that is why I am citing his case as an illustration of the point I am making. The Railway Department is not under the review of Ministers. Ministers have no more to do with that department than the hon. member himself.

Mr. BOSTON: You want to let the public know that!

[Mr. J. H. Cann.

Mr. J. H. CANN: I am trying to let them know. The public may have grievances and think that things are all wrong, and it may be that there are thousands of railway managers in this state who could run the railways better than the commissioners are running them, but they do not happen to be in charge, and we are not in charge. The Government are not responsible for what the Railway Commissioners are doing; but in my opinion the Railway Commissioners are fairly reasonable men, and if the traffic is there they will cater for that traffic.

Mr. BALL: You were aware of this alteration before it was made public?

Mr. J. H. CANN: No.

Mr. BALL: You were not consulted?

Mr. J. H. CANN: No. The hon. member knows I am not consulted. If it were proposed to do what the hon. member moving the motion proposes—to make additional charges—it would be necessary to have an amended by-law. In such a case I would be consulted. If it were proposed to make extra charges the Railway Commissioners would have to get executive authority for making them.

Mr. BALL: I am not referring to executive authority. I am only stating that the Government were aware of the alteration before it was made public!

Mr. J. H. CANN: No official representation was made to us regarding the alteration. This is a class of management which the Railway Commissioners have full authority to deal with without reference to the Government. I regret that the hon. member for Wagga Wagga should have taken the step he has without giving me sufficient notice to allow of my getting information from the department. If the hon. member had given me proper notice I would have got from the department the real facts of the case, but I have had no opportunity to do that. I was only told about 29 minutes past 4 this afternoon that it was proposed to move the adjournment of the House on this matter. At that time the officials had left.

Mr. BOSTON: We have your promise that you will see that it is remedied!

Mr. J. H. CANN: If the hon. member had shown me what I ought to remedy I would have been able to answer him.

What am I to remedy? If any hon. member after this revised service has been tried, can show me that a grievance exists I can make representations to the Railway Commissioners, but the present arrangement has not been sufficiently long in operation to show whether a real grievance exists or not.

Mr. BURGESS: It is not in operation yet!

Mr. J. H. CANN: If it be shown that traffic demands are not met, justification will be given to the Government to make representations to the Railway Commissioners and ask them to remedy the grievance, but at present the grievance is an imaginary one. The revised service has not been tried. If it had been tried and resulted in grievances arising, there would have been justification for asking the Railway Commissioners to remedy those grievances.

Mr. BURGESS: The Minister does not know that deputations have been waiting on the Railway Commissioners!

Mr. J. H. CANN: Asking them to do what?

Mr. BURGESS: Not to curtail the services!

Mr. J. H. CANN: While at the same time the Railway Commissioners know that owing to the exigencies of the position they must curtail them. If the hon. member for Wagga Wagga had given me the opportunity I would have been only too glad to extend to him the full courtesy to which every hon. member is entitled, but I am sure that under the circumstances he will acquit me of lack of that courtesy in not making a more adequate reply than I have made. I have had to depend solely on my memory in stating what I have said.

Mr. BALL (Corowa) [7.48]: Undoubtedly this question is a very important one as affecting the country districts. We were made aware through the press that the Railway Commissioners contemplated reducing railway services in various parts of the state. Despite the fact that the Minister has stated that nothing definite was placed before him so that he could make certain representations to the Railway Commissioners, there are country members who will be able to put before the Minister to-night something which I trust he will take note of and confer with the Railway Commis-

sioners upon. I am aware that the Chief Commissioner has full control of the management of the railways and that he generally confers with the Government in all matters of administration of an important character such as we are discussing to-night.

Mr. J. H. CANN: The commissioners did not do so in this instance!

Mr. BALL: I think the Minister must admit that the Government were aware of these contemplated changes before they were made public. What is the object of these contemplated changes? According to the Chief Commissioner the object is to effect a saving in working expenses on these particular lines, and I think we are within our rights when we make an attempt to show that it is very questionable whether the object held in view will be served. I admit that the commissioners have a perfect right to deal with this matter from the standpoint of making the railways pay, but I would remind them that most of these branch lines have been run at a loss ever since they have been open to traffic. It has been regarded as necessary to work the lines even at a loss for the purposes of developing the country. We have frequently complained that these branch lines are not credited with part of the earnings on the main lines derived from the traffic brought to them by the branch lines. We consider that the branch lines should be credited with a reasonable proportion of the revenue derived from the conveyance over the main lines of traffic brought from the branch lines. According to the reports of the commissioners some of the branch lines which now have a daily service, and upon which in future a tri-weekly service is to be run, were not earning as much revenue at the time the daily service was substituted for a tri-weekly service as they are earning to-day. I admit that there has been a falling off of traffic and revenue in many cases mainly on account of the drought, but I do not remember any previous occasion upon which it was proposed to curtail services merely because a loss was being sustained over a short period on account of bad seasons. In the first six months of 1912 we went through a more serious drought than we have recently experienced, and there was a great

falling off in the railway receipts. But no proposal was then made to curtail services.

The hon. member for Yass referred to one branch line, and I propose to refer to another branch line upon what the commissioners are not able to carry the traffic even with the daily train service in operation to-day. On the Culcairn-Corowa line goods have on many occasions to be left behind because the daily train service is not sufficient to cope with the traffic, and yet it is now proposed to reduce the service to three trains per week. I was so struck with the proposal to reduce the service on that line that I visited the locality and made inquiries and found that even during the last week or two, it has been necessary to run special trains to clear the line. And yet, in spite of that, it is now proposed to run only three trains per week. I know the Railway Commissioners say that they will shift whatever traffic is offering, but I would point out that they are going to do away with the time-table service, and to thus seriously interfere with the convenience of the travelling public, and of those who desire to despatch goods. They may have to run two trains per day to cope with the traffic, but in the meantime they are going to deprive the residents along the line of the usual daily service associated with the passenger traffic. I do not contend that the passenger traffic is paying. I do not believe there is a single branch line on which the passenger traffic pays. But the residents on such lines can reasonably claim fair facilities for travelling to and fro and for the removal of their goods. The commissioners should take into consideration the convenience of residents in the country districts, and even though a loss may be experienced for a short period, they should endeavour to continue the services as set out in the time-table in the same way that a private company would do. There are many private companies who run mail and passenger services and who find that during certain periods such services do not pay. But they do not, in consequence, take off their coaches, because they know that if they interfere with the traffic, they probably will never regain it. If the time-table service is

[Mr. Ball.

done away with on the Culcairn-Corowa line, a large amount of traffic which comes over the border from Victoria to that line will be diverted to Albury, from which station trains will continue to be despatched according to time-table. If this diversion of traffic takes place the residents along the Culcairn-Corowa line will be put to much inconvenience and expense. Hundreds of tons of manure come across the border from Victoria at this time of the year to Corowa, and if this traffic is diverted, the residents along the Culcairn-Corowa line will have to pay heavier freights. I fail to see how economy is to be served by reducing the service to three trains per week when the present daily service does not suffice. The Minister says that the commissioners will deal with the traffic whatever it may be, but I may remind him that only a few short months ago, the commissioners said they could not carry the traffic because they could not find a sufficient number of trucks.

Mr. J. H. CANN: We are carrying it!

Mr. BALL: Yes, because the season did not come up to expectation. If we had had a good harvest, the commissioners would not have been able to cope with the traffic. The Government say that the traffic will be carried, but if it be carried in the way proposed, it will involve hardship and inconvenience to the people. That is wrong, for it is the duty of the Government to see that these people have as reasonable and economical a service as is possible. This is another blow at the producers in the country. What do we find in the report of the Railway Commissioners? In their last report they admit that they have increased the fares and freights, so that we have been paying increases and yet are to have a decreased service. In July, 1913, first and second class goods underwent a 10 per cent. increase, which brought in additional revenue of £70,000. On the 1st March, 1914, A, B, and C classes had a 10 per cent. increase which brought in £46,000. On the 1st March, 1914, the live-stock rate was raised 10 per cent., an increase which brought in another £60,000. That was all an impost levied on the producer.

Mr. BOSTON:

Mr. BALL: Those extra receipts covered the whole of the lines. What I am pointing out is that those are increased rates and fares imposed by the present Government. There was an increase in the fares of £174,000, giving a grand total of £351,000 additional already imposed by the Railway Commissioners. I have no doubt that any effort to overcome the present difficulty by further increasing that burden would possibly be worse than decreasing the service, but there is no justification, even on the score of economy, for the commissioners' action in curtailing daily services to three days a week. Generally speaking I fail to see where there is going to be any great saving. We are told that it will not mean dismissal of men, that not a single hand will go, that the commissioners are still going to find employment for all the men in the railway service, that the men on the railway-stations will still be there to deal with the three days a week service just as they are there to deal with the full service.

Mr. McGARRY (Murrumbidgee) [8.4]: As this question has been brought forward by the hon. member for Wagga Wagga, and there are in my electorate three lines affected by the decision of the commissioners to curtail the services, I would be neglecting my duty to my constituents if I did not say a few words. I should like to reply, in the first place, to some of the remarks of the Acting-Premier. He complained that the hon. member for Wagga Wagga had not given him notice of his intention to move the adjournment. It appears that there is an old-established custom under which a member intending to move the adjournment of the House gives previous notice to the Minister concerned. I understand that advantage has been taken of that circumstance in the last few years, and means have been taken to stuff the adjournment box and so prevent the member from getting his motion called on. Therefore that custom has had to be abandoned. I do not know that anything of that kind has been done in this case.

Mr. J. H. CANN: I hope the hon. member does not charge me with doing that!

Mr. McGARRY: I do not. I have no knowledge that that is the reason

why the hon. member for Wagga Wagga did not inform the Minister. As far as the principle is concerned, it does not matter very much whether he gave notice to the Minister or not. It would not alter the position with regard to the railway service one iota. The fact we have to consider is whether a great number of people in the country have been very much inconvenienced by the administration of the railways. The Acting-Premier said that the Minister for Railways has not any power over the commissioners in these matters. I suppose it will be contended that sometimes the House has no power over the commissioners. If that is so, what power have we at all in the matter of the railways? I say we have full power, and if it transpires that we have given too much power to the Railway Commissioners, and that they exercise that power against the interests of the community, we as the representatives of the community have a right to alter those powers. That is my answer to the Acting-Premier when he doubts whether the Ministry has any power over the commissioners in these matters. Surely, as the community owns the railways, we, as their representatives, have a right to alter the regulations if they are opposed to the interests of the public, if the Minister for Railways himself has no such power.

With regard to the question of economy, I notice that the hon. member for Lyndhurst is anxious to speak, and I would have preferred that he had spoken before me. Even on the issue of economy there are two sides. Let us admit that the railways are losing some money. The hon. member for Corowa said it was never intended that the branch lines should pay the whole cost of their construction, because they were rendering some service to the main lines all the time. Apart from that altogether, during the past four or five years, when the railways of the state contributed about £500,000 a year to the general revenue, the Government had said, "Take that money and use it for general purposes." Consequently now, in times of drought, or distress, or difficulty, if the railways are losing something the Government of the state should

put their hands in their pockets and pay from the general revenue towards that loss.

Mr. JAMES: There is nothing in their pockets!

Mr. MCGARRY: We can owe it. What I urge is that this is doubtful economy. What goes to make up the cost of working the railways? Ordinarily there is interest on the cost of construction and the cost of the engines. Under the new arrangement the staff would not be fully employed, which fact would supply a third item of cost. Now the interest on the lines is as great whether they are lying idle or are working. The engines are doing no good to themselves by standing idle, and it would in a measure be better if we were to lose a little and give a good service. Let us examine the branch lines affected. In my district there are three lines—there is the line from Narrandera to Hay, Narrandera to Jerilderie, and Temora to Barellan. The curtailment of the service there creates a difficulty. There may be a meeting 20 or 100 miles away, and in order to attend it people have to leave their homes the day before and stop a day and a night at Narrandera or Junee. The service on the Narrandera-Hay line is curtailed. The engine has to run to Whitton, which is 30 miles from Narrandera, daily. It is only 80 miles further on to Hay and, practically speaking, the engine would be as well employed going to Hay as remaining idle at Whitton, as the day is lost with the shorter journey. The third line in my electorate runs from Temora to Barellan, a distance of 66 miles. The people there were struggling for many years with a tri-weekly service, but eventually they got a daily service established. Now, according to the new arrangement, they are to revert to a tri-weekly service. I admit that the traffic there is not as good as it has been, but I think that some arrangement could be made to work the general traffic in with the passenger service. In my opinion, a mistake is being made in curtailing the service given to those who are already getting the worst service. Take the railway from Temora to Barellan. Supposing a person has to go to a meeting at Temora on a Wednesday he has to leave home on Monday, there being no train service on Tuesday, and is compelled to

[Mr. McGarry.]

lose half a week. If the Government have no power in this matter will they tell us who has? Have we any power in it? If the Government have no power in it, and the House has none, and the farmer or the business man has none, who has? Whilst I sympathise with the Government in the difficult position they are placed in with regard to shortage of revenue, and whilst I sympathise with the Railway Commissioners also for the same reason, still I think that the best means to meet the difficulty has not been adopted. If we have to lose something, we should remember that four or five months ago we preached to the private individual the doctrine "lose a little, and keep things going." We told the people to keep on spending as much as they did previously on clothes and other things.

Mr. WADDELL: Very bad advice, too!

Mr. MCGARRY: Well, we gave it. If we preached that doctrine then we should set an example now. I do not think that the Acting-Premier put the position fairly when he claimed that neither the Government nor the House had any responsibility in the matter. I feel that we have a responsibility in regard to it, and hope that the Minister will bring under the notice of the Railway Commissioners the statements made by hon. members to-night with a view of having the whole position reconsidered.

Mr. WADDELL (Lyndhurst) [8.15]: I entirely agree with the Acting-Premier that the hon. member who moved the adjournment of the House should have given the Government notice of his intention. I think that the hon. member for Wagga Wagga himself will, on a moment's reflection, see the reasonableness of that. I presume that the hon. member, as a member of Parliament, is not only member for Wagga Wagga, but also wishes to voice the best interests of the country generally. If so, I suppose that in bringing forward a matter of this sort he would desire to have the fullest information on both sides of the question. How could the Acting-Premier give the House the fullest information if he had not received notice that the hon. member was going to bring the matter before the House? What is the object of moving a resolution of this kind if it is not to get in-

formation on both sides of the question? Surely the hon. member has not moved the resolution so as to have only one side of the question put before the House when the Government are, as it were, hobbled and unable to put the other side of the question before us. I do not say that the Government are responsible for the detailed actions of the Railway Commissioners; but they ought to have an opportunity of giving the fullest possible information to Parliament. At present we are without any information except what we ourselves happen to know. I think that the Acting-Premier might have gone still further in the direction he very rightly went in by saying that he was confident that the Chief Railway Commissioner was doing his best. What has been the universal practice in every community in the world as far back as history goes? When there have been difficulties and falling revenues either the Government or whoever else represented the community have had to effect economies. We are face to face with a difficult position. We have had a severe drought, which is still largely continuing—we have had some rain, but not much—and the result is that the quantity of wool to be carried on the railways this year will not be more than about four-fifths as much as it was last year. Wool is a thing that the Railway Commissioners charge a high rate upon. As far as wheat is concerned, hon. members know that there will be only about half a crop this year. Besides that, the Railway Commissioners have had to carry starving stock month after month. For doing that they get only three-fourths of the usual rate, and they have to take the stock back to the place they came from, free of cost. The rates of wages also have been increased and the hours of working shortened. That all adds to the cost, and surely the commissioners are not responsible for it.

Mr. BOSTON: Where have the hours been shortened?

Mr. WADDELL: I am speaking generally of the last two or three years.

Mr. BOSTON: They have had the eight-hour system for years!

Mr. WADDELL: I know they have had it in some branches of the railway

service, but it has been established to a much greater extent of late. Under those circumstances, if the commissioners are met on all sides with a falling-off in revenue and increased costs in running the railways, how in the name of fortune are they to meet the position? Unpalatable as it may be to many of us to have the train service in our districts reduced, any hon. member who looks as far as his own district and no further, and blames the men who are managing our railways simply because they do not give his district in times of falling revenues and other difficulties as good a service as they give it in prosperous times, is an unreasonable man, and is not taking a broad view, but is looking at things from the narrow-minded standpoint of the politician who thinks only of himself and ignores the welfare of the community generally.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Mr. WADDELL: If there are heavy losses on the railways, and not nearly sufficient returns to meet interest and working expenses, who is going to make up the deficit? I say to the hon. member who interjected, and to others who sympathise with him: if the railway authorities were so unworthy of their positions as to have no concern for running the business of the country in a proper way, they would have continued as usual and let things go to the dogs. For popularity's sake they would agree with what these hon. gentlemen say. They would have piled up a big deficit, and who would have had to pay for it? I am sure my hon. friend will agree with me that the men to be asked to pay would be mostly the producers. The comparatively small section of the community who have already to bear the brunt of the bad times caused by the war and other troubles are the men who would be asked to shoulder the whole of the cost. Is it fair that such a position should be brought about? Yet that is what would take place if the hon. member and those who have spoken as he has to-night had their way.

Mr. BOSTON:

Mr. WADDELL: I can quite understand that if it had happened in my district it would not be fair; but I am prepared while in this House to take

my share of responsibility for unpopular as well as popular actions. I know it is quite possible I may get a letter to-morrow from people in my district complaining that some portion of their train service has been reduced, and I know that as the representative of the district I should go and lay the matter before Mr. Harper, and ask him to give it his best consideration. But if Mr. Harper told me that what had occurred was part of a well-considered scheme, and that it was necessary—as I know it is—to effect considerable economies in the railway service, I would say to Mr. Harper, “You are only doing what is right.” I should say that not only privately, but I would say it, however unpopular it might be, in Parliament. What interest is it to Mr. Harper as Chief Commissioner, or to anyone associated with him whom the Government have appointed to manage the railways, to curtail the train service to any district, and incur the consequent unpopularity? Is it of any interest to them personally? If they were men who did not care a button for the interests of the country—if they were merely popularity-hunters, and traitors to the country they were paid to serve, then they would do exactly as hon. members ask. They would let things drift, and not discontinue a single train. I appeal to the better nature of the hon. member who has moved this resolution. I say to him, in the name of common-sense and fairness, “Ought you not to support the men who are endeavouring to successfully conduct the great business concerns of the country, who are doing the right, and are doing what you yourself would do in their place?” I know my hon. friend has a hard row to hoe, and I do not want to make it any harder; but he will find me by his side as long as he is doing the right thing. I would have liked to see him in such a position to-night as to have been able to give this House the fullest information direct from the Chief Commissioner; and I feel quite certain that if the hon. gentleman had full information his speech would have been even stronger than it was.

One thing which has helped to bring about the present state of things in the railway service is that we have been con-

[*Mr. Waddell.*

structing small lines in too many districts during recent years. The old idea was that these were going to be “feeders,” but the plain English of the matter is, that they have proved “bleeders”—they are bleeding the main lines. I believe in extending our lines all over the country as fast as we reasonably can, considering our wealth and population, and no faster. That is one of the causes, but the principal cause is the drought combined with the effects of the war, for which the Government and Mr. Harper are in no way to blame. Before any hon. member gets up to criticise the Railway Commissioners he ought to have the fullest information on the subject. I have always been in favour of the state running its own railway and tramway services, and so were the men who lived fifty or sixty years ago, when there were no socialists in the country; but if the House is unanimously in favour of these great concerns being run by the Government, then must it not have a depressing influence on the men appointed by the Government to run those concerns to have unreasonable criticism levelled at them in this House? Further, when hon. gentlemen come forward here to criticise the commissioners in the way they have done to-night, the assumption is that they know what they are saying. The assumption is that they believe the Railway Commissioners are wrong. It seems to me it would be difficult for any government to secure a management of our railways which would be universally satisfactory, because they would all be wrong in the opinion of some people. Some years ago we had in charge one of the ablest men the civilised world ever saw, yet while he was alive he was subject to all manner of abuse and unreasonable criticism, in this House and out of it. I refer to the late Mr. Eddy. It was only after that gentlemen was dead that he got any credit for the work he had done. When Mr. Oliver and Mr. Kirkcaldie were managing the railways there were similar complaints. The head of the Government will agree with me that, from one cause or another over which we have no control, there threatens to be a big deficit in connection with the running of the railways. How is that going to be dealt with? Will the hon. member for Wagga Wagga tell us how

that deficit is to be made up? Perhaps he will say that the freights should be raised. That was done a short time ago. Will he say that the men ought to get less wages or work longer hours? I do not think he will, nor shall I. As there is going to be a large deficit, I say that, if the Railway Commissioners do not show sufficient business ability and patriotism to introduce proposals of a temporary character until better times come, in order to make ends meet, they are not worthy to hold their positions. Who are the commissioners to look to in a matter of this kind if it is not the Government? I appeal to the hon. member's sense of fair play. Would he like to be placed in the position of the Minister, and not have the information necessary to defend the commissioners? The hon. member may treat this matter lightly, but the day is coming when the people will look at such questions in a more practical light than they have done in the past. They will know how to deal with men who advocate things because they are popular. They will wake up to that kind of humbug, and it will no longer find favour either inside or outside the House.

Mr. FINGLETON (Waverley) [8.33]: It is not because I have the honor to represent a city seat that I do not know a little with regard to the working of the railways. I also know something of the conditions of the man on the land, and the necessity for a good railway service to enable him to send his produce to market. I wish to extend every consideration to the man on the land in the way of enabling him to send his produce to market. In this matter the Railway Commissioner has taken an unwise step. Instead of going to the root of the evil, he has gone to the branches. The Chief Railway Commissioner is not only reducing the train service where he thinks that step is necessary because of the drought in certain parts of the state, but he is also reducing it in more favoured districts, where there has not been any drought, and the crops have been of a record character. The only conclusion to come to is, that if it is necessary to reduce the service in those districts, he must have been running more trains than were necessary. My contention is that, instead of reducing the train service, he

should cut out the unnecessary expenditure in the department due to mismanagement. That is the root of the evil. I have worked in the department, and know the conditions that exist. It is a scandal that such a state of affairs should obtain in the Railway and Tramway Department as exists at the present time.

Colonel ONSLOW: Has the hon. member any information to give the House?

Mr. FINGLETON: Let the hon. member visit the railway workshops.

Colonel ONSLOW: Tell us what you know!

Mr. FINGLETON: I am going to tell the House in my own manner. I have certain information which I will give to the House at the proper time. You can see highly-paid officials travelling round the city in motor-cars. Let the commissioner reduce the number of motor-cars, and the salaries of these highly-paid gentlemen. That is the first step to take.

Mr. PAGE: You can save time by using a motor-car!

Mr. FINGLETON: I have a knowledge of the department, and I say that there are men travelling round in motor-cars at the expense of the taxpayer. If you are going to use the pruning-knife, that is the place to begin.

Mr. J. H. CANN: There are only three motor-cars. Do you mean to say that, to reduce their number, would save what is wanted?

Mr. FINGLETON: There are men in the department who are running round to see what other men are doing. If you want to curtail expenditure, do it in that direction, but do not curtail the trains in country districts, where it takes the farmer all his time to get his produce to market. The hon. member for Corowa seems to object to the increase in the wages of the employees.

Mr. C. A. LEE: He did not say anything of the sort!

Mr. FINGLETON: The hon. member said that the increases in wages to the staff cost £1,000,000. That shows that the men were underpaid when the Liberal Government was in power, and that they are only getting now what they are entitled to, that is, a living wage.

Mr. MORRISH: Even that is threatened!

Mr. FINGLETON: Yes, that is threatened. I do not want to see any,

man turned out of his job, but I want to see every man in the service give something in return for the pay he receives.

The hon. member for Yass referred to the service from Cootamundra to Tumut. We had a little experience of that service recently, and if the people of the district have to put up with what we had to put up with, it is no wonder the line does not pay. There was a great deal of shunting. The cowcatcher fell down, and it took half an hour to unscrew it. It was then thrown aside. As one who represents a city constituency, but who knows the conditions of the country, I make my protest against the manner in which the Railway Commissioner is curtailing the services instead of going to the root of the evil. Instead of having pimps riding round the country districts and in the city, paying high salaries to officials who irritate the men at their work, it would be better for the state if he made them do something in return for what the taxpayer pays them.

Colonel ONSLOW (Bondi) [8.40]: The hon. member for Waverley concluded by bringing a very serious charge against the Railway Department. He stated that they had pimps at high rates of pay running about the country. From my knowledge of the English language I have always understood that a pimp was a person who was employed to procure women for immoral purposes. You will find that definition in any English dictionary. If the hon. member intends the word to be taken in the literal sense he should be called upon to justify his statement and give some evidence for bringing such a charge against the administration of the Railway Department.

Mr. MORRISH: He meant service detectives!

Colonel ONSLOW: If he meant that, he should say so. Debates in this House are conducted in the English language, and it is just as well that hon. members should understand the meaning of words which they use in this House.

Mr. FINGLETON: I do not know that the hon. member knows so much about it, anyhow!

Colonel ONSLOW: Perhaps not, but I refer the hon. member to the dictionary. Beyond his concluding sentence, the hon. member's remarks throughout were of a

[*Mr. Fingleton.*]

somewhat diverting description. He told us that we should get to the root of the whole evil and used many words to show that in his opinion there was something very wrong. I ventured an interjection that he should indicate the matters that were wrong, and as the result of my interjection and an interjection I think by the leader of the House, it appears that there are three motor-cars being used by the Railway Department. If the three motors which are being used by the Railway Department have made all the trouble which has apparently arisen, if all this curtailment of the railway service is due to the Chief Commissioner taking an occasional joy-ride in one of these motor-cars, I should like to know what these cars are costing. The hon. member might have given us some information on the subject.

Mr. FINGLETON: The hon. member would not understand it if I gave it!

Colonel ONSLOW: That is very likely, but I think there is sufficient understanding in this House, quite apart from my understanding or even the understanding of the hon. member, to be able to grasp what is the cost of running these three motor-cars. That was the only instance which the hon. member could give, and it was dragged out of him by two interjections. He said that we ought to get to the root of the whole evil. He was asked to indicate the root of the whole evil, but he certainly did not do so beyond saying that it was within the knowledge of most hon. members. I submit to the common-sense of hon. members that when a public man gets up in this House and talks about getting to the root of the evil, and gives us to understand that he has knowledge that something very wrong is going on, he should, in the interests of the public, and in the fulfilment of his public duty, point out what is going wrong in this great business undertaking. He talked a lot about reducing the salaries of higher-paid officials. I take it that the higher-paid officials will always be the last to have their salaries reduced, for the reason that the higher-paid officials, if they are competent to fill their posts, are much more difficult to replace than lower-paid officials.

Mr. FINGLETON: That shows the hon. member does not know what he is talking about!

Colonel ONSLOW: I do know what I am talking about. If a highly-paid official is competent to fill his post, he is much more difficult to replace than a man in a lower grade of the service. If the hon. member carried out his peculiar line of argument, he would probably prove to his own satisfaction that the railway service could be carried out without any highly-paid officials at all. There is an old saying that it is a bad state of affairs when the tail is wagging the dog. The dog has always to wag the tail in a properly constituted dog.

An HON. MEMBER: If the tail is cut off?

Colonel ONSLOW: If it is cut off we would arrive at the position of having a curtailed dog, and I understand the trouble is that we are having a curtailed railway service. Hon. members are not showing a proper appreciation of their public duty when they carp at the Railway Commissioners in times of difficulty such as this because the commissioners have to reduce the railway service. The greater portion of our public debt has been incurred in establishing the railway service, and the prosperity of the country is intimately bound up with the proper administration of the railways. If the railways are to pay any wages whatever, they have to earn those wages. If the railway employees, highly or lowly placed, are to be paid any wages, those wages have to be earned by the railway service. When the people responsible for the running of the railways inform us that the railways are not earning sufficient money to pay working expenses, something has to be done to bring the railways into a paying condition, and this is not the right time to carp at the administration of the railways, which are beginning to feel the effects of what is going to be, I fear, at some time an undoubtedly distressful condition of affairs. I think we have in the present Railway Commissioners men who are reasonably capable of carrying out the duties of their office, and I am quite sure the responsible Minister is satisfied in his own mind that those officials are carrying out their duties properly. If we find anything

going wrong, if we find any really serious incapacity or dereliction of duty on the part of the Railway Commissioners, the Minister in charge of the department is the man to bring it before the House. I submit that this motion is an unnecessary one, that it is likely to hamper the administration of the railway service, and can do no possible good to the public or the public service of this state.

Mr. G. CANN (Canterbury) [8.49]: During this discussion I have noticed that country members run away with the idea that this curtailment of the railway service applies particularly to the country districts. I consider that the metropolitan area is suffering just as much in this direction as are the country districts. The residents in the area I represent have a real grievance in connection with the curtailment of the train services. On the North Shore line one or two trains have been cut out, on the main suburban line two trains, and on the Illawarra line one train, whereas on the Sydenham to Bankstown line fourteen trains per day have been knocked off, and for a considerable period of the day an hourly service has been substituted for a half-hourly service. There may have been too many non-paying trains on the last-named line, but I think that, as compared with other lines, it is not getting a fair deal. In this case there is no question of a falling-off in the wheat or wool traffic, and no question of drought or anything of that kind. As a matter of fact, I am given to understand that there has been no decrease in regard to population or in any other way, but that ever since the war broke out there has been an increase in the traffic. In cutting down the services in such a savage way the commissioners are likely to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. Where there is an increase in the traffic the commissioners ought to be prepared to grant extra facilities, and they should have proceeded in this direction on the Sydenham to Bankstown section. I did not know that the motion was to be brought before us, and I had no intention of mentioning this matter, but I consider that when an hon. member has a grievance, whether it be against the Railway Commissioners or anyone else, he has a perfect right to voice it. At the

same time I agree with the Acting-Premier that the Minister in charge of the department should have reasonable notice. I do not intend to let this grievance rest. No doubt deputations will come along from the district I represent, and I hope they will be able to convince the commissioners that they ought to show special consideration to the people on the Bankstown line, and that by so doing they will assist in making good the deficiencies on other lines.

Mr. FERN (Cobar) [8.53]: Although it may be a matter for regret that this matter should have been brought forward in the absence of the Minister for Railways, and also in the absence of proper notice to the Minister temporarily in charge of the department, it is as well that the grievances of hon. members should be ventilated. I always consider that the observations of the hon. member for Lyndhurst are worthy of attention, but he surprised me to-night when he said that no hon. member ought to bring up a question of this kind and condemn the action of the commissioners in this time of war and drought. He said that we should be prepared to put up with some sort of set-back, and should not expect the same efficient service in time of drought as is usually in operation. I regard this argument as faulty. Now is the time to give to the people who have furnished revenue in the past, and who are unable to do so at present, the encouragement they so richly deserve. If it were possible to do so, now is the time to reduce freights and rates rather than to reduce the public conveniences. I cannot follow the argument of the hon. member when he says that we should be prepared to bow our knees to the commissioners because of the drought in the land. I would point out that neither the war nor the drought were with us when Ministers came down with a proposal to increase tram fares on Sundays and to charge an extra halfpenny on the second sections of the various tram journeys. The argument then used was that the tramways were not paying, and it was necessary to make them pay. Now that the Chief Railway Commissioner has come forward with his proposal to cut down the railway services, he mentions as the most important of the reasons for

[*Mr. G. Cann.*

his action that owing to the increased wages which the commissioners are called upon to pay to the railway servants the services have to be reduced and economy has to be exercised. I would not say that the Railway Commissioners had it in their mind that their action would be something in the nature of a slap back at the workers, but it would almost appear that the commissioners resented the fact that the railway servants were able to go to the courts and secure a decent living wage, and were going to make the public suffer for it and to bring home to them the enormity of allowing their servants to obtain increased wages.

So far as the war is concerned, some little time ago we heard the leader of the Opposition and the brilliant critic from Bondi stating that we should show the world that there was not a tremor of excitement in the community, and that our motto was "business as usual." The hon. member for Bondi does not now urge that we should carry on "business as usual," but he is prepared to regard the war as an excuse for the reduction of the railway services. From the producers' point of view it would be a good thing if the motto "business as usual" were acted upon and they were allowed their railway services as usual. It is remarkable how quickly the Railway Commissioners will reduce a service. For years and years the service on the Nyngan to Cobar line returned to the Railway Commissioners a clear £112,000 per annum, but as soon as the Cobar mine was closed down and the commissioners saw that their pound of flesh was not likely to be forthcoming they reduced the service. They said, "Hang the convenience of the public." They paid no regard to the fact that Cobar did not at once lose the greater part of its population, and that there were a large number of persons who had interests not directly associated with the mine. As soon as the mine closed down the service was reduced to three days per week on the ground that the line could not be expected to produce as much revenue as when the mine was at work. The commissioners forgot that the pastoralists, business men, and others, apart from those engaged in the mine, had helped to bring into their coffers £112,000 per annum.

year after year, and they did not give one moment's consideration to the convenience of the public. The convenience of the public and the building up of the interests of the state generally should be the primary considerations in connection with the administration of our railways, but at present such is not the case. The commissioners want to run the railways so that at the end of every year they may be able to show a huge profit, and no doubt if we could always show a huge profit in connection with all our concerns our lives would be very much more happy than they are. The time has arrived not altogether to pillory the Railway Commissioners—I should not like them to accept my argument to-night as being directed against them and their present administration; they cannot help themselves nor their administration, apparently; the Government have no control over them, and the members of the House have no control over them; the man in the street has no control over them, and they appear to be like a cork drifting along a channel; they have no right to adopt too much initiative, and the Government have no right to help them by initiative of their own—so, without pillorying them at all, it appears to me that the time is ripe for the House to seriously consider the wisdom not of putting great profits into the pockets of the Railway Commissioners and into the consolidated revenue, but to run those railway lines for the convenience of the public during this particularly trying time. Even if we are going to lose money for a time, might it not be wise? How many men in private life go into a venture prepared to accept huge losses for years with the hope of getting the money back in the future?

AN HON. MEMBER: How do you propose to get the money back in this case?

MR. FERN: The private investors feel sure they are going to get their money back, and so are we going to get ours back. We, as a Parliament, tell the people to go on the land. Is the settler whom we put on the land anywhere from 40 to 100 miles away from a railway any good to the state? No. But we tell him to go on the land, and as soon as he and others make a settlement we will complete the railway and carry the produce

to market. Those railways have been built. But now under the reduced timetable the Railway Commissioners are not giving those men the facilities they should have. If railways are to be built by the state and not used to their utmost capacity it is unwise, and the best way out of such a difficulty would be to build no railways at all. If we are going to build railways for the development of the country we should, even at a small loss, keep them going and give the settlers every chance to develop the country. How do we know we are not going to get our money back? If we encourage settlement, as we do, we should surely get our money back. As to regarding it always from an actuarial point of view I think it is a mistake. I do not want to carp at the Railway Commissioners. I should not have risen but for some of the remarks of the Bondi critic and others who make it almost impossible to deal with this question without indulging in carping criticism. The hon. member for Bondi said that in matters like this, even if there is anything wrong, an ordinary hon. member should not take action, but should wait for a Minister to introduce the matter. Well, sometimes Ministers will and sometimes Ministers will not; but if all Ministers find that a doctrine of that nature is accepted by everybody, then in nine cases out of ten a Minister's inclination will be to say, "I will not." That has been my experience. The more rope you give a Minister the more he will take. If a department—especially this curious department where the Minister is not directly responsible—does something of which the country disapproves, it is the duty of every hon. member concerned to bring the matter before the House and have it thrashed out. In this matter the real question that should engage the attention of the House is not whether these lines are paying now or not, but the wisdom of maintaining conveniences for the settlers who are living in the affected districts, even if the state is going to lose a little money. Whenever I have an opportunity I shall wait for no Minister to get in. I find that the Ministers are but human after all; a Minister is somewhat of a plagiarist, and sometimes a plagiarist of the first water.

You mention a good idea to a Minister and he will steal it at once and make it his. So every hon. member should bring his own ideas before the House, because each individual member is the mouthpiece of his constituents. That reminds me of a remark that fell from the hon. member for Lyndhurst. He said that the hon. member for Wagga Wagga should have come armed with all information on a matter of this kind, and he assumed that the very fact of the hon. member's bringing the matter before the House showed that he regarded the action of the Chief Commissioner as wrong. He should not have assumed that at all. The hon. member for Wagga Wagga, like every other hon. member, is the mouthpiece of his constituents. If they are aggrieved it is their convenience which must be considered and not that of the Railway Commissioners. If we were always to stand upon precedent there would never be any progress. If we had followed the lines laid down by hon. members in this Chamber fifty years ago we should not be so far ahead as we are now. It has only been the constant agitation of the constituents and their various representatives that has brought about the changes which have been made and which mark the difference between the attitude of hon. members now and fifty years ago. It is idle for the hon. member to say we should assume something wrong about the Railway Commissioners—that we know they did wrong. Nothing of the sort. We come here because our constituents are highly indignant at the treatment they are receiving; as producers of New South Wales they cannot come on the floor of the House and show their indignation, and so they say to their representatives, "We are holding indignation meetings throughout the length and breadth of our electorate; we think we have been treated very shabbily; the war has been played off upon us; we are asked to send our sons to give their lives in defence of the Empire; we are asked to bear all the inconveniences of the drought; we are asked to submit to the various losses that fall on the primary producer in order to make the price of the loaf of bread cheaper for the rest of the community—we are asked to do all this, and yet you are not giving us

[*Mr. Fern.*

any encouragement at all in this time of stress and trouble, and we call on you, our representative, to go on the floor of the House and give vent to our indignation and say to the Government that if they have any control over the Railway Commissioners they must redress our grievances, and if not, the quicker the Railway Act is amended the better. You are our mouthpiece, and as we have grievances we look to you to redress them." I hope something will be done if only in the direction of giving serious consideration to the necessity of amending the Railway Act and so assisting the development of the country by studying the convenience of the primary producer.

Mr. T. BROWN (Lachlan) [9.9]: Unfortunately the Lachlan electorate is one of those outback electorates that has been very seriously affected by the change of policy on the part of the Railway Commissioners. The railway extends from Temora out to Wyalong, and almost from its very inception the country has been served by a six-days a week train service. Suddenly the people get notice that this service is to be reduced to tri-weekly, which change I understand came into operation last Monday. Therefore, where for years past they have been accustomed to a six-days a week service, from Monday onwards, indefinitely as far as they know, they are asked to be satisfied with three trains a week. Hon. members can readily understand that a developing district such as that is very seriously affected by such a reduction of its service. The people of Wyalong and West Wyalong were naturally very indignant when this notice came along, and they held meetings. They got up petitions. I presented to the Railway Commissioners petitions bearing, I think, between 400 and 500 signatures from the people of Wyalong, West Wyalong, and Barmedman, and they sent a deputation to interview the Chief Commissioner and place their position before him. That deputation waited upon Mr. Harper last Monday. He received us very kindly, and took the opportunity of taking us into his confidence, and disclosing to us the reasons that led to this particular reduction, and I feel sure that the gentlemen who listened to the presentment of the case from the standpoint of the com-

missioners went away from that deputation very much more satisfied that there were some substantial grounds for this reduction than they felt when they entered into his presence. I do not propose to speak here as a carping critic of the commissioners' methods. I recognise that at the present time—for the first time I think in the history of our railways—we have at the head of the railways men who have been reared in the service. Mr. Harper is an old railway official, and with him are associated Messrs. Richardson and Fraser, who have given years of service and graduated from lower positions up to the high position they occupy, and I do not believe that either the Chief Commissioner or his associate commissioners desire to initiate a policy of retrogression in place of one of progress. I believe that it is their desire to place the railway service on a basis of efficiency, and to secure for it the best possible standing in the community, and I refuse to believe that they are going to associate their term of management with a policy that would be injurious to the community as a whole, and to the railway service itself. Mr. Harper told the deputation I had the honor of introducing to him that he was faced with two alternatives. He said that the railway revenue, on account of war and drought, had fallen off seriously. I know that in the particular district represented by that deputation, the Railway Commissioners twelve months ago were hard set to find sufficient rolling-stock to cart away the wheat yield. That yield was not an exceptionally heavy one on the average, but the area that had been placed under crop was so large that there was an enormous return of wheat all along the line. This year, whatever carting the commissioner does, is not in carting away wheat that has been produced locally, but in carting wheat to the district for the purpose of planting new lands for the coming season. That represents an immense shortage. The same thing applies to our wool. On account of the war, a great deal of the wool has not been sent away from the stations and the farms. Most of it is still there awaiting favourable market conditions. The same thing applies to mining other than gold-mining. Most of the mines have been closed down, for the

reason that at present they cannot find a market for their output. All along the line, during the last six months, owing to drought and war conditions, there has been a very large shortage of revenue on the railways. That has affected not only the heavy traffic, but also the passenger traffic, very seriously. The Chief Railway Commissioner told the deputation that he had to face the alternative of either continuing the service up to the present standard and piling up a big debt against the future, or reducing the service to something like reasonable limits, to meet the needs of the community in its present stress and trial, and avoid the piling up of a big debt, so that when good times come along there will be an opportunity of working the railway service to the very best advantage. I think that that presentment of the case must appeal to every reasonable man who has the future welfare of the country at heart. In the present dearth of traffic it would be an unwise policy to continue services in such a state of efficiency as better seasons would warrant and thereby pile up large deficiencies to be wiped off in better seasons. Mr. Harper told that deputation, and I presume the other deputations that waited upon him, that when a rush of traffic came it would be dealt with right away. There would be no holding up of traffic along that line, and when the conditions improved in such a way as to warrant a daily service, that service would be restored. He said that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to have the honor of restoring the service to the old state of efficiency. Having gone before the Chief Commissioner and had a look at his side of the question, I do not feel disposed to speak here to-night as a carping critic on the administration of the Railway Commissioners in this particular respect. At the same time, I am not going to complain of the hon. member who moved the adjournment of the House. I think that the policy indicated is so drastic and far-reaching that it is a good thing both for the House and the country to have the matter ventilated from every standpoint—from the standpoint of the people affected, from that of the Railway Commissioners charged with the administration of the

service, and from that of the Government who have to see to the making good of any shortage that may come about. I think that the discussion that has taken place to-night will not be wasted, but will indicate what the difficulties of the position are. I feel sure that our people are sufficiently patriotic and self-denying to shoulder any burdens that may come along as the result of drought or war. They will be prepared to bear their fair share. What they object to is to be unduly and unnecessarily loaded. It is for the Government and the Railway Commissioners to say whether this retrenchment is fair and reasonable, or whether it has gone to an extreme that can be adversely criticised. I am not prepared to express an opinion on that point. I rose mainly to point out to the Government and, through them, to the commissioners, that one of the great inconveniences that will be suffered by the districts in question will be the curtailment of their mail service. Those districts are receiving a mail service six days a week and all the little country centres for long distances out—extending right away to Lake Cudgellico and possibly further than that—are depending upon the mail train services to keep them in touch with civilisation.

Mr. STUART-ROBERTSON: You do not want their convenience to be served at the expense of the general taxpayers!

Mr. T. BROWN: No, I do not ask that their convenience shall be served at the expense of the general taxpayers. I am not adversely criticising the reduction of the train services, but in some other countries—I do not know why it should not be done here—a motor service has been instituted on alternate days, especially for mail deliveries. That could be run at considerably reduced cost, and the people could still have their postal facilities in those towns and in way-back places as they have them at present. If such postal facilities were provided, a great deal of the adverse criticism and sense of loss would disappear. It would then operate only as far as passenger and goods traffic is concerned, and the Railway Commissioners' statement is that as soon as traffic improves sufficiently to warrant the daily service, it will be restored. The deputation which waited

[Mr. T. Brown.]

on Mr. Harper and received his reply waited upon the Deputy Postmaster-General, and brought under his notice the inconvenience under which residents would be placed by this curtailment of the mail service. The Postal Department, of course, has no control over railways; all they can do is to substitute either a motor lorry or coach service. A coach service is a slow and antiquated mode of transit, and will not adequately meet the position. A motor lorry service would do more to meet it, and I do not see why a properly-equipped motor service on the railway cannot be run by the commissioners, in conjunction with the postal authorities, which would give a mail service on alternate days to the train service. Such a motor service could be initiated and carried on at a not very heavy cost to the department—a cost which would mainly be met by the Postal Department.

Question resolved in the negative.

RIVER MURRAY WATERS BILL.

Resolved (on motion by Mr. ASHFORD):

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 ratify and provide for carrying out an agreement entered into between the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Premiers of the States of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia, respecting the River Murray and Lake Victoria and other waters; and for other purposes.

RURAL TENANTS IMPROVEMENTS BILL.

Resolved (on motion by Mr. ASHFORD):

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 provide for compensation to tenants for improvements and other matters connected with rural holdings, and for unreasonable termination or refusal to renew such tenancies; to amend the law with regard to buildings and fixtures erected and affixed by such tenants; for the determination of certain disputes between such tenants and their landlords; to amend certain acts; and for purposes consequent thereon or incidental thereto.

DAIRY INDUSTRY BILL.

Resolved (on motion by Mr. ASHFORD):

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 regulate the manufacture, sale, storage, transit, and export of dairy produce, including margarine, and for prescribing standards for the same; to provide for the testing, blending, mixing, and grading of cream, and the basis of payment for cream; for the grading and branding of butter; for purposes consequent thereon or incidental thereto; to amend the Dairies Supervision Act, 1901, and certain other acts.

ABORIGINES PROTECTION AMENDING BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. J. H. CANN (Sturt), Colonial Secretary [9.26], moved:

That this bill be now read a second time. He said: In moving the second reading of this bill, I may say that it is one of those machinery measures which have been talked of for a long time, and one which has been urged by the Aborigines Protection Board for a number of years. The main principle embodied in the proposed amendment is actually to empower the board to take the place of the parents. Without dilating on the matter in detail, practically the entire principle involved is to place the board *in loco parentis*.

Mr. MCGARRY: To steal the child away from the parents!

Mr. J. H. CANN: No, the hon. member's suggestion is wrong. It is not a question of stealing the children, but of saving them. I have certain information before me now, but without using names or giving details I wish to inform the House that there are at the present time in our various settlements a number of half-caste children, of ages up to 12 years, actually housed with parents who are leading immoral lives. In some instances these are widows of aborigines and deserted aboriginal women. The moral status of these aborigines is very different from that of white people. A young girl 13 years of age may be an asset to an aboriginal woman, and unless we empower the board to save these children from lives of that description the result will be that children are kept with a mother who is actually leading an immoral life. We establish by this amending bill an opportunity for both the children and the parents to be freed from the operation of the provision, and from apprenticeship by the board if they choose to apply to the Children's Court,

which is practically a machinery provision which at present applies to other children. The reason why we cannot make a provision of this kind apply in this particular instance is because it is necessary to prove neglect; if the aboriginal child happens to be decently clad or apparently looked after it is very difficult indeed to show that the half-caste or aboriginal child is actually in a neglected condition, and therefore it is impossible to succeed in the court. There are other instances in which a child has been taken across the border when it has been anticipated that action would be taken because of the neglect of the child; the latter has been left in another state until the agitation has somewhat died down, and then brought back again. In the instances where, by consent of both parents and children, the board has been enabled to act in the way they will be able to act under this amended provision, the results have been highly satisfactory, as I think any member of the board will admit. I am sorry to say that, generally speaking, the rising generation of these people are mostly half-castes; very few pure bloods are left; and the half-castes remain in the camp to be brought down to the same standard as the aborigines. The result is that, instead of these children being given a fair chance in life and reared in such a way as will enable them to merge into citizens amongst the white people, they are left in such a degraded position that they will never be able to free themselves from their environment unless we make a special effort to give them the opportunity. If we give the board the powers I am seeking to bestow under this amending bill these half-caste children will be given a chance to better themselves, and instead of the Government being called upon to maintain stations all over the state for the protection of the aborigines, the aborigines will soon become a negligible quantity and the young people will merge into the present civilisation and become worthy citizens. I am asking that power be given to the board to enable these children to have a chance, and I am hopeful that under the act as amended there will be an improvement in the administration.

Question proposed.

Mr. JAMES (Goulburn) [9.32]: This bill is one which has been advocated by many members of my own party as well as by many members of the community. In dealing with aborigines we have to recognise that we are dealing with a class altogether different from the white children, and we must not forget that it is necessary there should be some protection of the half-caste child when it is taken from its parents. As has been pointed out by the Minister, the aboriginal children are brought up in such an environment that in the majority of cases in the camps—and I say this of my own knowledge—an illegitimate child very often leads the same kind of life as its mother did. Anyone who has had to do with the courts will know that owing to the life these children are compelled to live up to the age of 14 they are given to the very habits that we hope to cure by a measure of this kind. A most important provision in the amending bill is that which gives the board power to deal with children under the age of 14. That provision is lacking in the act. I very well recollect years ago the hon. member for Clarence moving an amendment for this very purpose. The hon. member moved that children under 14 years of age be brought under the provisions of the Aborigines Protection Act. That is done here. Those children who are of age will get all the protection necessary under this law. Other provisions are necessary with regard to our own children. We must all admit that in the case of the black child it is better that the board should have absolute power than that we should depend on any apprenticeship act which prescribes the conditions under which children shall be apprenticed. The black children labour under disadvantages which the white children will never labour under, and it is necessary that someone should stand *in loco parentis*, with authority to look after their best interests. This act is for the benefit of the surviving aborigines and the younger generation. In order to prevent any ill-usage or harm to these children the bill wisely provides that the parents of any children who may be taken away can appeal to a properly constituted court to see if that removal is justified.

The measure contains provisions to protect the interests both of the child and the parents, and I can assure the Minister that there will be no opposition from this side of the House.

Mr. MCGARRY (Murrumbidgee) [9.34]: Whilst all that has been said by the Colonial Secretary and the deputy-leader of the Opposition may be correct there is still a great need for some protection to be given to those people who are the parents of these unfortunate children. The argument used by the Colonial Secretary which most impressed itself upon me was the hope that by this measure the camps of aborigines would cease and that the younger generation would gradually merge into the general community. There is no desire for the white community to become a mixed race.

Mr. J. H. CANN: I do not want to see a mixed race created, but I want the half-caste child to develop the same self-reliance as we expect from the white person!

Mr. MCGARRY: I do not know whether the Minister and those who have advised him in this matter expect them to be self-reliant.

Mr. J. H. CANN: I do expect it!

Mr. MCGARRY: I do not; that is where we join issue. Apart from the interest of the community, from what may be regarded as a social or civilised viewpoint, there is something much more serious to be considered, and that is the question of separating the child from its parents. To me the separating of a swallow from its parents is a cruelty.

Mr. JAMES: Would not the hon. member take a child away from parents not fit to keep it?

Mr. MCGARRY: That power exists now, and it applies to the white race apart altogether from the aborigines. There is a camp in my district, one of the largest in the state. I take considerable interest in it, and without digressing from the question before the House let me say that it would be well if the Government provided decent protection of some kind for the unfortunate people concentrated in that camp instead of introducing a bill of this kind. I have heard of a measure of this kind talked of for years, but I never expected to see it

submitted to Parliament. What does it mean? These people are unfortunate because, in the interests of so-called civilisation, we have over-run their country and taken away their domain. We now propose to perpetrate further acts of cruelty upon them by separating the children from the parents. The mothers and fathers of these children love them just as much as the birds and animals of the bush care for their offspring, and hon. members would not perpetrate a cruelty of this kind even upon an animal.

Mr. JAMES: Neither will the board!

Mr. MCGARRY: We hear a lot of talk about the board. The board means the recommendation of an official who may be prejudiced. I have taken considerable interest in recent years in the aborigines in the Darling Point camp. I have conversed with them whenever opportunity has presented and endeavoured to ascertain their sentiments, and I am convinced that the love they have for their children is as sincere and genuine as the love of the white race.

An HON. MEMBER: More so in some cases!

Mr. MCGARRY: It is just as sincere—I will not go beyond that. I have also some knowledge and experience of the operations of boards in boarding out children of the white race, and I for one never want to see the cruelties perpetrated upon the aborigines which years ago were perpetrated upon the children of white parents. Twenty-five years ago, when I was working in the bush, I met many shocking instances of the treatment meted out by mean people in the interior to children boarded out with them. What is to become of these half-caste children who have less protection from the community than the children of white parents? We are told that the parents have an appeal. What does an appeal mean? Suppose a poor aboriginal woman goes into court, who will listen to her? Who will defend her and submit her case? We may have humane magistrates upon the bench, as I know we have in the interior, but who will put the case of these people?

Mr. JAMES: The magistrate always hears the case, and puts the questions himself!

Mr. MCGARRY: He does his best, I admit, but if the facts are not brought out and an injustice is done what protection have these children and their parents? To my mind some better method should be adopted. There should be some method of direct control over these children, but the child should not be separated from the mother. It is the mean settler who wants to get absolute control over these children to make them work for him. He is assisted by the mean policeman, who depends for promotion on the mean settler and the mean squatter. They make use of the policeman and every other official who are dependent on their favour, in order to get control of the children. It is not much use wasting my breath in opposing the bill, but, however I may be sneered at, I will give expression to my opinion. The Colonial Secretary's Department should make a thorough investigation into this question. It should go into the social aspect of it.

Mr. J. H. CANN: The more we do, the more necessity we find for such a measure!

Mr. MCGARRY: You are depending on official reports from the Police Department, but surely there are higher ideals than official reports. Even if it costs a little more to make the commission more efficient, the expense should be incurred. Land should be set apart for agriculture and vegetable growing. Instruct the aborigines in the methods of production. Give them an opportunity to produce what they can from the land. Give them a proper intellectual training, but allow them to remain on the stations. If the Government would spend a few thousand pounds a year in that way they would do much better than by making criminals of these unfortunate waifs.

Mr. J. H. CANN: We are not making criminals of them; we want to make men and women of them!

Mr. MCGARRY: You can never do it by a bill of this kind.

Mr. J. H. CANN: Everything you talk about is in operation to-day!

Mr. MCGARRY: You have nothing in operation. You give them a little bit of tucker.

Mr. J. H. CANN: I will give you a few facts presently!

Mr. MCGARRY: I could answer all your facts if I had the opportunity. These people should be trained in methods of production to enable them to satisfy their wants from the soil. They should also be trained morally. In some instances a school teacher of inferior moral character has been sent to them. I know things which have taken place which should have come under the notice of the Colonial Secretary's Department. I do not want to go into details, but suffice it to say that men who have been sent to give moral training to the aborigines have themselves been morally defective. At this late hour I have no hope of doing much good, but I would appeal to the House to stay its hand and not pass the bill without examination.

Mr. J. STOREY: What is the hon. member's real objection to the bill?

Mr. MCGARRY: My real objection to the bill is that it proposes that the state should take the place of the parent.

Mr. J. STOREY: In certain cases, I understand!

Mr. MCGARRY: Wherever an official says it ought to be done.

Mr. J. STOREY: Wherever they are of opinion that a child should be removed from immoral parents!

Mr. MCGARRY: That means the opinion of an official, perhaps some policeman who may be in league with the squatter of the district who wants to get absolute control of a child and use him as a slave without paying him wages.

Mr. J. STOREY: I thought the hon. member was in favour of some part of the bill!

Mr. MCGARRY: I am in favour of assisting the stations in the way of teaching children the methods of production, and instilling into them ideals of citizenship, but that can only be done by allowing the child to remain with the parent. Improve the parent if you can, but you will never improve the child by taking it away from the parent. Would hon. members advocate that with the white race? We only do that when the child is a criminal; and we do not expect as high a standard of morals in the case of the poor aborigines as we do in the case of white people.

Colonel ONSLOW: Have these people votes?

[Mr. McGarry.]

Mr. MCGARRY: Not 5 per cent. of them have votes. Only those who work on stations and do not remain in camp have votes. If they remain in camp they get charitable assistance, and so they have no vote. The hon. member perhaps thinks I am speaking on this question because the aborigines have votes, but the question of votes does not give me the slightest concern. I have no idea of making political capital out of this question, nor any desire of self-advancement. I speak from my knowledge of the conditions under which the children are imprisoned. The meanest person in the interior is the farmer who looks for a state child. He will not pay wages. When he does get such a child he will not feed it. When I was carrying my swag twenty-five years ago, and travelling in the interior, I met these children by the roadside. They were hunted by the police, and by those individuals to whom they had been apprenticed.

Mr. J. STOREY: It appears from the report that of 6,915 aboriginals 5,054 are half-castes, and yet the hon. member does not want protection for them!

Mr. MCGARRY: I am not dealing with that at all. I do not care what the caste or colour may be; I am speaking from a broad humanitarian standpoint. We should not take the offspring from the parent.

Mr. J. H. CANN: The hon. member talks as if I want to separate every child from its parent!

Mr. MCGARRY: This bill means that.

Mr. J. H. CANN: It does not!

Mr. MCGARRY: This bill means that practically every aboriginal child will be taken away from its mother in cases where a squatter wants a child or where an official wants a child to be separated from the mother. It means, broadly speaking, the breaking up of the camps.

Mr. J. H. CANN: It means that where a mother is leading an immoral life the child shall be saved!

Mr. MCGARRY: In how many cases can it be proved that that is not the fact?

Mr. MORRISH: How does the hon. member account for all these half-castes?

Mr. MCGARRY: That adds to my argument. Most of these aboriginal mothers may be regarded as leading an

immoral life, but is there no way of dealing with the position other than that of robbing the mothers of their children? Can we not devise methods of improving them? Can we not find methods of raising them to our ideals, giving them moral training, and showing them how to produce from the land? Surely some method can be devised of dealing with these few thousands of a declining race at a little cost other than the cruel method of allowing a few officials to separate the child from the mother. When we spend £18,000,000 or £20,000,000 a year, surely we can provide £20,000 or £30,000 a year in trying to improve the position of the race, rather than making the children prisoners, because that is what this bill means. Mean people will get these children—mean, cringing, and crawling people who will not pay wages to men, and who will not keep the children clean or in a proper condition. We are going to hand over these children to merciless, grasping, cruel people, who are looking for cheap labour all the time. That is what we are going to do, and shame upon the Government I am obliged to support, who would adopt the contemptible method of acting in this way! We should endeavour to bring these people up to a higher standard, and spend £20,000 a year in order to see if something cannot be done to improve them in their morals and to give them lessons in economics. I have been amongst these aborigines and have found them charitable and kind enough even to divide a meal when they could not spare it. The manner in which we treat them is no credit to us. We sneer at them and demoralise them, but surely while that may be done in the interior of the country by mean, contemptible individuals, we, as a state, ought to adopt some standard to which we could elevate them, rather than make them criminals, as will be done by this measure.

Mr. McFARLANE (Clarence) [9·54]: I can quite believe that the hon. member for Murrumbidgee is actuated by the best of motives in the observations which he has made. The hon. member pointed out cases of hardship which might possibly arise if this bill be passed, but he has not made a single suggestion as to how these unfortunate people should be treated. Statistics clearly show that

legislation is absolutely necessary in order to save aborigines from a downward course. There are two aboriginal homes in my district, and previous to the passing of the 1909 act, the aborigines were in a neglected condition. The board were without the necessary power to properly deal with them. The act of 1909 gave them additional powers, and I have no doubt that very good results have followed from the operation of the act. Some very important defects in the act have been discovered, and this amending bill has for its object the giving of additional powers to the board. The only way in which this question can be effectively dealt with is by giving the board the fullest possible power. Unless that be done, all our legislation will go by the board and be non-effective. If there was ever a time when a measure of this description should be passed, it is the present. The members of the board are gentlemen who have a full knowledge of the conditions of the aborigines throughout the state, and the hon. member for Murrumbidgee need not be afraid about reports from officials to which he has referred. I know that the members of the board have travelled throughout the state and made themselves personally acquainted with the conditions of the aborigines.

Mr. J. H. CANN: Not one of my officials report to me. All the reports which I receive come through the board!

Mr. McFARLANE: That is so. I believe that the aborigines will be perfectly safe in the hands of the board. The only possible risk there is in passing a measure of this description is that cases of hardship might arise if the board were so short-sighted as to take children away from their parents and send them to some remote locality. In such cases parents would not have the opportunity perhaps of ever seeing their children again, and another important point is, that if you take an aboriginal away from his native place, he will never be contented. He will always have a hankering to return to the place where he was brought up. The object of establishing homes in different parts was that the natives might be cared for in the localities in which they were reared. Now, with regard to the children, it is not to be supposed for a

moment that the board would take charge of young children except they were satisfied that the parents were immoral. I consider that the board should have the fullest powers to deal with children in cases where they are exposed to serious dangers in undesirable surroundings. I take it that this measure will give the board the powers necessary to enable them to deal with cases such as those to which I have referred, and I have not the slightest doubt that it will have good results. The hon. member for Goulburn pointed out that under the old act the boards were absolutely powerless to deal with the children of immoral parents if such children were under the age of 14 years, and anyone considering the matter for a moment must come to the conclusion that unless the board can take control of children under the age of 14 years of age, they can do little or no good. The bill will remedy this defect, and will enable the board to take charge of children of any age if they think it desirable to do so. This and the other amendments proposed will, I think, make the act as perfect as possible, and I feel sure that the measure will commend itself to the good sense of the House.

Mr. THROWER (Macquarie) [10.3]: This measure is somewhat outside the ordinary scope of our legislation, and deals with one of the most important questions that could engage our attention. I understand that the bill has emanated from the Hon. E. W. Fosbery, late Inspector-General of Police, as the mouthpiece of the Aborigines Protection Board, the members of which ask for certain additional powers. In the first place, before we enter seriously upon the consideration of legislation of this character, we should bear in mind the predominant characteristics of the aborigines, who are a difficult race to deal with. We know that if there is one characteristic predominating above all others among the aborigines it is the love of freedom, and that in the second place they have a very strong inclination to roam about. There are two aboriginal homes in the electorate I represent—one at Dubbo and one at Wellington—and I believe the management of these institutions is all that could be desired so far as the idea of the Legislature is concerned. But one serious

[Mr. McFarlane.

difficulty which was pointed out by Mr. Donaldson, who formerly represented the electorate of Wynyard in this House, is that many of the full-blooded aborigines object to being forced to live under a communal system. The better type of aborigine—and there are many men of this class in the Dubbo district—work regularly at shearing throughout the western district, and compare more than favorably with many white men. Many of them have fairly large banking accounts and live decently with their wives and families, and strongly object to living under a communal system. The Government have set apart certain mission camps in which all the aborigines—good, bad, and indifferent—full-blooded and half-caste, are thrown together. There is no provision for any division or classification of the men and women, and there is no hope at all for those who desire to live up to modern ideas. In some of the houses of the better class aborigines you will find sewing machines of the latest and most up-to-date type, which the women are skilled in using, and which prove of great assistance to them in making clothes for their children. But the people who have nice comfortable homes are subjected to great annoyance owing to the fact that half-castes and sometimes white men make periodical raids upon them.

Mr. J. STOREY: That does not prevail everywhere!

Mr. THROWER: I am speaking of facts within my own knowledge. Then again, as regards the cultivation of the land. The Dubbo home is situated in a very desirable locality on the banks of the Macquarie River, where, by the expenditure of a few pounds, provision could be made for irrigation and the growth of vegetables for the use of the aborigines. But at present those men who are prepared to go in for cultivation have no encouragement offered them, because they are not allowed to fence off a plot of land and have no right to grow anything for their own use. Even in regard to water supply the only means provided for obtaining water from the river is an obsolete apparatus. A piece of wire is run down for a distance of about 160 feet from the bank to the bed of the river, and along this wire is drawn up the whole of the water required for use on the

station. It is highly desirable that provision should be made for giving the better class of men small plots of land, and providing them with small irrigation plants, so that they may be encouraged to cultivate the soil.

Colonel ONSLOW: The hon. member is advocating a freehold tenure!

Mr. THROWER: No, I am not. I am advocating a leasehold tenure to be held by virtue of residence and industry.

In regard to the farming out of the children, through Mr. Donaldson I had the privilege of interviewing a girl of 16 or 17 years of age, who, without doubt, was merely wasting her time at the settlement. But the difficulty is that very few people in the towns will employ these aboriginal girls as domestics. Their colour is against them, because there is a strong prejudice against employing young girls belonging to the coloured races. Then again, although Mr. Donaldson pleaded very hard with the girl to whom I have referred, and offered to obtain a position for her, she did not feel inclined to leave. The bill will empower the board to take children away from immoral parents at any age, and I quite agree that some such power should be given, but at the same time I think it would be a mistake to apprentice out young children of, say, 7 years of age.

Mr. J. H. CANN: All young children would be sent to a home!

Mr. THROWER: If a child is below the age of 7 and it is considered desirable to remove her from her parents, she should be sent to some institution where she will be properly looked after, and should not be farmed out. If that course is to be adopted I have no objection to raise. In regard to the administration of the aboriginal settlements, provision should be made by which good men, such as are to be found in my district, who are legally married, whose children are legitimate, and who are living in a worthy way, could establish homes for themselves, instead of being compelled to go into camp and herd together with a lot of men who should really be kicked out. The whole trouble with the settlement is that the waster comes along. In many cases he is a half-caste, and the police are not always there, and his presence tends to demoralise the settlement.

Mr. G. BLACK (Namoï) [10.11]: I have very great sympathy with much that has been said by the hon. member for Murrumbidgee, and also by the hon. member for Macquarie. I have always felt that we have never done our duty to the aboriginal owners of this country; that we have neglected our manifold duties to them in many directions, and that we have a very great deal to learn from other countries, even from New Zealand and America, where the original owners of the soil are protected by the Governments of those countries and are in possession of large areas of cultivable soil set apart for their sole uses, where they are protected from interference by the outside world, where they are encouraged in all the useful arts, are taught morality, taught to respect themselves, and taught the decent habits which every prudent and self-respecting citizen values.

Mr. JAMES: The aboriginals are very different races in both those countries!

Mr. G. BLACK: I do not agree with that. I disagree with those who say that the aborigines of Australia are the lowest of all native races. I have the greatest contempt for the Australian who holds that view.

Mr. JAMES: I do not say that!

Mr. G. BLACK: No, the hon. member does not. But he seems to think that because some people hold that view there is some truth in it.

Mr. JAMES: No, but the Maori is one of the finest races in the world!

Mr. G. BLACK: Yes, in some respects; and in other respects he is inferior to the Australian aborigine. I know some of the latter who are shearers, boundary-riders, or follow other occupations, and who are worthy men. I know one or two aborigines who are holders of considerable areas which they cultivate, who own considerable sums of money, who have reared well-behaved and well-educated families, and who earn the respect of everyone in the community with whom they become associated. If the bulk of the aborigines of this country had been treated as they ought to have been there would not now be so many half-castes, the scum of the community, so many cases of drunkenness among the aborigines, and the race would not rapidly be becoming extinct. I heard

the Colonial Secretary speak as if the half-castes were superior to the aborigines. The position is absolutely the reverse. The half-caste is the inferior. The aborigine is a better citizen than the half-caste, who is usually the offspring of a dissolute white man, and has inherited all the vices of the white man, with all the defects of the black mother. I agree with much that has been said by the hon. member for Murrumbidgee. If you have a large number of half-castes it is due to the boarding-out system. They take young gins from the mothers and send them to stations where there are a number of hands, sons of the owners of the stations, and other men working there. Very often these girls are practically left to the mercies of these men. They sleep anywhere, there is no supervision exercised over them. It often happens that the mistress of the home and all white women are absent from the station for two or three days attending a show or a race meeting. During their absence these poor unfortunate black girls are left to the mercy of the men on the station, and the result is the increase of the half-caste population, and the ruin of the girls who are subject to this treatment. The whole system is absolutely wrong. There should be no such danger in regard to these unfortunate girls. They should so long as it is possible receive the protection of their parents, and after that if they are taken away from the protection of their parents, they should be placed under that of those who will act as parents towards them. There are three aboriginal stations in my electorate, one at Pilliga Scrub, one at Collarenebri, and one near Angledool. I have now a case under my attention where the police have been trying to take away from the mother two young gins, one of 15 years and one of 17 years, with a view to apprenticing them. I have strongly opposed that. The mother is a very respectable woman, who washes for a living in order to support herself, her children, and an aged mother, who is blind. When she goes out washing she takes her girls out with her, one at a time in turn, leaving the other to look after the mother. It is an act of cruelty to deprive that woman of her children,—cruelty to the children, and cruelty to herself.

[*Mr G. Black.*

Mr. J. H. CANN: Who wants to take them away from her?

Mr. G. BLACK: The board wants to take them away. The police are acting for the board, and I have applied to stop it. This is the sort of thing that goes on when you leave the execution of laws of that character to men who are mere officials, and who do not see these things with the kindly eye of men with humanitarian feelings, who have a view beyond the mere carrying out of the duties entrusted to them. These officials discharge such duties, along with others so multifarious that it is not possible for them to discharge all actively and carefully. Although there may be some good result from this bill, yet it would be much better to consider the whole subject comprehensively—to begin at the beginning, at the very root of the evil, and endeavour to do something effectual, and permit, as the hon. member for Murrumbidgee has urged, such a condition of things that there shall be work for the child alongside of parents, who have been so tutored and brought up that they are the best curators of their children's welfare. That could be done, and if we have neglected for so long the doing of it that is no reason why we should not enter upon it now. Let us do it before it is too late, and before we have to hand down the shame of our treatment to those whom we have robbed of all that belonged to them. Let us return to them some of their original territory and the portion of our civilisation which is good for them, and which would be of benefit for them and for us. I have seen, during visits to the country, large areas of land where aboriginal stations could be formed. At Port Stephens the other day I saw the blackfellows' fishing camp. I found that the blackfellows were well respected by the people in the neighbourhood, and that they made a good living. They played cricket matches, and met the white people on equal terms, and the white people were not ashamed to meet them and shake their hands when the games were over. It is true there were some snobs who would not speak to them, but the other white people would not associate with these until they did speak. The Government might give consideration to this matter in order that such a condition of affairs

should be instituted as would prevent the immorality which goes on, and for which the blacks are not responsible. It is caused by the immorality of the white people, upon whose mercy they are often thrown—sometimes by the action of the Aborigines Protection Board and sometimes by their own necessities.

Mr. DOOLEY (Hartley) [10.20]: Those of us who have lived in the country for any length of time realise that the question of dealing with the aborigines requires serious attention, and any board that has power in the matter must necessarily be protected, and perhaps given additional powers if they consider them necessary. With certain phases of the proposed amendment of the Aborigines Protection Act I am in entire agreement, but there is one thing I should like to ask the Colonial Secretary to seriously consider as the head of the department which administers the act. I admit that in the case of any parent, the mother particularly, who is morally or otherwise unfit to take care of a child, it is the duty of the state to see that that child gets every possible chance of growing up to be a decent citizen, and is taught how to work and other necessary requirements of civilised life. But what I have seen has led me to the conclusion that in nearly all cases the system of boarding-out apprentices to people in country or other districts is bad, particularly so in dealing with the cases of black children. The apprenticing out of these people is a bad system, and I think we are going from bad to worse. What we should do if it is necessary, and I do not suppose it will be done unless it is necessary, is to put them into some home or institution.

Mr. J. H. CANN: A home for girls was established at Cootamundra, and they are using it now!

Mr. DOOLEY: I think that they should be altogether kept in homes and not apprenticed to farmers or other people.

Mr. J. H. CANN: How long would you keep them in the home?

Mr. DOOLEY: Until they reach the age of 18 or 20 years—20 years say in the case of girls, and boys perhaps a little younger. I think that some of these homes might be made a little more self-contained as the hon. member for the

Murrumbidgee said—some of these homes might be established as agricultural homes, where the inmates could cultivate the land. In that way they could be made practically self-contained. If the state did spend a few extra pounds in this way it would only be paying back to these people a just debt for what we have done to them. I want the Chief Secretary to seriously consider whether it is advisable to adopt the system of apprenticing out the few aboriginal children that are left, with individuals whether farmers, squatters, or people in small country towns.

Mr. JAMES: The act provides that if a child does not want to be apprenticed it shall go to a home!

Mr. DOOLEY: Who decides that?

Mr. JAMES: The child itself. Any child who chooses can refuse to be apprenticed!

Mr. DOOLEY: There should be something higher than the free will of a child 12 or 14 years of age.

Mr. J. H. CANN: There will be several members of the House on the board!

Mr. MCGARRY:

Mr. J. H. CANN: Will the hon. member for Murrumbidgee take a seat upon the board?

Mr. MCGARRY: I was not offered it when there was a vacancy!

Mr. DOOLEY: Aboriginal children might desire to go to the nearest squatter or storekeeper, but my experience leads me to think that in most cases it is not advisable to apprentice them either to squatters, farmers, or townspeople. I think it would be a great deal better if we stuck strictly to the idea of keeping them in homes under the protection and guardianship of the state until they reach a certain age at which they could look after themselves.

Mr. J. STOREY (Balmain) [10.25]: I suppose we may agree from the debate that has taken place that this is a many-sided subject. Having listened to the hon. members for Murrumbidgee and Nanoi, and one or two other hon. members, I have come to the conclusion after perusing the report of the board that those hon. members are labouring under a mistake as to what takes place in the aboriginal camps. The hon. member for Macquarie said that we ought to let the

aborigines have the fruits of their labour. They do have them. In the Wardell district there are two people named in this report who have £120 in the bank, put in there as the result of their crop of cane. If hon. members will peruse the report they will see that in several districts the school attendance of the aboriginal kiddies was very high. In one instance, with an enrolment of 23 scholars the average attendance was 22. That fact answers very effectively what the hon. member for Macquarie said with regard to the education of the children. The report shows very clearly that in all the directions indicated in the very forcible speech delivered by the hon. member for Murrumbidgee, the board has been very careful to carry out the very things he says ought to be provided for. I advise the hon. member to read the report.

Mr. MCGARRY: What does the report mean? It means nothing!

Mr. J. STOREY: If the hon. member says that the report of the Aborigines Protection Board means nothing, may I be allowed to remind him that he has a seat on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, and ask him if he thinks it is fair to impute to others something which I am quite sure he would not like to be imputed to himself. The report of the Public Works Committee is accepted by the House as being reasonably correct according to information, but in this case it is not a question of information but of absolute fact from members of the board. The speech of the hon. member for Namoi was no doubt very serious and very earnest from his standpoint, but at the same time it was absolutely erroneous according to what is being done. If two-thirds of the increase of the aborigine population are half-caste, does not that indicate that something is wrong? My experience in travelling round the country has led me to the conclusion that it is not the fault of the board if things go wrong, but the fault of unscrupulous white people. The board has been compelled in hundreds of cases to prosecute them. In one of the cases enumerated a man who was found drunk on an aborigine station was fined £5, and in another case a man found in company with an aborigine woman was

fined £10. Wherever the board find a white man in the company of aborigines they prosecute him. What could they do more than that? Of course white people will find their way to the blacks' camps, and I say that it is about time that Parliament came to the assistance of these defenceless people. The hon. member for Macquarie pointed out that they were compelled to live in a communal camp, but in some places I found that they were not all huddled together, but their houses were fenced off, and in many cases there were gardens in front of them that were a credit to the women living in the houses. If white people go to these places and knock down the fences and ill-treat the aborigines, neither the Government nor the board can be held responsible for that, but those who do it. No more can be done in that respect. I wish the hon. member would peruse this report and note the thrift of some of these people. I invite the attention of hon. members to the hon. member for Burrangong, if he desires to address the House, upon his experience of aborigines' camps when a member of a Public Works Committee. The women were clean, careful, and in every sense well domesticated. It is quite wrong to say that people of that type would be interfered with. Where, however, it is proved that their conduct is such that they cannot control the children, the board should be enabled to intervene. We have truant inspectors always carefully watching to see whether white parents do the right thing by their children, and if in their opinion the parents are guilty of immorality or neglect, the children are forcibly taken away from them, and possibly they do not see them again for some years. Surely the same thing should apply to the black child; if she is unable to look after herself and her parents are unwilling to do so, it is obviously the duty of the board to take action. Although I admired the speech made by the hon. member for Murrumbidgee, and know that his whole idea was for protecting aborigines, I disagree entirely with him in regard to what is likely to take place. There are some squatters, as he termed them, who would do quite a lot of things, and there are plenty of humbler people who would do the same. There are numbers of

[*Mr. J. Storey.*]

timber-getters in the bush who get hold of a willing half-caste, make him swing the axe all the week until he looks like it, and give him a bottle of rum on Saturday as payment. The hon. member for Namoi has suggested that the full-blooded aborigine is better than the half-caste. I, with great respect, venture to differ. The average half-caste is a very bright, intelligent person, while I have found the full-blooded native slow and dilatory. On the North Coast some of the aborigines need a good deal of looking after; they are about the lowest type of human creature it is possible to meet. To make a comparison between them and the Maoris, or the full-blooded natives of other countries, is to pay the latter a very poor compliment. On account of the weakness of their intellect, and of their unprotected state, it is the duty of the hon. member as Minister, and of ourselves as members of Parliament, to do all we can in their interest, to shield them from the ravages of white people, and to better their unfortunate condition.

Mr. BURGESS (Burrangong) [10.34]: I regret I did not hear the speech of the Minister in introducing this bill or of the hon. member for Murrumbidgee; but I did hear those of the hon. members for Macquarie, Namoi, and Hartley. I take it the first object of previous Governments in putting aborigines into missionary camps or on reserves was the bettering of the conditions of these unfortunate people. In all cases where it was possible to educate them, they provided special teachers, when objection was taken to the children being educated among white children. All efforts have been made to help these people, as I can say from a very long experience in the western districts. There is an hon. member sitting on the other side of the House to-night—the hon. member for Gwydir—who knows a great deal about the conditions of aborigines in the district which he represents; I suppose there are as many there now as in any other part of New South Wales. Having seen them in their camps and elsewhere, I know that it will take a great deal to put them on the same footing as the natives of any other country I know of. They are not in the same class. With regard to those aborigines mentioned by the hon. members

for Namoi and Macquarie as going out shearing, very few of them do that. Some of the half-castes go shearing, but the full-blooded black does as little work as he possibly can. The teachers on the various settlements endeavour to teach these unfortunates something of agriculture or fruit-growing. They are very slow to learn, but they learn a little under the tuition of white people. Left to themselves, however, they would sit down and do nothing but revert to their old practices of catching 'possums or kangaroos. You cannot confine them to one place too long; after they have been in a settlement for a few months their tendency is to get away and roam somewhere else.

I do not know the idea of the amendments with regard to apprenticing the children out. If the board in their wisdom think it necessary that the children should be taken out of camps to bring them up to a proper state of civilisation, I would, without hesitation, give them power to do so. I am not afraid to trust the board. My opinion is that the members have done the best they can for the aborigines. The hon. member for Balmain speaks of a camp we came across near Quirindi when, as members of a Public Works Committee, we were travelling towards Gunnedah. There we saw a number of blacks well dressed and well kept, but they were like aborigines generally are—you could not bring them into the same class as white people. So far as the depredations of whites are concerned, there is protection now against white people entering those reserves at all. The police take action if they find any white person within a reserve, and, as is well known to every hon. member who has lived in a country district, the offender is brought before the bench, and prosecuted for trespassing. So far as the love of offspring is concerned, I have had a fair experience with aborigines, and I do not see that there is so much parental love on their part as has been stated on the floor of the House. If a girl could be made a better girl by taking her away from the camp—and I believe she could—then why should she not be taken away and allowed to be apprenticed out? I do not fall in with the views of some hon. members who have said to-night that we are endeavouring to

crush out the black race. As a matter of fact they are dying out; but the most unfortunate circumstance is that tuberculosis seems to set in amongst them if they are confined too long in one place. I know of a place at Gulargambone where eight or ten died of tuberculosis through being confined in one place and not having proper supervision and attention as regards health. The remainder were removed to a camp in another place, where, I believe, they were much better off under the supervision provided by the Government.

Mr. FERN (Cobar) [10.40]: I have many stations in my electorate, and as many aborigines and half-castes as are to be found in most localities, and I therefore feel called upon to say something. I have received a great number of complaints with regard to the boarding-out system. Whilst I do not think that system can be altogether done away with at present, it might be well to think out some scheme with the object of bettering the conditions surrounding these unfortunate individuals. They deserve more humane treatment than they have been getting, notwithstanding that the board has done all that it could do. We have to face the fact that the aborigine is not being elevated. The hon. member for Balmain pointed out certain facts disclosed by the report of the board. The hon. member showed that when a white man was found offending against an aborigine he was punished, and asked what more could the board do. The board could do something to lift the blackfellow out of his present environment instead of constantly instilling in him that he belongs to an inferior class from which he can never hope to rise. Let us try to improve his conditions; then we may hope to improve his intellect, which according to some hon. members is so weak that he is deserving of no consideration. If we were all treated as we are content to treat the aborigines, our intellect would not be so much developed. The trouble under present conditions is that the black children are not taught that they should be any better. The whole of their responsibility and crime depends on their environment. For that we white people are responsible. Recently I read a book by an able English

[*Mr. Burgess.*

writer on "Education Responsibilities and Crime." The author pointed out how the different portions of London are controlled by various religious organisations, and remarked that the Jewish section is the smartest and most alive to its responsibilities. That is due to the perfection of their organisation. The child is safeguarded, not only from its birth, but frequently before birth, and after birth it is followed up and looked after. It is all very well for hon. members to say that the aborigine is a creature of weak intellect. We are making him weak and keeping him weak, and if we continue the practices of the past, we shall keep him weak. We should endeavour to make the settlements more of a training ground and instil a better code of morals into the gins, and particularly look after the mongrel white men who put their stamp on the aborigines of this state. Many of these girls are boarded out, and we must recognise that in many cases they go wrong. The complaint I have against the boarding-out system is that it is bad enough in the case of the white children, and it is infinitely worse in the case of the aborigine. People have asked me to endeavour to obtain the services of a state child, and the reason of their request generally is that they have two or three little children, and that it would be a convenience if they could get a girl. That is in the case of a white child. When a black child is boarded out, she is generally either hooked on to the plough or swings an axe. Nobody cares what becomes of her. Once the children get out of the hands of the mission stations and are boarded out or apprenticed they have no chance whatever. We should seek to improve the educational system on the stations. Good as it is, there is room for improvement. Hon. members have said that the board prosecutes every one who maltreats these poor unfortunates, and asked what more can be done. We should make some provision to give them a little better chance to come to the light. When the hon. member for Namoi was speaking, the Minister interjected, "Who wants to take these children away from their parents?" Let me point out that the original act gives power to take these half-castes from their parents whether they like it or not,

and to do it without any inquiry. The board has power to apprentice any child with black blood in its veins. The amendment proposed is an addition to the original act and provides that a child can be taken from the parent in the case of any immorality. That is good. But I would suggest to the Minister that if he looks at the act he will see that a black child can be apprenticed without any inquiry whatever, and it is done now.

Mr. JAMES: This bill amends the act to this extent that if the child refuses she can go to a home instead!

Mr. FERN: Quite so. If the child refuses, then the board may take it away and dump it in a home. The child has either to go, or leave its parents if it does not. There should be an inquiry before the child leaves its parents. If we only make the blacks' environment better the parents will be the proper persons to look after the interests of the child. Section 11 of the original act provides for the apprenticing of a child under the Apprentices Act, 1901, but it says nothing about an inquiry. The new section, 11a, as set forth in the bill, says that the board may, after due inquiry, cancel the indentures of any child who may be apprenticed. Section 11 should be altered to provide for an inquiry.

Mr. JAMES: The new section 13a provides for that!

Mr. FERN: That new section says that the board may assume full control of the child of any aborigine if after due inquiry it is satisfied that such a course is in the interests of the child. That is all right if the parents are degenerate or immoral, whether in the case of black children or white.

Mr. JAMES: There must be an inquiry before they can take the child!

Mr. FERN: I differ from the hon. member. There is nothing about an inquiry before the child is taken from the mother.

Mr. JAMES: The new clause 13a makes such provision!

Mr. FERN: Whatever may be the legal view, why not make the meaning clearer? I represent a goodly number of aborigines, and the meaning is not clear enough to satisfy me. Why not rid the

bill of legal verbiage, and make it plain that no child shall be taken from its parents without an inquiry.

Mr. SPEAKER: That can all be done in the Committee stage. It is the general principles of a bill which are discussed on the second reading.

Mr. FERN: I think the Minister would be well advised to think out a scheme on broad humanitarian lines.

Mr. J. H. CANN: What made you assent to this scheme?

Mr. FERN: When?

Mr. J. H. CANN: In the caucus meeting. You are talking here by the hour!

Mr. FERN: I do not object to what the hon. member proposes to do in the bill, provided he leaves out some of the mistakes I notice in it. When a bill of this description comes up I, as a representative of the people, if I think that something better could be done for the aborigines than we are doing at the present time, should be at liberty to voice my opinions, whether I have agreed to this bill in the caucus or in the clouds. I am willing to vote for any measure that will afford the aborigines relief, and I am only exercising my right if I say I do not think this measure goes far enough. It ought to be more humane. I think the Minister is trying to do his best, but when an idea strikes me I will give it to the House for what it is worth. If my idea were acted upon it would make the lot of the aborigines much brighter. They would become more worthy citizens, and we should be relieved of a great deal of worry that we have in looking after the wants of this sadly neglected people.

Mr. SCOBIE (Murray) [10.58]: I object to the reintroduction of slavery into New South Wales, and that is what this bill means. It means nothing more nor less than the absolute despoiling of the black people of this country of their progeny after we have taken their lands. I can speak feelingly on this subject. I have been a member of the Aborigines Protection Board since 1901. When this bill was being discussed before the board I was absent through illness, but I intended to say a few words upon it when the matter came before the House. The bill has been concocted in a most narrow-spirited manner. I am sure, from what

I know of the philanthropic feelings of the Minister in charge of the bill, that he does not really comprehend what it actually means to the aborigine, or rather the black people of New South Wales. The aborigines of New South Wales are not under the control of the Aborigines Protection Board, though the board does give them rations occasionally in some of the backblocks when the attention to the central board is brought to the fact that the aborigines have not sufficient to eat. At one time when the pastoralists were well off an aborigine did not require to go short of rations which he could not procure himself, but nowadays the position is different, and the aborigine has to depend upon the state for rations in many instances. I remember the day when every man on a station had a blanket with the exception of the aborigine, who had to suffer in the cold. Those days have now passed, owing to action by the board, but I have always ardently advocated that the board should have some legal authority. The hon. member, Mr. Fosbery, was asked by Sir Henry Parkes to leave his position as Inspector-General of Police and take up the duty of being guardian of the black population of New South Wales, but Mr. Fosbery declined the offer. He was eventually persuaded, however, to add that to his multifarious duties and take on the task of largely superintending the New South Wales aborigines. I remember the time when he severed his connection with the board. He gave us a resume of what had taken place. He told us of the lamentable condition in which he found the blacks—suffering from syphilis and other loathsome diseases. Largely owing to his exertions, having the police to obey his commands, he was able to ameliorate their condition to a great extent. When I joined the board I was able to bring before it the little experience I had gained from a fairly extensive knowledge of the black population on the Darling, where they have no mission station. They have a sort of station at Pooncarie, where the blacks can go and camp so long as they are harmless and do no damage. I found that out there the blacks were actually being bled white on account of the injustice they suffered in regard to the rations issued to

[*Mr. Scobie.*

them. They did not get the quality of food which the Government paid for, and they did not at all times get the quantity which they should have received. There are a lot of other petty things I could mention which we endeavoured to remedy by getting a law passed. A law was passed which gave us power for the first time to deal with these matters. I do not want to run down gentlemen who give their time gratuitously and do the best they can, but different people see matters through different spectacles, and I decline to be a party to perpetuating outrages which I saw committed at the Warrangesda station. A woman came to me with a baby and two other children. The children were as clean and tidily dressed as those of any white woman. With flashing eyes and speaking in good English the woman asked me if I thought I would like her children to be taken away from her. She added, "Do you think I have not the same feeling as a white woman? If you put my children into an institution to learn a trade I shall leave the mission station altogether." This is where the folly of the matter comes in. If the aborigines leave the station the board has no power to deal with them or their children, so that we are committing a piece of folly in passing such legislation as this. I am certain that the Minister would do infinitely more credit to himself and the Government if he would postpone the passing of this measure and make inquiries into the whole of the facts surrounding the lives of these aborigines. I do not condemn this measure because I took no part in discussing it before the board, but I say that it proposes to put power into the hands of the board with which they should not be entrusted. It would be far better to leave these people under the control of the Inspector-General of Police. So far as young men who loaf about the stations are concerned, I think that if the board stopped giving rations to those who would not work, the solution of the difficulty would be arrived at. I do not agree with tearing the children away from their mothers. I do not regard such a proceeding as in the least degree humane, and I hope that we shall exercise a little more common-sense than to approve of any such

arrangement. I have always advocated the appointment of a board and the exercise of proper control over affairs relating to the aborigines. When I joined the board, it was a common thing to call for tenders for clothing for the aborigines. The storekeepers would rake from their shelves all the most unsuitable materials they had, give them over to their seamstresses and have them made up into clothing for the poor unfortunate aborigines, who after wearing them for a fortnight would find themselves in rags. It was very much the same thing with the blankets, which I have seen put to many strange uses. It is very desirable that we shall make our aborigine stations self-supporting. When the late Mr. Garvan was Inspector-General of Police he did his best in this direction. He was full of sympathy for the blacks, and enthusiasm for the work of improving their condition. Instead of giving them worn-out police horses he provided them with fresh horses suitable for agricultural work and did his very best to make the institutions self-supporting, but that result has not yet been achieved here as in Victoria.

• There are many matters in relation to the general wellbeing of the aborigines for which provision should be made in this bill. Arrangements should be made for sanitation, for the observance of well-recognised hygienic rules, and for proper inspection. We are too stingy in regard to the aborigines. We do not provide sufficient money for those in control of the stations, and we should among other things appoint a protector of aborigines. We should select for that position a man fully conversant with their characteristics and habits, and if possible also able to converse with them in their own language. The aborigines are an intelligent body of people and know what is due to them. We are teaching their children in schools, and many of the men are well educated and able to think clearly and express themselves in the best English. At Darlington Point I have heard an aborigine, who was highly educated, explaining in the best of English how the aborigines were being plundered of their rations, robbed of their lands, and reduced to the position of slaves. I do not say the man was

right in all his contentions, but when you meet men who understand all these things, you cannot expect them to calmly submit to an order to take from them their girl or boy in order to place them in a Government institution. I cannot support the bill as it stands, although it is true that the Minister has submitted it to caucus. I am sorry I was not there to express my views on the matter. Without very serious amendment, I would not support it, because I would not support a return to slavery under the British flag, which is what the bill means. This measure is framed by very philanthropic men, with kindly intentions for the future of the aborigines; but it is an absolute failure as a means of attaining their ends. These black children must be rescued from danger to themselves, and from being a danger to the whole of the white population. They are an increasing danger, because although there are only a few full-blooded aborigines left, there are 6,000 of the mixed blood growing up. It is a danger to us to have a people like that among us looking upon our institutions with eyes different from ours. We want to gradually absorb them into the white population, but this bill does not provide the best way of doing that; there are other and better ways. When certain philanthropic gentlemen sit round a table to deal with the aborigines of New South Wales, having power to give away £30,000 a year, it may be all very well, but we have to consider the effect of their administration on the aborigine population. We must find some method of dealing with them without resorting to this form of slavery.

Mr. J. H. CANN (Sturt), Colonial Secretary [11.14], in reply: Judging from the speeches to which I have just had the painful necessity to listen, it seems that hon. members will not inform themselves of what I propose.

Mr. SCOBIE: I was not here; I did not hear the hon. member's speech!

Mr. J. H. CANN: I cannot help that. The hon. member does not seem to be anywhere just when he is needed.

Mr. SCOBIE: I ask the hon. gentleman to take that back. It is not a proper thing for him to say about me!

Mr. J. H. CANN: I said the hon. member does not appear to be anywhere where he is needed. Every time I have twitted him with not knowing what has taken place he says he was not there.

Mr. SCOBIE: I am where it is necessary that I should be, and I do not think I should be insulted!

Mr. J. H. CANN: I do not wish to offer any insult; I am merely stating a fact.

Mr. SCOBIE: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the expression be withdrawn!

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not see anything ill-natured in the remark of the Minister, but I am sure that the argument of the Acting-Premier will be just as solid if he withdraws the remark.

Mr. J. H. CANN: If the hon. member wishes it, I shall withdraw the remark. The hon. member speaks, and other hon. members have spoken, as though I am going to make a raid on the black race in this state. It seems that they have got into their head the erroneous idea that I am going into every black gin's establishment to take away every child that is there.

Mr. SCOBIE: You cannot do it!

Mr. J. H. CANN: The hon. member has not taken the trouble to acquaint himself with what I do propose. If he had been present he would have heard me state the kind of case I want to give the board power to deal with. I am not going to mention names. I purposely avoided mentioning names before, and I am not going to cast a stigma on any black person where there is no necessity for it. There is a case mentioned here of a boy 11 years of age with no mother, the father being a drunken profligate who meanders around anywhere and leaves the boy like a stray dog in the streets of Sydney or anywhere else where he likes to leave him. The board has no power to deal with that boy. I am asking the House to give the board power to deal with him as a neglected child. Will the House refuse to do it? Is it not a proper thing to give that boy a chance and let him have an opportunity to mark out his own track in life if he has the ability to do it?

Mr. SCOBIE: The Police Act will allow you to do that now!

[*Mr. J. H. Cann.*]

Mr. J. H. CANN: I am telling the hon. member that the board has no power to do it, and I want some authority other than the police to be allowed to do it. Take another case. There are three children, all of the same family. The ages are 7, 9, and 11. The parents quarrel regularly. They exercise no control over the children, but leave them in a neglected condition, and the children meander about the camp like mangy dogs. Will hon. members say that they will not allow the board to take care of those children?

Mr. SCOBIE: I should like to know what camp that is in!

Mr. J. H. CANN: I have told the hon. member that I will not mention names. Take another case. Here is a case where the two eldest children belonged to the same father. He died and left a widow. The widow married another man, and had a child by him, now, about 5 years of age. He, for some reason or other, would not stick to his wife and family, but left and deserted them. She is leading an immoral and profligate life. Are we to leave those three children with her and not give the board power to look after them?

Mr. SCOBIE: The police can take them now!

Mr. J. H. CANN: I am telling the hon. member that the board cannot deal with them now. Take another case. There are two children, 12 and 10 years of age. There is positive proof that the mother is leading an immoral life and neglects these children. Are we to leave them with her?

Mr. FERN: The hon. member for Murray said they had to!

Mr. J. H. CANN: The hon. member has been talking about children I do not want to touch. Children who are under parental control and being properly looked after and given a fair chance in life I do not want to interfere with. Neither does the bill contemplate interfering with them. Here is another instance. Children of very tender years, 4 and 1. The mother is undoubtedly leading an immoral life. Should not the state, through the board, take charge of these children and look after them? I say that it should. Hon. members have said that we ought to inculcate habits of

thrift, and those who have not read the Aborigines Protection Board's report might perhaps come to the conclusion that nothing in that direction has been done. We have eighteen different stations devoted entirely to inculcating habits of thrift and so on, and giving this class of people an opportunity to practice the principles which have been advocated. Hon. members have spoken as though we had robbed the blacks of all their land—

Mr. SCOBIE: I spoke of what was said—I did not say so myself!

Mr. J. H. CANN: In one instance 250 people have 2,000 acres of land.

Mr. SCOBIE: That is not much!

Mr. J. H. CANN: It is more than they use, and more than they can be made to use. In other cases 130 people have 1,800 acres; 70 have 5,000 acres, and 55 have 1,170 acres. If hon. members will take the trouble to inform themselves of the contents of the report they will see that the board is doing the very thing which they have told us to-night we ought to do.

Mr. MCGARRY: What is the good of giving the blacks land if you do not help them?

Mr. J. H. CANN: We are helping them, as the hon. member knows, to the extent of about £20,000 a year.

Mr. SCOBIE: I know that, and that is the reason I speak as I have done!

Mr. J. H. CANN: It is a pity that hon. members have not given us long ago the information they have with reference to this matter. I know that I have had advice from the board that this provision is necessary to protect the children I have cited to the House, and I intend to protect them if it is within my power. I do not wish to interfere with any other children, nor, I believe, does the board. However, I cannot give the House any more information than I have given, and I cannot make out a better case than I have done. If ever in the cause of humanity there was reason for children to be protected it is now, and the House ought readily to accede to the proposal, and give these poor little ones a chance.

Mr. SCOBIE: On proper lines!

Mr. J. H. CANN: Yes, on proper lines. If I ask a member of the board to

see that the thing is carried out on proper lines I pay him a compliment.

Question—That the bill be now read a second time—put. The House divided:

Ayes, 31; noes, 3; majority, 28.

AYES.

Ashford, W. G.	Grimm, A. H.
Badgery, F. A.	Hickey, S.
Black, G.	Hollis, R.
Boston, W. J.	James, A. G. F.
Brown, T.	Kearsley, W.
Cann, G.	Lang, J. T.
Cann, J. H.	McDonald, G. R. W.
Carmichael, A. C.	Morrish, J. J.
Chaffey, F. A.	Osborne, J. P.
Crane, J. T.	Storey, J.
Dooley, J.	Stuart-Robertson,
Dunn, W. F.	R. J.
Durack, E.	Toombs, Capt. S.
Estell, J.	
Fingleton, J.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Grahame, W. C.	Burgess, G. A.
Griffith, Arthur	McGirr, J. J. G.

NOES.

Scobie, R.	<i>Tellers,</i>
	Fern, C. S.
	McGarry, P.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee:

Clause 1. This act may be cited as the "Aborigines Protection Amending Act, 1914," and shall be read with the Aborigines Protection Act, 1909, hereinafter called the principal act.

Amendment (by Mr. J. H. CANN) agreed to:

That the figure "4" be struck out with a view to insert the figure "5."

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 3. The following new sections are inserted and shall be read next after section eleven:—

11A. (1) Every child so apprenticed who refuses to go to the person to whom the board has apprenticed him may be removed, for the purpose of being trained, to some home or institution as the board may arrange.

Amendment (by Mr. DOOLEY) proposed:

That the following words be added:—
"Such home or institution shall be controlled entirely by the state."

Question put. The Committee divided:

Ayes, 10; noes, 21; majority, 11.

AYES.

Boston, W. J.	Stuart-Robertson,
Burgess, G. A.	R. J.
Fern, C. S.	Toombs, Capt. S.
Kearsley, W.	<i>Tellers,</i>
McGirr, J. J. G.	Dooley, J.
Scobie, R.	McGarry, P.

NOES.

Ashford, W. G.	Grahame, W. C.
Badgery, F. A.	Griffith, Arthur
Brown, T.	Grimm, A. H.
Cann, J. H.	Hickey, S.
Carmichael, A. C.	Hollis, R.
Chaffey, F. A.	James, A. G. F.
Crane, J. T.	Lang, J. T.
Dunn, W. F.	McDonald, G. R. W.
Durack, E.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Estell, J.	Cann, G.
Fingleton, J.	Morrish, J. J.

Question so resolved in the negative.

Clause agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment; report adopted.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES BILL.

In Committee:

Mr. J. H. CANN (Sturt), Colonial Secretary [11.43], moved:

That it is expedient to bring in a bill to provide standards and units, and to declare the law of weights and measures; for the verification and stamping of weights, measures, and weighing and measuring instruments; to regulate the sale of coal and firewood; to repeal the Weights and Measures Act, 1898, and the Sydney Coal Delivery Act, 1901; to amend the Government Railways Act, 1912, the Pure Food Act, 1908, and certain other acts; and for purposes consequent thereon or incidental thereto.

He said: I do not propose to go into any lengthy explanation of the contents of the bill. It is a comprehensive measure which practically consolidates all other measures on the subject, and although the motion recites a measure of 1898, this bill actually deals with a measure passed as far back as 1852, a thoroughly obsolete measure. I am advised that the main intentions of any law of weights and measures is to assure as far as practicable that purchasers shall receive the correct weight and measure of goods for which they have paid, and in that respect

the present act is powerless. A pound of butter, or any other article, may be purchased and paid for, and may be found upon weighing to be 2 or 3 ounces light, and no action can be taken under this law. The only remedy is a criminal proceeding for obtaining money under false pretences—a roundabout and difficult proceeding. In other respects the law is seriously defective. Old machines which are obsolete elsewhere and not allowed to be used in other countries where the law is up to date are sent into New South Wales and used here, because our law is not up to date. I could give other details with reference to the measure, but at this late hour I will not do so. I will not go on with the measure hastily, but will give hon. members a fair chance of knowing what it contains. I think it is a measure that ought to have been passed years ago. To my knowledge it has been dangling for fifteen or sixteen years before different Governments, and occasionally introduced into Parliament, but never given effect to. I think that from what I have read to hon. members they will see the necessity for passing such a measure.

Mr. SCOBIE: Does it provide for all weighing machines on railways as well as others?

Mr. J. H. CANN: I propose to make it apply to weighing machines used in connection with the railways as well as to weighing machines owned by private individuals, so that the railway weights can be tested as well as those calculated according to private weighing machines. People rely on the railway weighing machines, and if these machines are defective people can be robbed by means of them as well as by means of any other machines. I therefore propose to make the bill apply to weighing machines used in connection with the railways as well as those owned by private individuals.

Mr. SCOBIE: The bill also deals with measures?

Mr. J. H. CANN: Yes, there is a schedule to the bill which gives the standards for both weights and measures where it is not a matter of test.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution reported and agreed to.

Bill presented and read a first time.

**STOCK BRANDS (AMENDMENT)
BILL.**

In Committee:

Mr. ASHFORD (Liverpool Plains),
Minister for Agriculture [11.53], moved:

That it is expedient to bring in a bill to amend the Stock Act, 1901; to provide for the earmarking of cattle; and for purposes consequent thereon or incidental thereto.

He said: In bringing forward this measure it is not necessary at this stage to deal at any length with the proposals it contains. It has previously been before the House, having received the consideration of this Chamber in 1912. The bill deals with the cancellation of brands; the re-registration of same when necessary; the regulation of the size of brands; the registration of earmarks; the prescribing by regulation of fees, and also of the place of branding. It takes the place of the bill which was previously in existence, and which prescribed certain methods of branding.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution reported and agreed to.

House adjourned at 11.59 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 28 January, 1915.

Printed Questions and Answers—Papers—Questions without Notice—Aborigines Protection Amending Bill—Local Government Bill—Assent to Bills—Superannuation Bill—Railway Crossings Bill—Local Government Bill (No. 2)—Local Government (Franchise) Bill—Stock Brands (Amendment) Bill—Aplaries Bill—Veterinary Surgeons Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair.

**PRINTED QUESTIONS AND
ANSWERS.**

PURCHASE OF RAILWAY SLEEPERS.

Mr. PRICE asked the PREMIER,—(1) Was an arrangement made between the State Government and the sleeper-cutters of New South Wales for the purchase of sleepers at 3s. each for round-backs and 3s. 6d. each for squared sleepers? (2) Is it a fact that the Government intimated that the agreement to purchase sleepers

direct from the cutters was at an end in consequence of no more sleepers being required? (3) Is it a fact that a contract has been let to a private firm of financiers for 200,000, or some other quantity, of sleepers, at 4s. 2d.; or, if not, at what price? (4) Are Government debentures or Government stock, extending over a period of five years, to be issued in payment for such sleepers; if so, what are the conditions, rate of interest, and other details?

Answer.—(1) Yes; sleepers were purchased from the cutters on section 4 of the North Coast railway at the prices stated. (2) Yes; in August last year notice was given that further supplies would not be required for new lines then under construction, as the department had sufficient stocks in hand for present requirements, and funds were not available to continue the work. (3) Contracts have been let to four private firms for sleepers for stock at prices ranging from 3s. 9d. to 5s. 4d., according to place of delivery. These contracts were entered into, under special conditions, for the purpose, primarily, of finding work for unemployed sleeper-cutters. The conditions for financing the payment made it impossible to deal with the cutters direct. (4) The contract with Allen Taylor & Company, Limited, for the supply of 250,000 sleepers for railway construction provides that payment shall be accepted in New South Wales Government Treasury bills at par, having a currency of five years, and bearing interest at the rate of £4 10s. per centum per annum.

**CLEARING WHEAT LANDS AT
TOTTENHAM.**

Mr. T. BROWN asked the MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE,—(1) When is it proposed to start active operations in connection with clearing of wheat lands at Tottenham? (2) Is it a fact that numbers of workmen have gone to Tottenham to get work on this land, and are in straitened circumstances; and will he have some provision made to provide for their needs pending the starting of this work?

Answer.—(1) The work of clearing is now in full operation. (2) When the work was commenced a number of men did arrive at Tottenham, who were in