

members, to amend the Industrial Arbitration Act, 1912, the Industrial Arbitration (Amendment) Act, 1916, the Trade-union Act, 1881, and certain other Acts; and for purposes consequent thereon or incidental thereto.

ADJOURNMENT.

RELIEF OF DISTRESS.

Mr. FULLER (Wollondilly), Acting Premier [9.47], moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

He said: In moving the adjournment, I should like to inform hon. members of a decision come to by the Government to-day. We are fully alive to the fact that in consequence, to a very large extent, of the industrial chaos in which this State has been plunged during the last few weeks, an amount of distress exists not only in the city and suburbs, but in other parts of the State. We are hopeful that before very long industrial conditions will become normal, but in the meantime distress exists, and the Government, acting in accordance with the course it has pursued right along in connection with this matter, showing no vindictiveness and no malice, but fully realising its position and its responsibilities, has decided to set apart as a first instalment for the relief of distress in New South Wales a sum of £20,000. If, in consequence of the industries not getting back to a normal condition as rapidly as we hope, necessity should arise for the setting apart of a further amount, the Government will see that sufficient money is provided to secure that the women, and particularly the children, will suffer as little as possible.

Mr. LANG: I understand there is a regulation which provides that when inquiries are being conducted by the police the members of the force shall be dressed in ordinary civilian clothes. I would ask the Acting Premier to make representations to the Inspector-General of Police to give effect to that regulation. It is not being enforced at present, and it is not conducive to people opening their doors when the police come!

Mr. FULLER: I may say, in answer to the hon. member, that the whole question of the distribution of the relief which I have intimated the Government has decided to set apart will receive consideration to-morrow. The cases will be

inquired into, and the relief will be distributed in such a way that the unfortunate people who are to be the recipients will get what they want with as little publicity as possible.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 9.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 9 October, 1917.

Printed Questions and Answers—Papers—Electoral District of Murray—Questions without Notice—New South Wales Benevolent Society—The Ashtonfields Coal-mines Railway Bill (second reading)—Real Estate and Stock Agents Bill—University Prizes and Medals Alteration Bill—Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Bill (second reading)—Theatres and Public Halls (Amendment) Bill—Careless Use of Fire (Amendment) Bill—University and University Colleges (Amendment) Bill—Adjournment (Attorney-General's Visit to America).

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair.

PRINTED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS.

Mr. DOOLEY asked the MINISTER OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION,—(1) Is it a fact that forty-four teachers have been promoted from IIA to IIB for good service since January last? (2) Is it a fact that four of these teachers were in charge of fourth-class schools; if so, what are the names of these four teachers; what are their lengths of service; what efficiency marks have they to their credit; and what schools are they in charge of? (3) Will he consider the advisability of reducing the rent assessment on the basis of so much per child per annum?

Answer,—(1) Yes. (2) Mr. C. J. Hamilton, school Binnaway, fourth, still in charge; Mr. P. O'Hara, school Canghai, fourth, still in charge; Mr. D. S. Jones, school Duntroon, fourth, still in charge, pending removal to a fifth; Mr. William Hayes, school Tuncurry, fourth, now at Bolwarra, a fifth. Mr. Hamilton has been in the service since 21st January, 1892; Mr. O'Hara since 13th May, 1902; Mr. Jones since 15th January, 1896; and Mr. Hayes since 16th January, 1890. It is not the practice to

publish efficiency awards of teachers, as these are personal to each individual teacher. (3) The question of allowances to married teachers is now receiving attention.

CONSUMPTION OF GAS DURING STRIKE.

Mr. WEAVER asked the ACTING PREMIER,—(1) Is it a fact that, notwithstanding the reduced consumption of gas during the strike, consumers are being debited with a higher registration of gas than formerly in addition to the supply being inefficient? (2) Will he give this matter careful consideration with a view of inducing the North Sydney Gas Company and the Australian Gaslight Company to make an allowance in their charges during this period?

Answer.—The hon. member's attention is drawn to the statement made to the House by the Minister for Labour and Industry on Thursday last, 4th instant.

GOODS STOLEN FROM S.S. CUMBERLAND.

Mr. KEEGAN asked the ATTORNEY-GENERAL,—(1) Is it a fact that Sergeant Chancey, of Eden, a member of the New South Wales police force, arrested a man named Scott and a man named Warren on a charge of being in possession of goods reasonably supposed to have been stolen in Victorian territory from the steamer *Cumberland*? (2) If so, were such proceedings initiated by the Victorian authorities? (3) If not, under what authority were such arrests made? (4) Were the abovenamed men committed for trial by a police magistrate having jurisdiction in New South Wales? (5) If so, under what authority? (6) Is it a fact that the men were arrested on a Saturday morning, and that the clerk of petty sessions at Eden refused to open the court so that an application for bail might be heard and determined, and that the said men were brought before two justices of the peace on the following Monday, and that the said justices refused bail because such was opposed by the police? (7) Is it a fact that bail in a substantial amount was forthcoming, and on what grounds was such refused? (8) Is the police

magistrate who subsequently granted the said men release on bail the same magistrate who later committed them for trial, and is he the same magistrate who, in a previous case involving the same law, had dismissed the said previous case because he had no jurisdiction to deal with the matter?

Answer.—Inquiries are being made regarding the cases referred to. I shall be glad to let the hon. member know the result of these inquiries as early as possible.

EMPLOYEES, TEXTILE WORKERS' UNION.

Mr. COCHRAN asked the MINISTER FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY,—(1) Is it a fact that the employees of the Textile Workers' Union have been asked to sign an application for re-employment containing the following particulars:—"The employee shall not oppose any application for deregistration of the General Textile Workers' Union of New South Wales Industrial Union of Employees, and shall resign his membership thereof, or of any other industrial union, State or Federal, if any, when called upon by the employer so to do. The employee shall, when called upon, join and support such new union as the employer shall approve"? (2) Will he obtain the opinion of the Attorney-General as to whether any employer has a legal right to demand the imposition of such conditions?

Answer.—(1) Yes. (2) The Government is agreed that unionists should not be asked to forego any right of trial that may be reserved to them, and it will not be a party to any attempt to break normal and independent unionism.

REGISTRATION OF COAL-LUMPERS' UNION.

Mr. COCHRAN asked the MINISTER FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY,—(1) Has his attention been directed to the judgment of Mr. Justice Heydon on the application by the Crown for the cancellation of the registration of the Coal-lumpers' Union? (2) Is it a fact that the union took no steps to controvert the application of the Crown? (3) Has it been brought to his knowledge that a roll of honor was unveiled at the union rooms

on the 30th August, 1917, containing 183 names of members of the union who have enlisted in the A.I.F., and that many of those men have paid the extreme penalty, and lie buried "somewhere in France"?

Answer,—(1) Yes. (2) The union appeared to submit to the order of the court. (3) Coal-lumpers, as well as other members of the community, have undoubtedly contributed largely to the Australian forces now engaged in the great war, but their fellow-workmen engaged in the industry in Sydney—notwithstanding the war, notwithstanding their agreement to stand by Australia till the war is over, and notwithstanding the special inducements which were offered to persuade them to enter into such agreements—not only took part in the strike, but deliberately refused to coal transports urgently required for war purposes.

EXTENSION OF RAILWAY SEASON TICKETS.

Mr. J. W. DOYLE asked the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS,—Will the Government take into consideration the matter of making good the losses incurred by the travelling public who utilise the train service, and who held season tickets, by extending the period of the said season tickets, or allowing a refund equivalent to the loss sustained, through no fault of their own, between those stations where the trains stopped running during the recent industrial dispute?

Answer,—I am informed:

Periodical tickets are issued under the following condition amongst others:—"Periodical tickets are issued subject to any alteration which may be made in the train service during the currency of such tickets, and holders will not be entitled to any allowance or compensation on account of any change in the time or reduction in the number of trains. Neither will the Commissioners make any allowance or refund in the event of any reduction in fares becoming effective during the currency of any periodical ticket." The Commissioners do not propose to depart from the regulations.

W. A. FLYNN, POLICE MAGISTRATE, WENTWORTH.

Mr. MUTCH asked the COLONIAL SECRETARY,—(1) Is it a fact that William

Alfred Flynn, police magistrate at Wentworth, recently took about a week off to take part in the selection of a Nationalist candidate at Hay? (2) Is it a fact that during the period of the Murray by-election he was canvassing for the Nationalist candidate?

Answer,—The officer referred to informs me that it is not a fact.

RE-EMPLOYMENT OF STRIKERS.

Mr. MUTCH asked the ACTING PREMIER,—(1) Is it a fact that large numbers of ex-employees in the railway service who, since the termination of the strike, applied for re-employment, have received notices informing them that their services are no longer required? (2) Is it a fact that the employees so victimised are almost invariably union officers, delegates, or pickets? (3) In view of his assurance that no victimisation will be shown, and in view of the doubt expressed by him in answer to a question without notice by the hon. member for Botany, on 26th September, that the Railway Commissioners were acting in this manner, will he give instructions to the Railway Commissioners that any notices so issued shall be withdrawn, and the men concerned be re-employed in the service?

Answer,—(1) Yes. (2 and 3) Discrimination is not being directed against men on account of holding the positions referred to. The general principles followed in connection with the re-employment of strikers are stated in reply to question No. 7 of Wednesday, 3rd October, 1917.

FREE PASSES FOR RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

Mr. BRUNTNEILL asked the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS,—(1) Is it a fact that station-masters and night officers are being compelled by the Railway Commissioners to take their holidays, and that the usual free pass is cancelled? (2) Will he consider whether this is just treatment to men who so loyally stood to their posts and helped the country in the greatest industrial crisis in its history? (3) Will he make representation to the Railway Commissioners on this subject?

Answer,—I am informed :

As already publicly announced, the full privileges in respect to railway employees' passes have been restored.

REDUCED PAY OF GANGERS AND FETTLERS.

Mr. BRUNTNELL asked the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS,—(1) Is it a fact that the Railway Commissioners have deducted so much per day from the wages of gangers and fettlers as from Monday last, the 2nd October? (2) Is it a fact that an appeal was pending in the matter, and will he consider whether the men who stood loyally to the Commissioners in the recent struggle deserve better treatment? (3) Will he make representation to the Commissioners with a view to allowing the award to stand until the court decides otherwise?

Answer,—I am informed :

On 5th September, an appeal by the Railway Commissioners against the award of the Railway No. 1 Board for permanent-way and signalling branches was listed for hearing in the court of Industrial Arbitration, but as the Commissioners were unwilling to proceed with their appeal in the absence of any representative of the employees, they accordingly obtained the court's permission for the appeal to stand over, and for the payment, meanwhile, of rates of wages calculated upon the principles laid down by the court. The result of this was that the wages of some employees were slightly reduced as from the 1st instant. As soon as an industrial union places itself in a position to approach the court arrangements can be made for the appeal to be dealt with, and in cases where the court fixes the wages higher than those paid by the Commissioners back money will be paid over the whole period of reduction, so as to bring the wages of each employee up to the amount decided upon by the court.

RE-EMPLOYMENT OF EX-SHOP ASSISTANT COOK.

Mr. T. J. SMITH asked the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS,—(1) Is it a fact, that an ex-shop assistant named Cook made application for a position as labourer at Eveleigh workshops last week, and has since been appointed? (2) Will he consider whether this is consistent with the declared policy of the Government regarding the reinstatement of ex-employees?

Answer,—I am informed :

(1) No. (2) See answer to No. 1.

DISTRIBUTING COMMITTEE.

Mr. KEARSLEY asked the SECRETARY FOR MINES,—

(1) Is there a designated distributing committee acting under the authority of the Board? (2) If so, what are the members of this committee there any other such committee for any general or specific purposes, under the direction or authority in conjunction with the Coal Board? If so, what is the function or purpose of each, and who are the members? (5) Are any of the members of the Board also members of the coal distributing committee, which members? (6) Are any members of the distributing committee also members of the coal board, which members? (7) Is it the intention of the Government to disband the Board when a general settler is present trouble in the mines is over and work is resumed? (8) What amount per ton allowed by the Board to the colliery owner's mouth at each colliery in the southern, and western districts, are the respective prices charged consumers for coal from the collieries referred to in the question? (10) To what purposes are the differences, if any amounts allowed by the board and the prices charged consumers for coal from each of referred to in question (8) a

Answer,—(1) Yes. (2) Yes. A. Gibson, J. Johnston, A. E. Packer, J. T. McKern, and J. S. Bragg. (3) Yes. (4) To control under the board's instructions, the lifting of Federal stocks, and the shipping and disposal of both Federal and State stocks. Northern sub-committee—Commander J. G. Fearnley, R.A.N.B., Mr. A. E. Cutler, and Mr. C. James. Southern sub-committee—Messrs. R. Vowell, A. E. O. Sellers, and C. J. Williams. (5) and (6) No. (7) The Coal Board is constituted under the War Precautions Act, and its disbandment is a matter for the Federal Government. (8) The Coal Board decline to allow this information to be made public at present. (9) Northern district, free on board, 20s. large, 16s. small; free on rail at colliery, 19s. large, 15s. small; Southern district, free on

board, 21s. 3d. large, 17s. 3d. small, including Government shipping and outwards wharfage charges, namely, 1s. 3d. per ton; Western district, free on rail, 19s. large, 17s. small. (10) The differences referred to are to be applied towards meeting the expenses to which the Government has been committed in maintaining coal supplies to the public.

NOMINATION OF JUSTICES OF THE PEACE AT BROKEN HILL.

Mr. BROOKFIELD asked the ACTING PREMIER,—(1) Is it a fact that a stipendiary magistrate of Broken Hill recently nominated three residents for appointment as justices of the peace? (2) If these residents are appointed will they have jurisdiction within the district presided over by their nominator? (3) Will he consider whether it is a desirable practice for magistrates to nominate justices of the peace in this manner?

Answer,—(1) Yes. (2) If appointed they would possess all the rights conferred by law upon justices of the peace. (3) It is in my opinion desirable in certain circumstances.

HOLIDAYS FOR RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

Mr. BUCKLEY asked the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS,—(1) Will he state whether the men now employed by the Railway Commissioners, who have been ex-employees, will receive, at the end of 1918, the one week's additional holiday granted to the Commissioners' employees by the new Railway Act of 1916? (2) Will anything that may have happened, with respect to such employees, during the past two months be used against them in obtaining the one week's extra holiday referred to above?

Answer,—I am informed:

(1) Railway officers employed on the wages staff during the whole of 1918 will be entitled to the week's holiday referred to at the end of that year. (2) No, not for the year mentioned (1918).

PAPERS.

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

New general rule No. 64, under the Mines Inspection Act, 1901.

Amended by-laws of the University of Sydney.

New by-laws of the University of Sydney.

Particulars of western land leases issued under the Western Lands Acts on the 5th October, 1917.

Transactions of the Benevolent Society of New South Wales.

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF MURRAY.

Mr. SPEAKER informed the House that, upon the passing of the resolution of the 23rd August, 1917, declaring the seat of Robert Scobie, Esquire, vacant, he had issued a writ for the election of a member to serve in the room of the late Mr. Scobie, and that such writ had been duly returned, with a certificate endorsed thereon by the returning-officer, of the election of Brian James Doe, Esquire, to serve as member for the electoral district of Murray.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

COAL-TRIMMERS AT NEWCASTLE.

Mr. GARDINER: I desire to ask the Minister for Labour and Industry whether it is a fact that the coal-trimmers at Newcastle have not refused to supply labour for ships on any occasion since the commencement of the strike, and that on the only occasion labour was applied for from the union it was supplied? If so, will he ascertain why this class of labour is not obtained through the union instead of through the free labour bureau at Newcastle?

Mr. BEEBY: The information I have is entirely contrary to that indicated by the hon. member's question, but if he will give notice I will have proper inquiries made.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S VISIT TO AMERICA.

Mr. LANG: I wish to know whether the attention of the Attorney-General has been drawn to paragraphs which have been published in the newspapers of yesterday and to-day to the effect that he has received an invitation to visit America, and whether he intends to accept the invitation? If so, what was the answer to my question last Tuesday night?

Mr. LAZZARINI: If it is the intention of the Attorney-General to visit America in December next, who is going to pay his expenses?

Mr. D. R. HALL: With regard to the question asked by the hon. member for Granville, I desire to say that last week he asked me whether I contemplated going to England, and I said I did not. That is perfectly true. With regard to the question asked by the hon. member for Marriekville, as to who will pay my expenses if I go to America, I would like to tell the hon. member that the country will not pay my expenses, and that is all that concerns him.

Later,

Mr. KEEGAN: I desire to ask the Attorney-General whether it is a fact, as reported in the daily press, that he contemplates an early visit to America?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That question has already been asked and answered.

Later,

Mr. LANG: I desire to ask the Attorney-General with reference to the answer he gave to the question bearing on his proposed visit to America—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. gentleman cannot ask any more questions with respect to the suggested visit of the Attorney-General to America.

Mr. LANG: I desire to ask the Attorney-General if he will look up the reply he gave me in answer to a question I asked him the other day about the receipt of a message from Mr. Holman to the effect that the Attorney-General was to be appointed to a position in connection with munition-making—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot refer to a previous question asked this session.

Later,

Mr. COCHRAN: I would like to know from the Attorney-General if the "Mr. Hall" referred to in to-day's cables, whose services have been requisitioned by statesmen in America—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have already said that there can be no further questions asked on that subject.

VALUATION OF LAND ACT.

Mr. COLQUHOUN: I desire to know from the Acting Premier whether the Cabinet will take into consideration the desirability of suspending the operation of the Valuation of Land Act?

Mr. FULLER: If it be found necessary to take this matter into consideration the Cabinet will do so. I do not know the reason which prompts the hon. member to ask this question, but if he will forward it to me, I will give it consideration.

WOOL AND BASIL WORKERS.

Mr. MUTCH: I desire to know whether the Minister for Labour and Industry has any statement to make to the House concerning negotiations which have been proceeding for a resumption of work by the wool and basil workers. In the event of no settlement being arrived at, will the Minister take steps, through the Industrial Court, to intervene and lay down the conditions under which employment shall be resumed?

Mr. BEEBY: The hon. member saw me on the subject of his question, and I promised, in reply to him, to give the House information regarding the matter. It is necessary for me to explain the whole of the circumstances in this case. The wool and basil workers were involved in the recent strike, and all work in the industry ceased for some time. When the question of re-employing workmen arose, the employers asked that all the applicants should sign a form which included the following clauses:—

- (a) The employee shall not oppose any application for de-registration of the Wool and Basil Workers' Association of New South Wales Industrial Union of Employees, and shall resign his membership thereof, or of any other industrial union, State or Federal, if and when called upon by the employer so to do.
- (b) The employee shall, when called upon, join and support such new union as the employer shall approve.

My attention was drawn to these two clauses by representatives of the workmen who urged that the men were willing to return to work and make fresh arrangements, which would probably lead to better relationship in the future, but they objected to the two clauses referred to on the grounds that the employers were

asking the men to sign away their right of appearance in the court which the law gave them. And, further, that they were asked to agree to belong only to such union as the employer should approve of. I interviewed the employers on the matter, and suggested that the clauses in question should be withdrawn. I subsequently received a letter, stating that the Association of Employers declined to amend the form of application in the direction asked. I thereupon caused a letter to be sent to the employers, stating that advantage should not be taken of the strike to force unionists to abandon their ordinary rights of action in the Industrial Court, and that if the association persisted in its attitude I would take whatever steps might be deemed necessary. As the matter is still pending, and work has not been resumed in the industry, I have decided to immediately apply to the court to make an application as to what conditions of re-employment might be fairly insisted upon by the employers. Applications will be made as a matter of urgency, probably to-morrow. Beyond this I have no power to interfere in the matter.

THE FORTHCOMING WHEAT HARVEST.

Mr. McGARRY: I desire to know whether the Minister for Agriculture can give the House any information as to the method which will be adopted in handling the coming wheat harvest—as to the methods of storage at the railway-stations and elsewhere, the method of control by agents of the State or Federal Governments, or any other information which may be available, so that the people in the country districts may know what the position is?

Mr. GRAHAME: The matter of handling the next wheat crop was dealt with at the Federal conference last week, and we came to a resolution that the method of handling should be much the same as that adopted in connection with the two previous crops. The same agents will handle the wheat crop in the event of the different State committees being able to arrive at satisfactory arrangements with regard to commission. It was left to each State to arrange separately as to the commission to be paid, and if satisfactory terms can be agreed upon, the

same agents that handled the crops in the two previous years will deal with the forthcoming harvest. Up to the present time satisfactory arrangements have not been agreed upon, but it is hoped that in the course of the next two or three days everything will be settled. As regards the stacking, now that the unfortunate strike has passed away, and the railways will be running as formerly, all the wheat that is stored in the country will be shifted into colder climates, in order to try to prevent its destruction by weevil, and after the yards are cleaned out the new wheat will be stacked in much the same manner as previously until storage accommodation is provided. The Federal and State Governments have guaranteed to the farmers not less than 4s. for the wheat crop for this and the next season. We arranged at the conference in Melbourne last week that 3s. would be paid on delivery, and the other 1s. when the wheat was sold, so that this year the farmer, instead of receiving 2s. 6d., will receive 3s. when his wheat is delivered at the railway-station.

Later,

Mr. WRIGHT: Will the Minister for Agriculture seriously consider the question of the Government undertaking the control of the purchase, stacking, and shipment of wheat, and thus do away with the payment of 3½d. per bushel which I understand is now made to certain wheat agents in this State? If it is not the intention of the Agricultural Department to do what I have asked, will the Minister undertake to throw the matter open to the various agents who have acted in the past, to see whether or not the wheat can be handled for something less than the amount mentioned?

Mr. GRAHAME: In reply to the hon. member for Willyama, I may say that the different Governments are under a pledge given by the Prime Minister that so long as satisfactory arrangements could be made with the agents who handled the wheat prior to the Government assuming control, those agents would not be removed during the currency of the war. I may inform the hon. member that the payment in New South Wales was 3d., not 3½d., and this year it will be very much less.

EMPLOYMENT OF WATERSIDE WORKERS.

Mr. COCHRAN: I desire to ask the Minister for Labour and Industry have employers the right to lay down the conditions on which men shall be employed, without having reference to the Industrial Court? Have shipowners the right to demand that wharf labourers who apply for employment shall sign a document to the effect that the men must agree to carry out all reasonable orders, and neither by word nor deed do anything to disturb the peaceful serenity of the surroundings of the wharfs? Further, has an employer the right to call upon any applicant for employment to sign a declaration under the provisions of the Oaths Act, 1900, to the effect that he is not a member of the Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia or any branch thereof; in other words, has an employer the right to wrongfully administer the Oaths Act, in order to crush unionism and victimise his former employees?

Mr. BEEBY: There are so many expressions of opinion in the question that it is difficult to answer it. The broad fact is that, in engaging labour under present conditions, employers have the right to ask men to agree that they will not be a disturbing influence on the wharfs in the future. They are asking men to sign an undertaking to that effect before they are taken on as permanent hands. As to rates of pay, hours of employment, and all other conditions, employers are offering those conditions which were fixed in Mr. Justice Higgins' award.

Later,

Mr. T. J. SMITH: I desire to ask the Minister for Labour and Industry have shipowners or employers on the waterside front the power without appealing to the Arbitration Court to ask that an individual applying for employment shall sign a declaration—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That question has already been asked and answered.

Later,

Mr. COCHRAN: I desire to ask the Attorney-General whether he will instruct the officials of his department to put the law into immediate motion by prosecuting

shipowners and others who are exacting from applicants for employment a declaration on oath to the effect that they are not members of the Waterside Workers' Union; will he also see that the provisions of the Oaths Act are not maladministered, and that people who trifle with the law are prosecuted?

Mr. D. R. HALL: If on the wharfs there is any interference with the Oaths Act I will see that my department takes the necessary steps.

CITY RAILWAY RESUMPTIONS.

Dr. ARTHUR: I desire to ask the Secretary for Public Works, in view of the fact that he has postponed the construction of the city railway, does he not consider that it would be possible to let temporarily for building purposes some of the land which has been resumed in the city, and on which buildings have been demolished?

Mr. BALL: That aspect of the case has been taken into consideration, and will be dealt with under the provisions of the bill now before the House.

RELIEF OF DISTRESS: PAYMENT OF RENT.

Mr. KEEGAN: I desire to ask the Attorney-General has his attention been drawn to statements made by applicants for relief to the different distress committees that their great difficulty is to meet demands made upon them by landlords for payment of rent; if so, will he give instructions to these committees to assist these people to pay their rents, so that they may not be evicted?

Mr. D. R. HALL: I hesitate to say that the Government is prepared to provide not merely sufficient to meet the immediate and pressing needs of those who require food, but that it is also prepared to pay any arrears of rent that may be due to landlords. That might open the door to very costly expenditure by the Government. I have under very close consideration the question as to what may be done in very special cases where landlords are not giving their tenants reasonably fair treatment. I do not subscribe to the view that the obligation of providing for the needy rests more upon landlords than upon any other section of the community, nor will we take any action

which will have that result. But I think it will be found possible to take certain action which will relieve those few cases of excessive hardship which have been brought under the notice of the committees, and I shall gladly take action in that direction.

RE-EMPLOYMENT OF RAILWAY OFFICIALS.

Mr. BUCKLEY: I desire to ask the Acting Premier, in view of his emphatic statements that no vindictiveness or victimisation has been shown towards former railway employees, is he aware of the fact that the Railway Commissioners are taking on junior ex-employees and allowing senior men to stand down who took no active part in the strike? Is he aware that old employees are being paid off and no explanation is being given to them as to the cause of their dismissal? If that is the case will he take into consideration the advisableness of establishing an appeals board to consider this grievance? I quote the case of—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BUCKLEY: Will the Acting Premier have inquiries made with a view to having the cases of these old employees considered?

Mr. FULLER: If the hon. member will provide me with the necessary information and the names I shall have full inquiries made.

SOUTH MAITLAND MINES.

Mr. KEARSLEY: I desire to ask the Acting Premier whether it is a fact that at certain mines on the South Maitland coal-field, in which the relationships between the managers and the owners of the various collieries with the men have been very amicable, arrangements have been made for resuming work, and that the time has been fixed? Is it a fact that the managers have informed the men that the power is not theirs to employ men, and that the Government has prevented the resumption of work at these mines? Will the Acting Premier inform the House whether it is a fact that where work might be resumed the Government prevents it?

Mr. FULLER: I understand that a cavil was made at all the mines to-day with the exception of Hebburn. If there

is any other information the hon. member wants, and he will give notice, I shall have the matter inquired into.

Later,

Mr. KEARSLEY: I desire to ask the Minister for Mines whether it is a fact that in certain mines of the South Maitland group the men and the managers have been working in harmony, but the Government has, nevertheless, stated that unless all those mines resume work none shall be allowed to do so; if so, does the Government intend by such action to penalise the managers who have been working amicably with the men for the faults of the managers in other mines who are always in conflict with the men?

Mr. J. C. L. FITZPATRICK: It is a fact that the Government has decided, in connection with the group of mines in South Maitland, including the Pelaw Main, the Richmond Main, and others, that unless the whole group resumes work none of the mines shall. I conveyed that information to a gathering of the hon. member's supporters last Friday, and I had a very pleasant Friday afternoon. I told them what the Government had decided upon, and gave them good advice. They agreed to accept the good advice, and admitted to me that they had been deceived by those gentlemen who have for a long time been posing as their particular friends.

Later,

Mr. KEARSLEY: I wish to ask the Minister if the Government intends to penalise the manager and owner of Neath colliery for the misdoings and shortcomings of the manager and owners of Pelaw Main colliery? Will he say whether he has any fault to find with the Neath colliery proprietors, and if not, why are they not allowed to work?

Mr. J. C. L. FITZPATRICK: I am given to understand that the reply which was furnished to the hon. member or some other hon. member earlier in the afternoon is absolutely correct—that the cavil has been drawn in relation to all mines in the South Maitland group, with the exception of one. Neath is one colliery that has drawn the cavil, and Pelaw Main is another.

Mr. KEARSLEY: They are not working!

Mr. J. C. L. FITZPATRICK : They are not working for the simple reason that the whole of the collieries have not agreed to start work. Hebburn is the only one out at present ; when that comes into line the whole of the mines will be working, and the thousands of men whom the hon. member and others induced to come out will be again earning their livelihood.

MORATORIUM FOR FARMERS.

Mr. P. M. MCGIRR : I desire to ask the Acting Premier whether he will take the necessary steps to extend the provisions of the Moratorium Act to farmers and share-farmers, to prevent them from being unfairly treated by machinery agents ?

Mr. FULLER : The Government will consider the matter.

WAR CHEST PARCELS : AUCTION SALE.

Mr. WEAVER : I desire to ask the Acting Premier whether his attention has been drawn to a newspaper report to the effect that many thousands of parcels which were intended for soldiers at the front have been returned to the Postmaster-General, and that that official proposes to sell them by auction, instead of allowing them to revert to the war chest, as formerly. Will the Acting Premier make representations to the Postmaster-General with the view of inducing him to allow these parcels to go to the War Chest Council ?

Mr. FULLER : I did notice the paragraph to which the hon. member refers, and I shall consider the advisability of taking steps in the direction indicated by the hon. gentleman.

SALARIES OF TRAMWAY OFFICIALS.

Mr. BROOKFIELD : I desire to ask the Minister for Railways whether it is a fact that the salaries of Mr. Dineen, Traffic Auditor, and of Mr. Doran, the Tramway Superintendent, have within the last month or two been raised by £100 a year ; and if such is the case, will he explain why ?

Mr. BALL : I do not think it is a fact that they have been raised within the last few months.

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

SANDOWN MEAT WORKS.

Mr. LANG : I desire to ask the Minister for Labour and Industry whether it is a fact that the employers and employees of the Sandown Meat Works, on the Parramatta River, at Granville, were prepared to start work for the purpose of exporting meat to England for the people of Great Britain and the soldiers ? Is it also a fact that Mr. T. A. Field, who controls the meat pool, and is said to be the agent of Swift & Co., of the American meat trust, informed the employers that if they started work with union labour they would not be able to purchase beef or sheep ? If that is so, will the Minister, who has expressed the opinion that he will favour all *bond fide* unions, take the same determined action against the meat pool as the Government has taken against the unions ?

Mr. BEEBY : I saw the manager of the Sandown Meat Works to-day. He made no complaint of any such threat having been issued by Mr. Field. What he did say was that he was negotiating with the men to resume work, that certain terms have been sent to the Melbourne office for consideration, and he was hopeful that the export branch of the meat industry would soon be resumed.

EXCESSIVE PRICE OF MEAT.

Mr. JOHNSTON : I wish to ask the Acting Premier whether his attention has been drawn to a newspaper report by Sir Henry Lucy with regard to the price of meat in England, that Australian meat can be placed on the market in London at less than 8d. per pound ; if so, will the Acting Premier take such action as may be necessary to prevent similar meat from being sold in the Australian market at 1s. 4d. per pound ?

Colonel ONSLOW : On the same question I should like to ask the Acting Premier whether it is true that an ordinary leg of mutton is now selling retail in England for 18s. 6d. ?

Mr. FULLER : I have not seen the article referred to by the hon. member for Bathurst, nor am I aware of the position as stated by the hon. member for Bondi. I may say the object of the Government is to reduce as quickly as possible the price of meat consumed in New South Wales.

DRINKING WATER IN RAILWAY CARRIAGES.

Mr. MCGARRY: I desire to ask the Minister for Railways whether he is aware that at the present time there is no drinking water provided on the railway system throughout a portion of the State; and, seeing that in summer very hot conditions prevail in the interior, will the Minister see that the water-bags are restored, and that fountains are provided on the railway-stations where there is sufficient pressure of water?

Mr. BALL: Seeing that the Railway Commissioners have taken over the control of the refreshment-rooms at the various railway-stations it is a reasonable request that water-bags should be available at those railway-stations.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION BY THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

Mr. T. J. SMITH: I desire to ask the Acting Premier whether, in regard to the distribution of food by the Benevolent Society, he will consider the advisableness of requesting that society to substitute white sugar for brown, seeing that brown sugar is assimilated with difficulty by many people?

Mr. COCHRAN: On the same subject, I desire to ask the Minister whether he will consider the advisableness of instructing the directors of the Benevolent Society to open depôts in the different centres?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member's question does not bear upon the same subject.

Mr. FULLER: In reply to the hon. member for King, I may say I have just been informed that the president of the society is not aware that brown sugar has ever been issued; but if it has been issued, and it is not acceptable to the people, he will see that white sugar is distributed in the future.

Mr. COCHRAN: I desire to ask the Acting Premier if he will instruct the directors of the Benevolent Society, which has a very nauseous reputation—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! If the hon. member wishes to ask a question he must frame it in parliamentary language. The hon. member knows very well that he must not make a statement, but ask a question.

Mr. COCHRAN: I had forgotten, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Then I would remind the hon. member.

Mr. COCHRAN: Will the Acting Premier instruct the directors of that notorious institution, the Benevolent Society—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. COCHRAN: What I wish to ascertain is whether the Minister will instruct the society to open depôts in the different wards, so that impoverished people may not have to drag themselves from the far end of the city to the central depôt, near the railway-station, in order to serve the convenience of these people?

Mr. FULLER: I realise the position put forward by the hon. member, and I may inform him that the particular matter to which he has referred is now being considered.

GOODS STOLEN FROM S.S. CUMBERLAND.

Mr. KEEGAN: I wish to ask the Attorney-General if he can inform me when it is his intention or the intention of his department to give a reply to Question No. 5 standing in my name, re goods stolen from s.s. *Cumberland*?

Mr. D. R. HALL: The hon. member will see that the answer is furnished today:—

Answer.—Inquiries are being made regarding the cases referred to. I shall be glad to let the hon. member know the result of the inquiries as early as possible.

Just as soon as I have the information I will let the hon. member know.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would remind the hon. member for Glebe that it is very disorderly to ask a question which has already been answered.

Mr. KEEGAN: I was not aware of it!

Mr. SPEAKER: The business-paper is available to the hon. member, and he should have satisfied himself on the point before putting his question.

DUBBO-WERRIS CREEK RAILWAY.

Mr. P. M. MCGIRR: I wish to ask the Secretary for Public Works if he will lay upon the table of the House the estimated total cost of the construction of

the Dubbo-Werris Creek railway, together with the total amount already expended on (a) the Dubbo-Merrygoen, and (b) on Binnaway-Werris Creek sections?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must see that his question comes within the category I have very often referred to, and which was referred to by my predecessor in office, of questions of which notice must be given. It is not regular to ask a question of that nature when notice can be given.

RETURNED BLIND SOLDIERS.

Mr. LANG: Is the Acting Premier aware that returned blind soldiers received from the Federal Government the maximum amount of pension payable to totally incapacitated soldiers, which amount has since been increased by the Federal Government from £1 10s. to £2 a week, and that the authorities now take the stand that a returned blind soldier is not deemed to be totally incapacitated? If that is so, will the Minister take into consideration the pre-election pledges of the present State National Government, and, treating returned blind soldiers as soldiers totally incapacitated, augment the amount of pension paid by the Commonwealth Government, in order to make the total payment £2 per week?

Mr. BRUNTNEILL: Is the Minister also aware that some of these returned blind soldiers are earning a good livelihood in certain directions?

Mr. FULLER: With regard to the question put by the hon. member for Parramatta, I am aware that some of the returned soldiers are doing very well in the occupations in which they were engaged before they went away to the war. In regard to what has been done by the Federal Government, I am not absolutely aware of the position as put forward by the hon. member for Granville; but I can assure the hon. member that the position of the New South Wales Government on the matter is this: that it will carry out the pledges given to the people of New South Wales in the policy speech of the Premier.

SUPPLEMENTING MILITARY PAY.

Mr. W. E. V. ROBSON: I wish to ask the Acting Premier if he is aware

[Mr. P. M. McGirr.

that notwithstanding the promise of the Government that the difference between the ordinary and the military pay would be made up in the case of certain employees in the railway service, the Commissioners are withholding such difference in the case of certain soldiers who have been killed at the front on the ground that it cannot be shown that those who are claiming the money under the will of the deceased soldier were solely dependent upon his pay; if so, will the Minister inquire into the matter?

Mr. FULLER: A report to that effect reached me five or six weeks ago. I expressed the opinion that this pay was clearly the property of the soldier and I gave instructions that it should go to his representatives. I feel sure that order has been carried out.

SHIPMENT OF WHEAT.

Mr. BROOKFIELD: In view of the statement of the Minister for Agriculture that much of our wheat has been destroyed or is in process of being destroyed by mice or weevils, I desire to ask the Acting Premier if the Imperial authorities have been notified of that fact or are they still depending on our wheat as foodstuffs? If they are, should they not be informed of the fact, so that they can make other arrangements?

Mr. FULLER: Whatever wheat can be got away to the old country is being got away, and a good deal more would have been got away if certain gentlemen in this community had not interfered with the shipping facilities.

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT STEAMER.

Mr. COCHRAN: I desire to ask the Acting Premier if it is a fact, as alleged, that almost insuperable obstacles have been placed in the way of the loading of the steamer owned by the Queensland Government? What conditions are laid down to secure that the ship is to be loaded with wheat by loyalists? Has any correspondence taken place between the Government of this State and the Government of Queensland? Does the Government of this State think it is right to take action which is inimical to the interests of the Queensland Government?

Mr FULLER : I have taken no action inimical to the interests of the Queensland Government. When the Queensland Premier communicated with me in connection with the supply of labour to load the vessel with wheat to be taken to a Queensland port I notified him that there was plenty of loyal labour available.

RAILWAY AND TRAMWAY STRIKE.

Mr. BROOKFIELD : I desire to ask the Minister for Labour and Industry whether it is a fact that he said the recent strike in the railway and tramway service was an insulting challenge to the community ; if so, is it a fact that at any time men go on strike they are to be considered as——

Mr. SPEAKER : The hon. member is now expressing an opinion.

Mr. BEEBY : I said the original ultimatum issued by the railway men was an insolent challenge to this community. I have said that over and over again, and I still stick to it.

WORK OF SHIPPING COMPANIES.

Mr. P. M. MCGIRR : I desire to ask the Acting Premier whether he will consider the advisability of urging upon the Federal Government the wisdom of appointing a royal commission to inquire into the working of shipping companies during the period of the war and for the previous two years, in order to prevent the people from being further exploited ?

Mr. FULLER : I shall certainly make no recommendation of that character to the Federal Government.

FINES UNDER THE GAS EMERGENCY ACT.

Mr. O'BRIEN : I desire to ask the Acting Premier whether he is aware that very severe fines have been imposed on a number of small shopkeepers for breaches of the Electric Lighting and Gas Emergency Act, and that if they are forced to pay those fines they will have to sell their homes up ? Will the Acting Premier take into consideration the reduction of those fines ?

Mr. FULLER : I am very sorry to hear of the position described by the hon.

member. Any representations made to me in connection with it will receive every consideration.

GAS SUPPLY.

Dr. ARTHUR : Will the Minister for Labour and Industry obtain the services of some independent authority to throw some light upon this question of gas ; and until we get an authoritative report upon the exceedingly contradictory statements which have been made, will he declare a moratorium as regards paying any gas accounts for the last quarter ?

Mr. BEEBY : The only answer I can give to the hon. member's question is that I believe that within the next day or two the Gas Company will be receiving normal supplies of average gas coal, and that all our troubles as to gas will then disappear.

NEW SOUTH WALES BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

Debate resumed (from 2nd October, *vide* page 1448), on motion by Mr. Stuart-Robertson :

(1) That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the amount of subscription and subsidy received during the past seven years by the New South Wales Benevolent Society, Valentine-lane, Sydney, and distribution of same. (2) That such committee consist of Mr. Fuller, Mr. Cochran, Mr. Lang, Mr. Nesbitt, Mr. Thomas, Mr. McKell, and the mover.

Mr. FULLER (Wollondilly), Acting Premier [5.26] : This matter was adjourned, I understand, from Tuesday last. I have this afternoon, in connection with the statements made by the hon. member for Camperdown, on the 2nd instant, in moving this motion, laid before the House a complete statement of all the moneys which have been received by the institution in any way—as subscriptions, donations, or legacies, the amount of Government subsidy, salaries and wages paid, commission and expenses allowed to collectors, amounts paid for building and repairs, and generally full and complete details in regard to the whole of the matter which would form the subject of inquiry under the proposed resolution. There is also a complete statement as to distribution. With regard to a number of the statements which were made by the hon.

member, I have received from the president of the Benevolent Society, for the information of the hon. member and any other hon. members who choose to peruse it, a complete answer to the various statements made by the hon. member. Under all these circumstances it seems to me that a select committee is not required, as the hon. member has now available full information in connection with the matter. I would respectfully suggest to him and to hon. members generally, that there is no necessity for the appointment of this select committee.

MR. STUART-ROBERTSON: I should like to have the debate adjourned until I have had an opportunity of perusing the documents.

Motion (by Mr. JOHNSTON) proposed:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Question—That the debate be now adjourned—put. The House divided:

Ayes, 24; noes, 32; majority, 8.

AYES.

Brookfield, P.	Loughlin, P. F.
Buckley, A. W.	Miller, G. T. C.
Burke, F. M.	Mutch, T. D.
Bushell, O. H.	O'Brien, W. J.
Cochran, J. P.	Quirk, J. P.
Davies, W.	Smith, T. J.
Dooley, J.	Storey, J.
Doyle, J. W.	Stuart-Robertson,
Hickey, Simon	R. J.
Kearsley, W.	Wright, J.
Keegan, T.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Lang, J. T.	Johnston, V. C. R. W.
Lazzarini, C. C.	McGirr, P. M.

NOES.

Arthur, Dr. R.	Ley, T. J.
Ball, R. T.	Manning, A. G.
Bruntnell, A.	Morton, Harry
Colquhoun, P. B.	Nesbitt, G.
Fallick, J.	Oakes, C. W.
Fitzpatrick, J. C. L.	Onslow, Col. J. W. M.
Fuller, G. W.	Perry, J.
Graff, A.	Robson, W. E. V.
Grahame, W. C.	Storey, D.
Grimm, A. H.	Thomas, F. J.
Hall, D. R.	Walker, R. B.
Hoskins, T. J.	Wearne, W. E.
James, A. G. F.	Weaver, R. W. D.
Lane, H. W.	
Latimer, W. F.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Lee, C. A.	McDonald, G. R. W.
Levy, D.	McGarry, P.

Question so resolved in the negative.

MR. J. C. L. FITZPATRICK: I move:

That the question be now put.

[Mr. Fuller.

The House divided:

Ayes, 31; noes, 25; majority, 6.

AYES.

Arthur, Dr. R.	Ley, T. J.
Ball, R. T.	Manning, A. G.
Bruntnell, A.	McGarry, P.
Fallick, J.	Morton, Harry
Fitzpatrick, J. C. L.	Nesbitt, G.
Fuller, G. W.	Oakes, C. W.
Graff, A.	Onslow, Col. J. W. M.
Grahame, W. C.	Perry, J.
Grimm, A. H.	Robson, W. E. V.
Hall, D. R.	Storey, D.
Hoskins, T. J.	Thomas, F. J.
James, A. G. F.	Walker, R. B.
Lane, H. W.	Wearne, W. E.
Latimer, W. F.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Lee, C. A.	Colquhoun, P. B.
Levy, D.	Weaver, R. W. D.

NOES.

Brookfield, P.	McGirr, P. M.
Burke, M.	Miller, G. T. C.
Bushell, C. H.	Mutch, T. D.
Cochran, J. P.	O'Brien, W. J.
Davies, W.	Quirk, J. P.
Dooley, J.	Smith, T. J.
Doyle, J. W.	Storey, J.
Hickey, Simon	Stuart-Robertson,
Johnston, V. C. R. W.	R. J.
Kearsley, W.	Wright, J.
Keegan, T.	
Lang, J. T.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Lazzarini, C. C.	Buckley, A. W.
Loughlin, P. F.	Burke, F. M.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

MR. STUART-ROBERTSON (Camperdown) [5.40], in reply: It would have been better for all parties concerned if the debate had been adjourned until an opportunity had been afforded to hon. members to peruse the statement which has been laid on the table to-night. I have no doubt that the officers of the Colonial Secretary's Department have made a very complete statement so far as they can answer the questions in regard to which information is desired. But there are other gentlemen who have supplied answers to some of the questions I have submitted—men like the president of the society, who has no public standing except that he is known as the possessor of some motor-cars, and plenty of money. I am expected to accept the statements of the gentlemen to whom I have referred without question, and without having an opportunity of acquainting myself with the answers that have been furnished. I think I am entitled to have an opportunity of perusing the statement before

making my reply. I have been endeavouring to obtain an answer to allegations in regard to the herding together of the people who have to apply to the society, and also as to the quality of the food supplied. The officers of the Colonial Secretary's Department cannot, any more than I can, supply this information. I made a charge against persons who are not in the public service, but who are receiving a subsidy from the Government for the purpose of distribution, and I have received an answer from the department in the form of the statement laid on the table of the House. In regard to certain allegations, the Acting Premier says that he has personally inquired into them, and has supplied answers from persons to whom certain questions have been put. What are these answers, and by whom have they been supplied? I desire to have placed before hon. members, not merely statements, but evidence given on oath, by witnesses who can be subjected to cross-examination by members of the select committee. The fact is that there is a strong desire to prevent publicity and proper inquiry, and to prevent the unearthing of the methods of management of the Benevolent Institution, and of the manner in which the public money is being distributed. Only this morning certain persons made application to me for assistance, and I told them that as residents of Camperdown they must apply to the Benevolent Society. One woman said, "Good God. Are we to be subjected to such treatment as that? I would not mind going to the Newtown council or to the Darlington council, or to a committee here in Camperdown, but why should we be required to present ourselves at the Benevolent Society? Of course we shall have to do it or starve, but only the fear of starvation will compel us." Every person to whom I have spoken on this matter since the distribution of the public money has been placed in the hands of the Benevolent Society has answered me in the same way, and if I required direct evidence as to the necessity of a full inquiry into the management of the institution, I could not have anything better than the statements made to me voluntarily at my own house this morning.

Here we come along on private members' night and find that debate is strangled.

MR. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order—the House has decided that the question be put.

MR. STUART-ROBERTSON: It is most unfair.

MR. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member cannot discuss that. He merely has the right of reply on the question before the House.

MR. STUART-ROBERTSON: We have a statement by the Acting Premier, and a few days ago we had a statement by the Attorney-General, who said:

I listened to the hon. member for Camperdown, and tried to find out what sort of information he expects a committee of this House would be able to get that would not be readily available without such a committee.

The information that will not be available unless we appoint a select committee is such as can be given by the unfortunate people who have to apply to the Benevolent Society for relief. I want evidence on oath from these people, and an opportunity for members of a select committee to cross-examine witnesses. The second portion of my motion relating to the "method of distribution" would cover the whole of the transactions of the society in respect to the distribution of relief, and if a select committee were appointed we could ascertain how applicants are treated, and we should be in a position to judge whether the method now adopted is proper or improper. The officers of the Colonial Secretary's Department have not been able to give this information.

MR. J. C. L. FITZPATRICK: How do you know?

MR. STUART-ROBERTSON: I am certain of it, and this House, if it decides that a select committee shall not be appointed, will refuse to allow the public to have the information I have referred to. The Attorney-General also said that he would have prepared in tabulated form certain information which was readily available. I knew that such information was available, and I knew that if a select committee were appointed all I would need to do would be to call upon the officers of the Colonial Secretary's Department to produce certain documents certified as true. The information that would

follow on the production of such papers would be in regard to the allegation I have made to the effect that food unfit for human consumption is being supplied.

Mr. PERRY: So do we in our own homes!

Mr. STUART-ROBERTSON: Yes, but when we receive food of that kind in our own homes from tradespeople with whom we are dealing we immediately return it and say that we will not have any further dealings with those tradespeople. In this case, however, the unfortunate people who receive this bad food cannot act in that way. If they make complaint they are probably told that the food is quite good enough for them, or something of that kind. I have no complaint whatever to make against any other benevolent society that is operating in the State. The hon. member for Byron referred to committees in Bathurst and other places.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member cannot refer to those societies. I stopped the hon. member for Byron from making reference to them.

Mr. STUART-ROBERTSON: I am merely complaining of the actions of the New South Wales Benevolent Society. That society sends people not only throughout Sydney but throughout the whole of the State to collect money. I want to know what it costs to collect that money. I want to know how the society distributes it. I want to know where it purchases its goods. I want to know the prices it pays for the goods which it purchases, and having got that evidence before me, I want to show the House that the business could be run more economically, and that goods could be purchased at cheaper prices and more expeditiously. I believe every hon. member has a firm desire to see persons who are compelled to seek charitable relief treated in the most lenient and respectful manner. I submitted this motion to the House in the firm belief that hon. members on hearing the allegations which I made would enable me to have a committee of inquiry so that it could be seen whether the statements made by me were true or not. I believe them to be true, and believing that hon. members desired to have the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth placed before them, I expect them to grant

[*Mr. Stuart-Robertson.*

me this committee of inquiry. It is the duty of hon. members to see that the honor of the House is maintained, and those who vote in the direction of suppressing information that could be gathered through an inquiry of this kind will certainly not vote in the best interests of the electors. It is furthermore the duty of hon. members to see that every person with a grievance shall have that grievance thoroughly inquired into, and those who vote against this motion will refuse to grant to persons who have grievances the right to have them thoroughly ventilated. If everything is right and clean and above board, as hon. members opposite—particularly the Attorney-General—would have us believe, what is the objection to appointing this committee in order to have the facts brought to light and the report thrashed out on the floor of this House? I appeal to hon. members to give me an opportunity to prove the allegations which I have made. If they do so, I say that I can get information three times as strong as that which I have already given, and that information will be obtained by evidence on oath.

Original question put. The House divided:

Ayes, 27; noes, 29; majority, 2.

AYES.

Brookfield, P.	Miller, G. T. C.
Buckley, A. W.	Mutch, T. D.
Burke, F. M.	McGirr, P. M.
Burke, M.	McKell, W. J.
Bushell, C. H.	O'Brien, W. J.
Cochran, J. P.	Quirk, J. P.
Dooley, J.	Smith, T. J.
Gardiner, A. R.	Storey, J.
Hickey, Simon	Stuart-Robertson,
Johnston, V. C. R. W.	R. J.
Kearsley, W.	Wright, J.
Keegan, T.	
Lang, J. T.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Lazzarini, C. C.	Davies, W.
Loughlin, P. F.	Doyle, J. W.

NOES.

Arthur, Dr. R.	Hoskins, T. J.
Ball, R. T.	James, A. G. F.
Beeby, G. S.	Lane, H. W.
Bruntnell, A.	Lee, C. A.
Colquhoun, P. B.	McDonald, G. R. W.
Fallick, J.	McGarry, P.
Graff, A.	Morton, Harry
Grahame, W. C.	Nesbitt, G.
Grimm, A. H.	Oakes, C. W.
Hall, D. R.	Onslow, Col. J. W. M.

Perry, J.	Wearne, W. E.
Robson, W. E. V.	Weaver, R. W. D.
Storey, D.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Thomas, F. J.	Latimer, W. F.
Walker, R. B.	Ley, T. J.

Question so resolved in the negative.

THE ASHTONFIELDS COAL-MINES RAILWAY BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD (Bingara)
[6.5] moved:

That this bill be now read a second time.

He said: I should like to inform hon. members that this is the same bill that was before the House last Parliament, but, owing to its not having been completed before the expiration of Parliament, the whole matter lapsed, and had to be commenced *de novo*. The bill originated again in the Legislative Council, and a select committee was appointed to report on it. The bill was brought up and passed in that Chamber, and it is now before hon. members again. It is a very simple proposition. The proposal is merely to enable Messrs. William and Thomas Longworth, who own certain lands in the county of Northumberland, in the neighbourhood of Thornton, to construct a line of railway from their coal-mines to junction with the Great Northern railway, the property of the State. There are practically no interests whatever involved in this proposal. The land where the line starts belongs to the people who propose to build the railway. The land adjoining the Great Northern railway at Thornton is also the property of William and Thomas Longworth, and there are two properties intervening which will be traversed by the line. One is the property of the trustees of the late Henry Osborne, and the other is the property of the trustees of the De Salis estate. The interest of the public is involved in only two spots on the line, one where the railway crosses the main northern road from Maitland to Sydney, and one where the line junctions with the railway. The Railway Commissioners are satisfied with the proposal, and are looking after the public interests, as far as they are concerned. The Tarro shire council has been consulted, so far as the public interest is concerned, in relation

to the road. The interests of the owners of the private lands are protected by the bill, as it only takes from them the portion of the surface over which the railway passes. The minerals beneath the area of land covered by the railway remain, of course, the property of the owners of the freehold. The Railway Commissioners approve of the bill, and the Tarro shire council has no objection to offer. Proper gates will be made where the railway crosses the road, and everything will be done to the satisfaction of the shire council. Consequently there is no public interest not properly provided for. The whole proposal is merely to enable William and Thomas Longworth to work certain coal seams in their land and bring the coal to market. The Government is not asked to build the line; the owners are prepared to build the line. All they want is legislative enactment to allow the line to be worked in conjunction with the State railway system.

Mr. BROOKFIELD: Why do you say that the Government will not build the line?

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD: I suppose the Government would be more interested in building lines elsewhere. Although this line is justified from a public point of view, it might come into conflict with other proposals that have to be left over.

Mr. SIMON HICKEY:

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD: It serves the interests of the Longworths in this way, that it will enable them to get their coal, and it will help the public, because it will increase the supply of coal. I may tell hon. members that the railway has actually been constructed and is in operation. This bill is to enable the line to be worked in conjunction with the State railway system and to enable the Railway Commissioners to issue tickets in conjunction with the owners.

Mr. LANG: Is the line strong enough to carry the rolling-stock?

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD: The railway is built according to the standard gauge, and the interlocking and signalling apparatus has been approved by the Railway Commissioners. The bill passed its second reading during last Parliament, when the late Government was in office, and a number of hon. members who are now on the opposite side of the House

were sitting on this side. I think it reached the Committee stage. There is nothing fresh before the Chamber.

AN HON. MEMBER: Why was it turned down?

MR. G. R. W. McDONALD: It was not turned down; it was simply unfinished when Parliament expired. It has never been opposed by hon. members. I will ask hon. members to let the second reading pass, and if there is anything they want to bring up at the Committee stage I shall be pleased to consider any amendment that may be moved with the view of conserving the public interest.

Question proposed.

MR. J. STOREY (Balmain) [6.10]: Under ordinary circumstances, if one had only in mind the giving of facilities to persons interested in coal-mining or any other industry, there would not be very much objection to a bill of this character. If there were certain coal-fields which could be exploited to the advantage of the whole community, but which cannot be availed of because of the difficulty of getting the produce to market, it might be a wise thing to give permission to construct a private line of railway. But we have to remember that the Government of this country and the people, rightly or wrongly, have accepted the policy that wherever practicable the Government shall own and control railways constructed within the State.

MR. G. R. W. McDONALD: As a matter of fact the line has been built. Under those circumstances it is no use asking the Government to come in and construct, but there is provision for resumption by the Government at the cost of construction!

MR. J. STOREY: Do I understand from the hon. member that this line has already been constructed?

MR. G. R. W. McDONALD: Yes, and it is in operation!

MR. J. STOREY: Then, what is the purpose of the bill?

MR. G. R. W. McDONALD: To enable fares and freights to be collected, and to make the railway to all intents and purposes part and parcel of the system controlled by the Railway Commissioners!

MR. J. STOREY: I am reminded that this bill was dealt with in a previous Parliament, and that it had reached a

[*Mr. G. R. W. McDonald.*]

certain stage when Parliament prorogued; but according to what the hon. member says the line has already been constructed and equipped, and it is doing certain work, and parliamentary sanction is now sought in order that passenger fares and freightage on goods may be charged.

MR. G. R. W. McDONALD: That is so!

MR. J. STOREY: Then my original objection in a measure disappears, because of the fact that the line has been constructed, is fully equipped, and is doing a particular class of work. But power is now sought to do certain other things now done by the Railway Commissioners. What I fail to understand is that these people should have expended such a large sum of money upon the construction and equipment of the line with a certain object in view, and that they should now seek powers which they did not ask for when authority to construct the line was originally granted.

MR. G. R. W. McDONALD: The growth of a town has made it necessary for goods and passengers to be carried over the line. As it is, the private owners can refuse to carry either passengers or goods. This bill will enable the public to travel over the line under the regulations of the Railway Commissioners!

MR. J. STOREY: If I supported this bill on a previous occasion it must have been out of consideration for the hon. member. I can scarcely imagine that I voted for a bill which will have the effect now suggested. Originally the line was constructed to enable coal from certain mines to be brought to the main line, and for the purpose of enabling those who had invested their money in that particular property to get a fair return. I hold—contrary, perhaps, to some of those who sit with me—that if a man spends his money in a particular direction to create employment under conditions satisfactory to the community he is entitled to a reasonable reward. The building of this railway for the purpose of getting coal was a legitimate enterprise, and one which should not in any way be interfered with. Anyone possessed of common-sense will agree with that.

MR. LANG: The owners are only entitled to a fair return!

MR. J. STOREY: Undoubtedly. A man who is exploiting the people is not

to be allowed to go on and obtain parliamentary sanction for it. So long as a man reaps a fair return for his investment no one with a grain of common-sense can object. But the position here is entirely different. The railway was built for a specific purpose. Having served that purpose, Parliament is appealed to by the owners for power to carry goods and passengers over the line. Now that the railway has reached that stage the Government should take it over.

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD: There is provision in the bill under which the Government can take it over at the cost of construction!

Mr. J. STOREY: I am aware of it.

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD: Unless we pass the bill that provision cannot be availed of!

Mr. J. STOREY: If we pass the bill giving to these people the powers sought and later the Government proposes to resume the line, the owners will say, "We propose to allow you to have this line, but you will have to pay us, in addition to the amount which would be demanded for an ordinary goods line, the value of the whole of the services which we are carrying out."

Mr. JAMES: It is provided in the bill that they cannot do that!

Mr. J. STOREY: Clause 32 is as follows:—

It shall be lawful for the Secretary for Public Works, on behalf of the Government, at any time, by notice in writing, to require the said promoters to sell, and thereupon the said promoters shall sell to the Government the said railway, upon the terms of paying the then value (exclusive of any allowance for compensation for compulsory sale) of the said railway and all lands, buildings, works, materials, and plant of the said promoters suitable to and used by them for the purposes of the said railway; such value in case of difference to be ascertained by arbitration in the manner provided by the Public Works Act, 1912, for settling cases of disputed compensation and subject to the terms and conditions therein contained. And when any such sale shall have been made to the said Government, the said railway, lands, buildings, works, materials, plant, and premises shall vest in the Chief Commissioner for Railways and Tramways, who shall have all the rights, powers, and authorities of the said promoters in respect of the said railways so sold:—

Provided that the sum to be paid by way of purchase shall in no case exceed the total cost of the construction of the railway and related works, land, and buildings.

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD: What more can you expect than that provision?

Mr. J. STOREY: That meets my objection. I feel, however, that the Government ought to take up the bill. It is difficult to understand why the Government should sanction a bill of this description being in the hands of a private member. We have repeatedly had hon. members bringing forward bills of this kind. I have opposed the practice for many years on the ground that the impression was always created that matters were not as they should be, or the Government would have taken charge of the bill. Not so very long ago I had a bill in connection with a road 80 feet long in Balmain, and because I knew that impression was always created, I asked the Minister for Lands if he would take charge of the measure. I have never believed, and I do not now believe, in private members' bills. However, I do not want to talk the hon. member's bill out, but for the reasons stated I shall vote against it.

Mr. McGARRY (Murrumbidgee) [6.24]: I do not remember the second reading of the bill having been agreed to by this House, but I do remember its having been defeated in the Legislative Council some years ago. I should like to get an opinion from the Government to-night in regard to an objection I have to this line being constructed. I want to know if the Government is going to take over all the private lines in the Maitland coal-fields? A proposal was before this House twelve months ago to build a line from Thornton on the Northern line to Aberdare Junction. I have some knowledge of the coal country, and I intend to quote from Mr. Hutchinson's evidence in regard to that proposed line. When the inquiry was made by the Public Works Committee twelve months ago the Government was anxious that the whole of the lines controlled by private enterprise should be inquired into in order to ascertain whether they should be taken over by the Government or not. The following question put to Mr. Hutchinson, and his answer to it, appear in the report of the Public Works Committee:—

What is the justification for the proposed line;—is it to develop new collieries along the route, or is it to further develop collieries that have been partly developed by private lines?

The object of the line is that it shall be a stepping-stone towards the Government resuming the whole of the colliery lines, and to their taking over the whole of the business of getting coal from the mines to the shipping port. It was thought that a line from Thornton would prove one way of getting over the difficulty, and it is understood that the Minister would like the committee to investigate the whole proposal.

When the proposal was fully investigated it was thought that the Government should take the whole responsibility of the construction of the line, and should own it. I shall read the concluding paragraph of the report of the committee, as follows :—

In conclusion, the committee direct attention to the fact that the Caledonian Company appear to have been unfairly treated by the Government of the day in depriving them of the means of constructing a private line from their collieries at Cessnock to Cockle Creek, a facility enjoyed by their competitors, to the disadvantage of the Caledonian Collieries, Limited.

A great amount of evidence was taken, and it was made apparent that some companies were penalised while others appeared to get concessions. To-night it appears that private individuals are asking for a similar concession. I suggest that the Government should indicate whether it is prepared to take over the whole of the railways in the Maitland district, in order to work them to better advantage. Here is a private line which joins on to a Government railway. There is already much shunting congestion at Maitland, Greta, and right through, and if this bill is passed we are going to make the muddle worse.

[Mr. Speaker left the chair at 6.30 p.m. The House resumed at 7.45 p.m.]

[Government business called on in pursuance of sessional order of 4th October.]

REAL ESTATE AND STOCK AGENTS BILL.

In Committee:

Mr. JAMES (Goulburn), Minister of Public Instruction [7.50], moved :

That it is expedient to bring in a bill to provide for the licensing and regulation of real estate and stock agents ; to prohibit certain acts by unregistered agents ; and for purposes consequent thereon or incidental thereto.

He said : This is a bill which has been asked for by a majority of the real estate agents, and also by the stock and station

agents. It has practically been drafted by associations of leading firms of the two different classes of agents. I will not go into the provisions of the measure just now, but the purpose for which it is being introduced is really the protection of the public. There are a large number of reputable agents, and there are a number of agents who carry on their business in a way which leaves much to be desired. It is thought that if a bill is introduced to regulate the operations of agents in these two different branches of trade, it will be of benefit to the public, and at the same time, may I say, of assistance to the revenue of the State.

Shortly, it is proposed that agents shall be registered, and that a board shall be created of which the president shall be chosen by the Governor, and the six other members elected, three by the real estate agents and three by the stock and station agents. The president will, if the Governor thinks fit, be paid a fee, but the other members of the board will be paid nothing whatever. The board will deal with the registration of agents. Those who are reputable and bear good characters will be registered, and those who are not of that class will, under certain provisions which I shall submit to the House later on, be disqualified from practising as agents.

Another feature of the bill which I think will be of service to the public is that six months after it is passed no agency will be recognised unless the terms are in writing. We know that over and over again agents have brought actions in the courts in which they have alleged that certain properties have been placed in their hands for sale, and on inquiry it has turned out that those properties had never been placed in their hands at all. These agents are not men who have any means behind them, and very often, as a result, a person who is improperly sued for commission does not succeed in getting his costs out of the other party. We know that large properties pass through the hands of estate agents, and large sales of stock take place through stock and station agents, so we are providing at the same time that those agents who are registered shall put up a certain guarantee as to their stability. We are also providing that they must keep their clients' moneys.

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separate from their own by means of a trust account, and other matters of that kind.

AN HON. MEMBER: Of whom did you say the board would be constituted?

MR. JAMES: Six members, elected by the registered agents. No one who is not registered will be allowed to practice as an agent.

MR. DOOLEY: Who is to be the judge as to whether a man should be admitted to practice or not?

MR. JAMES: The board itself. In the election of the board every registered agent will have the same voting power, be he a large or a small agent.

MR. COCKS: What is to be the penalty if an agent does not keep a trust account?

MR. JAMES: I cannot say offhand, but I think he will be liable to a penalty not exceeding £500. He will have to enter into a bond, also, I think for £500.

AN HON. MEMBER: Will this bill apply to horse and cattle dealers?

MR. JAMES: It will apply to any body of that sort, but not to auctioneers. Auctioneers are under a different Act altogether.

AN HON. MEMBER: Is provision made in this bill for an appeal from a decision of the board?

MR. JAMES: Yes, to a judge of the District Court. The bill, I think, is one which will excite a great deal of interest, and I wish to get it before the House as soon as possible, to have it fairly and properly discussed. The registration fee suggested was pretty high—£20, but in the bill I have made it £10. An auctioneer's registration fee is £15. Under this bill every member of an agency firm will have to be registered, not the firm as a whole, but each member of the firm individually; otherwise one man might take into partnership a fellow not as trustworthy as himself, and he himself be registered and the other man not.

MR. MARK F. MORTON: Why should not this bill apply to auctioneers?

MR. JAMES: Because they are registered under another Act.

MR. MARK F. MORTON: But they are not bound to keep a separate trust account!

MR. JAMES: I do not want to mix up auctioneers with agents under this bill.

If it becomes necessary to amend the Auctioneers Act, to bring it into line with this measure, that can be done.

Question proposed.

MR. J. STOREY (Balmain) [7.56]: I do not know that under ordinary circumstances there would be much opposition to a bill of this description. I think that hon. members generally recognise that some sort of registration of agents is necessary; therefore I suppose that, generally speaking, this measure will be acceptable to hon. members. But I cannot understand why we should hand over to the board the powers that are to be exercised under this bill. Why is it not possible for the Government itself to administer this measure the same as it administers other Acts of Parliament? I understood the Minister of Public Instruction to say that there was to be a board consisting of a certain number of agents, and that they would have all the powers necessary for the purpose of either admitting or rejecting any applicant for registration under this bill—

MR. JAMES: The same as in the case of the Dental Board!

MR. J. STOREY: And that from this board there may be an appeal to a District Court judge by anyone who is rejected by the board. In this proposition I see the same danger as I saw in connection with the Dental Board. Hon. members know the controversy that took place in this House, and outside the House too, as to the behaviour of the Dental Board generally. On that occasion several hon. members expressed the opinion that the Dental Board had done many things it ought not to have done, and great objection was raised to the Dental Board in consequence. The same thing might happen in this case if we delegate certain powers to men who are already in the business. Having got into the business, they might immediately proceed to make it a close corporation, and any man, no matter what his qualifications, might be refused registration by the board. If he desired to pursue the matter further, he would have to appeal to a District Court judge.

MR. JAMES: You will find all that is provided for in the bill!

MR. J. STOREY: It may be provided for in the bill; but what I have mentioned appears to me to be objectionable. I hold

the view that applicants for registration under this measure should be similarly situated to a man who wants to obtain a license to sell rabbits or anything else in the street. If I desire to become an agent of any description I ought to be able to go to the Government, and upon presenting satisfactory proofs of my qualifications to obtain a license. I have no objection to the provision requiring that a bond shall be given. I have sometimes wondered why members of the legal profession are not required to find bonds of a substantial character. If we had a provision of that kind we should not have so many cases of "in re gent one." Hon. members on this side have no particular purpose to serve, but want to see proper provision made for the registration and control of agents. The registration procedure should be simple, and it should be competent for any man of reasonable capability to obtain the necessary license. We believe in registration and we have said so for years, but nothing has been done. I do not believe in relegating important powers to a board such as that contemplated. We have had experience, not once but a hundred times, of the objectionable features associated with allowing a number of men engaged in a particular calling to do business themselves and to prevent, very often on fictitious grounds, other men from following the same calling. I admit that it is expedient at this stage to introduce a bill of this description, but hold that it is not expedient that we should hand over the control that is to be exercised to a board which might create a close corporation.

Mr. MARK F. MORTON (Allowrie) [8.3]: As one of those who will be affected by the proposed measure, I quite agree with the remarks which have fallen from the leader of the Opposition. We shall provide facilities for creating a close monopoly if we allow agents generally to be controlled by a board consisting of agents. I suggest that the Minister should give this matter careful consideration before bringing the bill on for the second reading. Any provision for the registration of agents should be shaped in such a way as to protect the public and not the agents; but if the control of affairs is handed over to a board consisting of agents, the chances are that the

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powers conferred upon the board will be exercised in such a manner as to protect the agents and to render it difficult for other persons to become members of the profession. The Minister should seriously consider the question as to whether it would not be better to retain the control in the hands of some Government department. There is no doubt that a measure of this kind is badly needed. I can see no difference between the case of the agent who receives a deposit on the sale of land and a solicitor who receives a similar deposit. If a solicitor is required to pay the deposit into a separate account, the agent should be under a similar obligation. The amount of the registration fee is a matter of small moment so long as the public are rendered secure in their dealings with agents. I asked the Minister why auctioneers should not be brought under the provisions of the bill, and he said they were dealt with under the Auctioneers Licensing Act. That, however, is not the case. An auctioneer simply pays his license fee, and has no obligation beyond that.

Mr. JOHNSTON: He is subject to the criminal law!

Mr. MARK F. MORTON: Yes, but we are all subject to the criminal law. When an auctioneer sells land by auction he should be placed in the same position as a real estate agent who sells it privately, and the Minister would do well to amend the bill to bring auctioneers within its provisions. There should be no distinction between the two classes of business men. I hope the Minister will take the points mentioned into consideration, with a view to making the bill more satisfactory, and insuring its discussion upon a strictly non-party basis.

Mr. P. M. MCGIRR (Macquarie) [8.7]: I quite agree with the hon. member for Allowrie and the leader of the Opposition. I recognise that it is expedient to bring in a measure of this kind, but I consider the control exercised over land agents should remain in the hands of the Government. I know of many cases in which agents have obtained commission to which they were not entitled, and some control should be exercised over them. A £10 registration fee would be far too high,

because I know of many small men who are struggling and who are now making a living—

Mr. JAMES: If they are not worth £10 they do not offer a very good guarantee to the public!

Mr. P. M. MCGIRR: There are many honorable men who are making a living as agents, but who are not in a position to pay a £10 registration fee. It would not be right to place agents now in business in a position to squeeze other men out, and therefore the Government should retain the control in its own hands.

Mr. MCGARRY (Murrumbidgee) [8]: The question before us is the expediency of introducing a bill, but there is nothing before us to indicate whether or not the expediency can be established. I read the report of a deputation, representative of big stock and station agents and auctioneers in the city, which recently waited on the Minister in reference to a measure of this kind, and the impression left on my mind was that it was desired to create a monopoly and crush out the smaller agents. I suggest that the bill should provide for the protection of the public interests.

Mr. JAMES: So it does!

Mr. MCGARRY: I suggest the insertion of a clause making it a criminal offence for a man to be an agent and a dealer at the same time.

Mr. JAMES: Why should not a man be an agent as well as a dealer?

Mr. MCGARRY: According to business etiquette it is a crime for a man to be both an agent and a dealer. A property may be put into his hands and he may take it himself if he sees that it is a "snap." That occurs every day in the week.

Mr. MARK F. MORTON: A man should not himself buy what he is called upon to sell!

Mr. MCGARRY: That is so. That is regarded as a crime according to business etiquette.

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD: If it should become known that a man does that, that is an end to his business!

Mr. MCGARRY: There are cases where people in England and other countries give properties to agents to sell, and the thing is worked in such a way by these agents that it is hard to detect them in the offence, and the result is that people

suffer considerably in the sale of their properties. The bill should make it a criminal offence for agents to deal in a tricky manner with people's property. I do not oppose the introduction of the bill, but it should to my mind be in the direction of protecting the interests of the public.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bathurst) [8.12]: I do not oppose the introduction of the bill, for I regard it as a wise thing to provide for certain principles of which the Minister has spoken, but I am one of those who think that the qualification of an agent should be honesty and not a matter of payment of £10 or £20 as a fee. His two qualifications should be capacity and integrity, and so far as this bill provides for a registration fee of £10, which cannot be regarded as a nominal amount, I am going to strenuously oppose it. With regard to what has been said by the hon. member for Allowrie, we shall at the second reading and Committee stages have an opportunity of thrashing that out. This is an opportune bill and I hope that it will deal with horse-mongers—people who, particularly in the city, are getting despicable livings by trading on the innocence of those who in many instances come from the country, by selling them "mokes." I knew this to be done only a fortnight ago: A man went into the yards for the purpose of buying a horse. He was driven round Centennial Park, and given a splendid trip behind a fast trotting horse. He came back into the yards, and paid as deposit the bulk of the purchase money, and was handed a receipt, which had certain brands marked on it. He did not compare the brands with the brands on the horse that had been run round Centennial Park. He was told that he would have to come back and get a new set of harness, as the harness that had been used was too old. He came back, and got the new set of harness. The assistant pulled the horse out in a sulky, and the man said to the person from whom he had made the purchase, and whom he called "Robbo" in the police court—

An HON. MEMBER: They are dealers!

Mr. JOHNSTON: They are "take downs." The purchaser complained to the vendor, whom he called "Robbo," and said, "This is not the horse with which

you drove me round Centennial Park," and "Robbo" assured him that it was. After he had gone up the road some distance the horse stopped and dropped dead. The magistrate said, "Did you tell 'Robbo' about this?" and he replied, "Yes, I did." The magistrate said, "What did 'Robbo' do then?" He replied, "'Robbo' said, 'Well, he never did that before.'" That is the kind of thing that this bill should deal with.

Mr. JAMES: The hon. member knows that if he had been careful and compared the brands on the receipt with the brands on the horse that could not have happened!

Mr. JOHNSTON: If he had been careful "Robbo" would not have taken him down in the way in which he did. I am not going to vote for any bill that is going to put a prohibitive registration fee on a man without money, but who has honesty, and a fair amount of capacity to carry on a decent business.

Mr. WALKER (Hawkesbury) [8.16]: No one is going to say that it is not expedient to bring in a bill of this kind, which has been required for a very long time, but this measure does not go far enough. It should embrace all classes of commission agents. There is no doubt that people living in the country, fruit-growers and agriculturists, are suffering greatly at the present time through the actions of commission agents down about the markets in the city. They are being treated in a scandalous manner by these agents, and it is quite time that legislation was introduced to deal with agents. Only within the last eighteen months I had occasion to bring four of these commission agents in the markets up to the bull-ring for "sticking" to the moneys which they received as the proceeds of products sent down to them for sale. The only way in which you can deal with them at present is to charge them with larceny as bailees, but when you take proceedings in that direction they come along and square up, and that appears to be about the only chance you have of getting your money. Thousands of pounds are being taken out of the pockets of the fruit-growers by these unscrupulous agents. I would suggest that this bill be withdrawn, and that a bill dealing with all these agents and

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brokers should be passed. Every member of the legal profession knows the trouble that is experienced in getting back deposits which have been paid to hotel-brokers, and if the Minister will bring in a general bill of that character he will confer a boon on the community.

Mr. BUCKLEY: Will you vote against the bill if he does not do that?

Mr. WALKER: No; I am prepared to accept this as a first instalment. If the bill is not made general now, the Minister will probably bring in a bill subsequently dealing with all these commission agents. People living on the land have enough to put up with now in the way of droughts, fires, floods, all sorts of insect pests, and fruit inspector pests, and in addition to that they are being robbed by these commission agents. I shall give a case in point. A man who was growing pumpkins was not satisfied with the prices he was getting and came to see me about the matter. He said his neighbour was getting more than he was. I told him that the thing could be very easily settled by sending down a truck-load of pumpkins to the markets and buying them himself. He sent a truck-load to Darling Harbour and bought it for £2 15s., while the returns from the commission agent showed £1 7s. We took proceedings against the agent, and sent the papers to the then Attorney-General, but nothing happened. The reply was, "We have no objection to your taking proceedings, but the Crown is not going to interfere." It is time that something was done to stop that sort of practice. These agents should be required to keep trust accounts, to pay registration fees, and enter into a bond that they will square up when they get the proceeds of the producers' crops. I shall certainly vote that it is expedient to introduce the bill, but I would suggest to the Minister in charge to withdraw it so as to deal with all commission agents. Until that is done, people in the country will continue to suffer.

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD (Bingara) [8.21]: I should like to ask the Minister whether he proposes to make it an offence to accept a commission unless the person is registered under the provisions of the bill?

Mr. JAMES: Yes!

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD: When solicitors sell properties, or act in connection with a sale, it is a common occurrence for them to accept commission, although they are not agents.

Mr. JAMES: There is a clause which takes that class out!

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD: The point is, that very often a person is refused business unless he is prepared to share the commission. A solicitor who is acting for an estate may go to an agent and say, "I want you to sell a property, but I am not prepared to let you do so unless you give me half the commission."

Mr. J. STOREY: Does the hon. member suggest that a reputable solicitor would do that?

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD: I do not suggest that a reputable solicitor would, but we are faced with the position that not all solicitors are reputable.

Mr. JAMES: There is no special exemption in the case of solicitors. There is in the New Zealand Act, but I took that out. The only persons exempted in the bill are licensed auctioneers!

Mr. G. R. W. McDONALD: When an agent does work, and his client will not pay him, will you make that an offence?

Mr. JAMES: In that case you can sue him!

Mr. SIMON HICKEY (Alexandria) [8.25]: Regulation of this character is the only means whereby we can keep any body of men under adequate control. You want to know who they are, and the only way is to make it necessary for them to register every year. I take it that the object of the measure is to make it essential that these men shall register so that we may know who they are, and keep a careful look-out on their transactions, but surely it cannot be an object of the bill to raise a considerable sum of money by means of a registration fee.

Mr. JAMES: That is part of it!

Mr. SIMON HICKEY: I do not think that is a right principle.

Mr. JAMES: Why are auctioneers charged £15?

Mr. SIMON HICKEY: I do not think that is a parallel case. It is possible that auctioneers are being charged too much.

•Mr. JAMES: What about the Liquor Act?

Mr. SIMON HICKEY: It seems to me that the good character and reputation of an agent ought to be a sufficient asset from the Government standpoint. £10 is a very considerable fee to charge. The Minister proposes that an auctioneer's license fee shall be £20. If an auctioneer is selling his own stuff he is allowed to do so on paying a much reduced registration fee of £2 2s.

Mr. JAMES: Leave all that till the second reading!

Mr. SIMON HICKEY: This is the only means whereby the Government can hope to control these men. I agree with the hon. member for Hawkesbury, that stock and station agents are only one class that requires controlling. The hon. member has mentioned the case of fruit commission agents who operate in the fruit markets. I might also quote the case of the produce agents who operate at the Alexandria produce markets from week to week. When men in the country send produce to the market they are largely guided by the newspapers in their ideas as to what prices are obtained. The newspaper reporters who attend the market, rather innocently, as I always thought, take the prices at which the different produce is knocked down under the hammer by the auctioneer publicly. But what happens is this: There is a large number of buyers looking for the best stuff that is offering. Really first-class stuff is readily sold by the auctioneer without having recourse to the hammer. It is sold privately, at perhaps 15 per cent. to 20 per cent. over the stuff that has been knocked down. Some of this produce is sold at a much higher rate than what is recorded in the newspapers, and the produce agents are not slow to take advantage of the position, to the detriment of their clients. They return prime stuff as being sold at the prices realised by auction. Naturally, the man in the country is dissatisfied. He is being absolutely robbed. This bill only touches the fringe of things. What

I have referred to should be comprehended in this measure; if not, it should be dealt with at another time. However, I agree with the hon. member for Hawkesbury that this is a step in the right direction.

Mr. LANG (Granville) [8.28]: We know that agents and associations have come to the Minister and asked for this measure. An objection that I see to it is that we are going to put into the hands of large associations the power to say who shall be admitted to practise in the future as land agents.

Mr. JAMES: The first election will be done by the association, and after that agents will have to register!

Mr. LANG: I have always taken the stand that I would not join any of these associations, and I will not need to join them. But under this bill these men will be able to penalise me. It would be better to act on the principle adopted in the case of auctioneers. As an auctioneer, I must have a good character, go before the bench of magistrates every year, and pay a fee of £15. That, with the guarantee of a trust account, ought to be sufficient in the case of a land agent, without handing over the control of this particular class of business to a set of individuals who may prevent men of ability and character from joining the association. I think that part of the bill ought to be amended so as to leave the matter in the hands of the Government, or, better still, with the bench of magistrates. It seems to me that under the system outlined by the Minister, there will be no guarantee as to the character of those who may seek to set up as real estate or stock agents. Simply because they happen to be in business before the measure comes into operation, they will be allowed to register and continue their operations.

Mr. JAMES: Every man who wants to come in will have to be registered. The mere fact that he is already in practice entitles him to no more consideration than a man who is not in practice!

Mr. LANG: Who will be the judge as to the qualifications of an applicant?

Mr. JAMES: The board!

[Mr. Simon Hickey.

Mr. LANG: The board will be composed of representatives of large firms like Hardie and Gorman, Richardson and Wrench.

Mr. JAMES: I do not think so!

Mr. LANG: I am prepared to prophesy that the present officers of the association will be the first members of the board.

Mr. JAMES: Will not men like that give a fair deal for the first time?

Mr. LANG: I admit that they are reputable men, and I would not suggest that they would refuse a fair deal; at the same time it is a source of objection that they should constitute the board. If a man wants to start in a business which does not require the passing of a preliminary examination or previous training, it would be much better that he should go before a magistrate and submit evidence that he is a fit and proper person. If the applicant is a poor person with no friend on the board, my fear is that he will not be allowed to register.

Mr. JAMES: Let the hon. member wait until he sees the bill!

Mr. LANG: I hope the Minister will provide that persons of this class shall not be cut out, and that too much power is not given to the board.

Mr. JAMES: The board is bound by the provisions of the measure!

Mr. LANG: I am opposed to the creation of a board. I prefer that an applicant should go before a magistrate. Then he can get a solicitor to represent him, and his application will be dealt with as a matter of equity and justice and not of favouritism.

Mr. LANE (Armidale) [8.34]: I am inclined to agree with what was said by the previous speaker. The Minister will require the wisdom of a Solon and the eloquence of a Socrates if he would persuade me to vote for the proposed board. I cannot understand why the Minister should desire to create what the leader of the Opposition terms a close corporation to control the operations of estate agents and stock agents. I trust the Minister will give some consideration to country agents. Are they to go to the expense of coming down to Sydney in order to apply for permission to enter upon either of these callings? If so, I protest most strongly. The Minister told us that the provisions of the bill do not apply to auctioneers.

If that is so, how is it proposed to prevent men from taking out an auctioneer's license and then acting as real estate agents?

Mr. JAMES: If they do that, they come under the bill!

Mr. LANE: That is a ground for further objection. I can assure the Minister that his proposals will meet with my most strenuous opposition. At the present time all that an auctioneer need do is to appear before a bench of magistrates, and inquiry is made into his character. That should be sufficient for a real estate agent. I shall vote against any proposal to create a board. I admit that something should be done to register and control those who have property placed in their hands, but I am not prepared to go as far as the Minister contemplates going in this bill.

Mr. JAMES: Let the hon. gentleman wait until the bill is introduced, and he will find that it is all right!

Mr. BUSHELL (Lyndhurst) [8.36]: In regard to the proposal to establish a board, I should be glad if the Minister would explain how the men who constitute the board will satisfy themselves as to the character and ability of applicants who appear before them.

Mr. JAMES: They must admit everyone unless he fails to comply with the provisions of the bill. Only certain power is given, and if an applicant satisfies the board on those points he must be admitted. If he submits evidence that he is over 21 years of age and is of good character and he lodges a fidelity bond, the board must admit him.

Mr. BUSHELL: Would it be necessary for a country applicant to come down to the city and make personal application to the board?

Mr. JAMES: Certainly not; nor need he be in practice. The hon. member had better wait until he sees the bill. Then if there is anything requiring amendment we can give consideration to it!

Colonel ONSLOW (Bondi) [8.37]: I would suggest to hon. members that they should wait until the bill is introduced. At this stage it is usually the custom for hon. members to say very little. When the bill is before the House is more properly the time when criticism, adverse or favourable, can be indulged in. Hon.

members at present are almost in the dark. They have no details of the bill and very little knowledge. It would be much more advantageous and conserve the time of the Committee if hon. members reserved their comments until such time as the measure was before them.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution reported and agreed to.

Bill presented and read a first time.

UNIVERSITY PRIZES AND MEDALS ALTERATION BILL.

In Committee:

Mr. JAMES (Goulburn), Minister of Public Instruction [8.43]: I move:

That it is expedient to bring in a bill to provide that certain prizes and medals founded at the University of Sydney for award at certain examinations of the University may be awarded at certain other examinations of the University, and to vary the terms and conditions on which the prizes and medals may be awarded; and for purposes consequent thereon or incidental thereto.

Owing to the alteration of the examination conditions of the University, by which the senior and junior examinations are done away with and replaced by leaving certificate examinations, a number of prizes have become incapable of being awarded. It is provided by the Act that they shall be awarded at the senior and junior examinations. They are such prizes as the Fairfax prize, which is awarded to girls at the junior examinations; and the John West medal and Graham medal, which are awarded to boys at the senior examinations. This is a short bill to provide that those prizes can be awarded at the school examinations for leaving certificates.

Mr. J. STOREY: Will the prizes be re-named?

Mr. JAMES: No; the names will be the same.

Mr. WRIGHT (Willyama) [8.45]: As all those prizes are given by private individuals, why do we want an Act of Parliament to authorise the giving of them?

Mr. JAMES: Because the method of giving them was fixed by an Act. They were given for certain examinations, and we cannot give them for any other examinations. The Fairfax prize, for instance, was given for the junior examination, and there is now no junior examination!

Mr. WRIGHT: What are those prizes to be given for now? The Minister says they cannot be given as was intended by the donors. Are they to be given for any form of "scabbing"—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. WRIGHT: Are they to go to those loyalist members—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Will the hon. member resume his seat.

Mr. JAMES: I have already explained that they are to be given to children leaving school. If you like to throw dust you may!

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the hon. member to deal with the matters presented and not to introduce irrelevant subjects.

Mr. WRIGHT: I am entitled to ask the Minister whether it is proposed to give these medals to some of those boys who before leaving school went to work as loyalists—

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member deals with that matter further I shall order him to discontinue his remarks.

Mr. WRIGHT: I want to ascertain to whom these medals are supposed to go, seeing that the Minister has said that the original idea of the people who gave them cannot be carried out. Are they for scholastic attainments or some other attainments?

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution reported and agreed to.

Bill presented and read a first time.

ABORIGINES PROTECTION (AMENDMENT) BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. FULLER (Wollondilly), Acting Premier and Colonial Secretary [8.52], moved:

That this bill be now read a second time. He said: The first object of this bill is the removal of quadroons, octoroons, and their descendants from the atmosphere of the aboriginal camps. Under the present definition of "aboriginal" quadroons and octoroons may, if they choose, continue to live on in the camps despite any opposition on the part of the Aborigines Protection Board. If this bill is passed, quadroons and octoroons will be merged in the white population, and the camps will merely contain the full-blooded aborigines and their de-

[*Mr. Wright.*

scendants. By this means considerable saving will be effected in the expenditure by the Aborigines Protection Board. At the time the original Act was passed for the purpose of providing for these natives—the responsibility for which is of course on the shoulders of the Government—the object was to assist the full-bloods and their descendants. At the close of last year the number of aborigines in New South Wales was: Males, 669; females, 450; children, 454—a total of 1,573. This was a decrease of twenty-four in the adult population, as compared with the figures for the previous year. As regards half-castes and their descendants, there were 1,280 males, 1,025 females, and 2,721 children—or a total of 5,026, which is an increase on the previous year of forty-three adults. Comparing these figures it will be seen that while the number of full-blooded aborigines is decreasing, the number of half-castes and their descendants is on the increase; and that will continue as long as the law remains as at present. I do not think hon. members will consider it desirable that that state of affairs should continue. While we recognise our responsibility towards the aboriginal and his direct descendants, it seems to me that when we come to the quadroon and octoroon the responsibility of the Government ceases.

In New South Wales there are at present 112 aborigines' camps. These include twenty-two stations, each with a staff consisting of a manager, a teacher, and a matron. At Cumerogunga there is also an overseer. At the head office there is a staff of seven, comprising a secretary, two inspectors, a home-finder (female), and two clerks. The cost of administering the service amounted last year to £27,629. There is hope that the operation of the amendment suggested in this bill will tend towards reducing this expenditure very considerably, and that in years to come the expenditure in respect of the aborigines will reach vanishing point.

There is a second amendment in the bill altering the provisions of the original Act with regard to reserves. Under the Aborigines Protection Act "reserve" is defined as land reserved by the Governor,

while under the Crown Lands Consolidation Act, 1913, the powers with regard to reserving lands have been placed in the hands of the Minister. I am therefore taking advantage of this alteration of the law to also have an alteration made of the definition of "reserve." Instead of land being reserved by the Governor I propose in accord with the Crown Lands Consolidation Act to have reserves made at the direction of the Minister.

Those are the two amendments proposed in the measure, and I hope I have made the position clear to hon. members. The bill will mean a saving in the State expenditure; it will mean that we shall continue to do our duty by the aborigines; and it will further mean that the quadrooms and octoroons will not be dependent on the Government, but will take up their proper places in the social and industrial life of the community.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Has the Minister given consideration to a further amendment, namely, making a reduction in the expenditure on account of inspectors by doing away with the 112 different camps and having one reserve only, in which the whole of these people could be confined?

Mr. FULLER: No, I have not considered that. The only amendments I have considered are those which I have suggested. It appears to me, however, that there is something to be said in favour of the suggestion made by the hon. member. I assume from his question that he has had some experience with the aborigines, and I think therefore he will be aware that if you were to put them all in one camp you would find them clearing out to their native homes before very long. That was tried in the district from which I come. Nice homes were put up for these people, but after they had been there for a little while they gradually got back to their old haunts.

Question proposed.

Mr. J. STOREY (Balmain) [8.58]: With this bill, as with many others which have been before the House within the last few days, hon. members on this side generally are in agreement. I do not know any hon. member who opposes the object of the bill; but there is this to be said about it, that if all

the half and quarter castes are to be removed from camp and are to mingle, so to speak, with the white population, there is a possibility that the board will be fully engaged in moving these children from the camps. If hon. members take the annual report of the Aborigines Protection Board, they will see the number of full-blooded children born each year, and the number of half-castes and quarter-castes, which clearly indicates the mixing of the whites with the blacks. It is in that direction drastic legislation ought to be introduced. The idea of removing quadrooms and octoroons from the camps is, as I have said, a very good one; but if strong measures are not taken for the purpose of preventing white people from visiting the camps, the good proposed to be effected by this bill will to some extent not be accomplished. Hon. members who travel about the country know that the camps as at present constituted are first-class institutions of their kind, and the idea that governs the operations of the board is excellent; but, owing to laxity in the administration of the regulations, the mixing of the races is not prevented. Anything that can be done in that direction, I am sure, will have the support of hon. members generally. On page 2 of the report of the Aborigines Protection Board for the year 1915 there is the following:—

The details of the census of the aboriginal population of the State, taken by the police as on the 1st September, 1915, are given in appendix B.

The figures disclose a population of 6,580, comprising 1,597 full-bloods (679 male and 438 female adults and 480 children) and 4,983 half-castes (1,217 male and 998 female adults and 2,768 children).

There is a decrease of 133 in the number of full-bloods as compared with the previous year, and a decrease of 66 in the number of half-castes.

That shows that the decrease in the number of full-bloods was considerably greater than the decrease in the number of half-castes.

Mr. FULLER:

Mr. J. STOREY: The figures just quoted by the Acting Premier clearly show that there is a marked improvement in the behaviour of those in the camps, but it does not alter the fact that there is still laxity in the administration of

the regulations. When travelling about the country I and other members of the Public Works Committee, then including Mr. Donaldson, from what we saw at the camps, were satisfied that the work being done by the board was of a very satisfactory character, but from information we gathered we came to the conclusion that a good deal more was to be desired in the direction of preventing people from going to the camps who had no right to be there. I have no objection to what the Acting Premier is seeking to achieve by means of this bill. The board is an active one and is doing good work. I know that the members of the board and Inspector Donaldson take a great deal of interest in the aborigines, as also did the late Mr. Scobie. I am satisfied that the board is doing satisfactory work, and I presume it is at the board's instance the Acting Premier has introduced this bill.

Mr. MCGARRY (Murrumbidgee) [9.5]: I am entirely in accord with the general idea embodied in the bill. I was opposed in principle to the original Act, but, as it is in operation, I admit it is necessary to give greater control over half-castes, who constitute the greater proportion of the aborigines. I think that some of the provisions of this bill require explanation. They appear to me to be of an extraordinary character. It is proposed to amend section 3 of the present Act:

By omitting in the definition of "reserve" the words "by the Governor," and inserting in lieu thereof the words "under any Act dealing with Crown lands."

What does that mean?

Mr. SPEAKER: Should not the hon. member wait until the Committee stage to deal with that?

Mr. MCGARRY: A matter of principle is involved. At the present time the board has control over reserves for aborigines, but in my opinion this amendment will give the board power to interfere with aborigines on any land in New South Wales.

Mr. FULLER: The amendment is to bring this into conformity with the Crown Lands Consolidation Act of 1913, under which the power of creating reserves is placed in the hands of the Minister!

[*Mr. J. Storey.*

Mr. MCGARRY: If I thought it did not mean more than that, I would not raise any objection; but, in my opinion, if we pass this amendment there is no portion of New South Wales where the board will not have control over these people, and if we abolish the reserves perhaps they may not be allowed to go upon any stock route or unalienated land. I do not think it is the intention of the Government to harass these people to a greater extent than the white population.

Mr. FULLER: We have no desire to harass them at all. All we wish to do is to have power to create reserves for them vested in the Minister in the same way as are reserves under the Crown Lands Act!

Mr. MCGARRY: The amendment says, "under any Act dealing with Crown lands."

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will have an opportunity of discussing that matter in Committee.

Mr. MCGARRY: I shall have something to say about it in Committee, if I happen to be here.

Mr. MARK F. MORTON (Allowrie) [9.9]: In reply to the leader of the Opposition, I may say that the supervision of these camps has not always been so good as it is now. The regulations are now more drastic, but at the same time the people on the stations are more satisfied than ever they were before. This measure has not been brought in from motives of economy, and I am sure that no one would desire to exercise economy at the expense of the aborigines. The object is to enable the board to cope with the ever-increasing numbers of quadrooms and octoroons, and to confine its attention as far as possible to the pure aborigines, who are unfortunately diminishing in numbers, and to the half-castes. For some time past it has been the policy of the board to get all the able-bodied men off the reserves as soon as possible, and make them earn their own living. This policy does not involve turning out the women and children, and the men can always live on the reserves so long as they are earning their living outside. One hon. member suggested that the blacks should be concentrated in a few camps; but that would be impossible.

Some little time ago at Yass an old woman, who was known as the queen of the local tribe, objected to be removed from where she was located to a few miles away, and brute force had almost to be used to drag her from one point to the other. Then again, the hon. member for Clarence knows of the case of an old black couple who for forty or fifty years lived in one place, and when it was desired to remove them across a road into a much better house wild horses would not have dragged them there. I do not think the board should be called upon to reduce the number of stations, but that the blacks belonging to the various tribes should be allowed to live as long as possible in the localities to which they belong. The amount of money spent by the board will necessarily decrease year by year, and there is no necessity to ask that economy should be exercised at the expense of the aborigines. I do not follow the hon. member for Murrumbidgee in his remarks. I consider that if the board has power to turn men off the reserves, it should cease to have control over them after they have gone. Once these men join the ordinary population, the board should have no authority over them. I may point out that although white men may occasionally visit the aboriginal camps, it is now an offence for them to do so, and the board managers and the local committees take all sorts of steps to see that no one is allowed on the stations except with special permission.

Mr. J. STOREY: I was merely pointing out that according to the figures quoted by the Acting Premier in 1916 there had been an increase in the direction I indicated, and that although there were penalties attached the offence still continued!

Mr. MARK F. MORTON: Every effort is made to keep white men off the stations, and there may be other reasons for the increase referred to. Unfortunately the pure-bred blacks are diminishing to vanishing point, whereas the half-castes are increasing, and I think that this should be checked by every means possible. It is not desired to in any way harass the aborigines, and I think we may rely on the board to see justice done.

Mr. BROOKFIELD (Sturt) [9.15]: I am quite in accord with the object sought to be achieved by the bill, but I would like to direct attention to one phase of the question which has not been touched upon. For some time I was prospecting in North Queensland, where the blacks are more numerous than in New South Wales. There they had mission stations and a bush brotherhood which obtained money and supplied food to the aborigines and half-castes. There were a number of half-castes, quadroons, and octo-rooms in some of the camps, and when these men were turned out, they had no means of earning their own living. Having been in the camps for a considerable time and having in their veins a lot of black blood of a come-day go-day nature, they, in the absence of means of earning their livelihood, took to cattle-killing. The point I wish to emphasise is that before these men are turned out of the camps some provision should be made for giving them a reasonable chance of earning their living; otherwise, owing to their having lived without work for a number of years, they may, when they are turned out of the camps, take to cattle-killing and sheep-killing as they did in North Queensland.

Mr. FULLER: A great number of the men go out and earn a living and come back to the camps again!

Mr. BROOKFIELD: Yes, I know that they take advantage of the camp as a rendezvous when they are out of work.

Mr. MARK F. MORTON: The New South Wales blacks are better able than are the North Queensland blacks to earn their living!

Mr. BROOKFIELD: So far as my experience goes, the blacks are not inclined to earn their living, whether they be in New South Wales or Queensland, and what happened in North Queensland is likely to happen here unless means are provided to enable the men who are turned out of the camps to earn an honest living.

Mr. WRIGHT (Willyama) [9.18]: I am totally opposed to the bill. Surely we can afford to spend £20,000 a year to allow the aboriginal race to die out in peace. We have taken the land away from these people, and we should not

interfere with them any more than is necessary. The bill contains something more than appears on the surface, and will result in taking away from these people the land that has been reserved for their use. The blacks naturally like to roam about, and this applies also to the half-castes, quarter-castes, and octoroons. The latter have some pure black blood in them, and some awfully bad white blood, and should be treated with reasonable consideration. We have had no trouble in New South Wales compared with what has been experienced in America with the black race. We are civilising the aborigines off the face of the earth, because, according to the report quoted by the Minister, they are rapidly diminishing in numbers. We are killing them with bad whites and rum. We have been fairly humane with them, but it is cowardly to use our giant's strength against them.

Mr. MARK F. MORTON: It is not proposed to economise in money!

Mr. WRIGHT: The Minister said that he wanted to get rid of the quad-rooms and octoroons, and the only inference I can draw from that statement is, that he wants to decrease the expenditure. I am opposed to the bill because it will give power to the Minister to take from these people those lands on which they would like to roam.

Mr. FULLER: There is no intention of doing that!

Mr. WRIGHT: I do not think the present Minister has that intention, but he may be succeeded by a Minister who is less humane than he is. I do not regard this bill as being of much importance. It is a bill that will interfere with the liberty of the people who have black blood in their veins, and who naturally want to roam the country. The Minister ought to be careful how he interferes with rights which have been given to these aborigines, and we should not take away from them any of the lands which previous Governments thought it necessary to give them.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time and reported from Committee without amendment; report adopted.

[Mr. Wright.

THEATRES AND PUBLIC HALLS (AMENDMENT) BILL.

In Committee:

Mr. FULLER (Wollondilly), Acting Premier and Colonial Secretary [9.30], moved:

That it is expedient to bring in a bill to regulate cinematographic exhibitions in premises other than those licensed under the Theatres and Public Halls Act, 1908; to amend the said Act; and for purposes incidental thereto or consequent thereon.

He said: This proposed amendment of the Principal Act dealing with theatres and public halls has been found necessary in consequence of an unfortunate occurrence which took place at Surry Hills some time ago. It will be within the recollection of hon. members that a large number of boys belonging to the Boys' Brigade attended a cinematograph show in a hall at Surry Hills. The films took fire, the boys rushed down stairs, and one boy unfortunately lost his life. The bill does not interfere with licensed premises, nor with people who may have cinematograph shows in their own private houses, but we want to place power in the hands of the Minister to prevent a cinematograph show from taking place in unlicensed premises without his permission. That is done with the view to guarantee as far as possible the safety of persons who attend these shows. Before permission is given in connection with any unlicensed hall to carry on a cinematograph show, the Minister, who will be the Colonial Secretary, will instruct the inspector of police to inspect the premises where the proposed show is to be held in order to see that it is perfectly safe for the public to attend. It is proposed to add a new section to the present Act to the effect that a person shall not give any cinematograph exhibition in unlicensed premises unless he applies in writing to the Minister for permission to give such exhibition, which permission may be granted subject to such conditions as may be thought necessary. The inspector will make a thorough inspection of the premises, and if he thinks they are perfectly safe for the public to attend a cinematograph show a license will issue through the Minister.

Mr. WRIGHT: Suppose they do not make a charge?

Mr. FULLER: They can make a charge or not, but before an exhibition is allowed to be held the premises will have to be guaranteed as safe by the inspector. On his report the Minister will either issue or refuse a license. A penalty is proposed to the effect that any person who gives an exhibition of this character in an unlicensed place, and who has not received the permission of the Minister to give the show, will be liable to a penalty not exceeding £50. People giving a show in their own houses will be exempt from the operations of the bill. We hope that in the future nothing of the sort that occurred at Surry Hills will take place again. The boys of the Boys' Brigade were jammed together in the hall and were unable to get down stairs. A number of them were trampled on, and one lad was killed. We are not interfering with licensed premises in any way, nor with the liberties of people in their own private houses, but we say that, in connection with premises that are not licensed, an inspection must take place before an exhibition can be given, and the permission of the Minister must be obtained.

Question proposed.

Mr. LANG (Granville) [9.36]: It seems to me the object of the bill is to take control of exhibitions for which no admission is charged. I have in my mind certain instances which the Minister has not thought fit to refer to. The unfortunate episode when one lad of the Boys' Brigade lost his life is used as a stalking-horse for the purpose of getting this measure passed.

Mr. FULLER: That is what has brought about this proposal!

Mr. LANG: I have in my mind a number of cases that this bill will interfere with. A couple of years ago I went into a Church of England at Strathfield on a Sunday evening. The minister was giving a cinematograph show in connection with the service. If he happened to be travelling through New South Wales he would have to go to the Minister in charge of this measure to get his permission before he could deliver his sermon illustrated by the aid of a cinematograph show. Such exhibitions also take place in public schools and schools

of arts in connection with lectures, for which no charge is made. They would come under the provisions of this bill. I know of many cases where people who are floating some new organisation give a cinematograph show in a public hall.

Mr. FULLER: Public halls, being licensed, will not be interfered with. The bill only refers to unlicensed halls!

Mr. LANG: And though private halls may be licensed, they are not licensed for cinematograph pictures. I take it that the proposed amendment of the law is in connection with cinematograph exhibitions. Such exhibitions are not allowed in many halls, including town halls. According to the law the operating-box must be fireproof, but no such provision exists in town halls. Cinematograph exhibitions are also given at picture shows.

Mr. FULLER: They are licensed, too!

Mr. LANG: According to the way I read the bill an exhibition will not be allowed in a licensed hall.

Mr. FULLER: I spoke only with regard to unlicensed premises. The proposal is that these shows shall not be allowed in unlicensed premises except with the permission of the Minister!

Mr. LANG: Even if afterwards it is found that the bill will have an effect which the Minister says it will not, it will still have the effect of preventing a minister of religion from giving an exhibition of pictures to illustrate his sermon. It will also prevent any mechanics' institute or school of arts which is not licensed from giving an exhibition for educational purposes. I know licenses have been granted permitting gentlemen to give exhibitions in public schools, and these are not licensed buildings.

Mr. FULLER: It would be easy to get a license if the building was found to be safe for the assembling of people to see an exhibition of this character. We only want to protect human life!

Mr. LANG: My fear is that the power given by the bill may be used to interfere with the work of educational institutions desirous of helping the workers of this country through the medium of shows of this character.

Mr. FULLER: We are not anxious to do that. We simply wish to protect the lives of people who go to see these shows in unlicensed premises!

Mr. LANG: I would not place my trust in any promise of a Minister of the present Government that such a power as this would not be used to the detriment of the interests of the working-classes. There may be more underlying this bill than appears on the surface.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bathurst) [9.42]: Is it the Minister's intention that a separate permit shall be granted each time a cinematographic entertainment is given on unlicensed premises?

Mr. FULLER: Application must be made to the Minister!

Mr. JOHNSTON: To me that is good reason for hon. members opposing the introduction of such a bill. It is true that at the entertainment at Surry Hills referred to by the Minister one boy lost his life. But that was not because the premises were unlicensed or because permission had not been given. The accident might have occurred in the Theatre Royal or any other licensed place of entertainment. The case mentioned by the Minister does not furnish this Committee with reason for the expediency of introducing legislation of the character proposed.

Mr. FULLER: We do not want to prevent entertainments being given. We simply want to prevent the loss of human life!

Mr. JOHNSTON: Surely the Minister sees that the effect of this legislation must be to put an embargo on the holding of free entertainments throughout the State.

Mr. FULLER: No, only cinematographic exhibitions!

Mr. JOHNSTON: The children of the interior have very few opportunities of seeing such exhibitions or of receiving technical education. It would be a good thing to avail of the cinematograph in our public schools as a means of instruction.

Mr. FULLER: The buildings the hon. member speaks of are absolutely safe for this purpose!

Mr. JOHNSTON: I asked the Minister if it would be necessary to obtain a

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separate permit for each exhibition, and the answer I received was yes. That being the case, then every time a travelling missionary or a local schoolmaster with the interests of his pupils at heart desired to give a cinematographic entertainment in order to educate the children along clean lines permission must be obtained from the Minister.

Mr. FULLER: It only means writing a letter!

Mr. JOHNSTON: A request would have to be sent to the Minister; the Minister would have to obtain a report from the local police, and a reply would have to be sent back. Possibly there would be further correspondence. It would be all right in the city where the Minister can be seen and the necessary permission obtained in a few minutes. But I am speaking of places hundreds of miles away, in the interests of children attending school and of artisans frequenting schools of art. Country members should vote against this motion. There is no necessity for a bill such as is proposed, nor is this the time for the introduction of legislation of this type. The fact that an accident occurred at one free entertainment—a very excellent entertainment given for the instruction of a number of poor children—is no proof of the necessity for such a drastic alteration of the law. I shall vote against the proposal at every stage.

Mr. FULLER: In regard to places like schools, a permit will be granted as a matter of course on application to the Minister!

Mr. JOHNSTON: Will it be a permanent permit?

Mr. FULLER: Yes. It will not be necessary to make application for each exhibition. Once the building is passed by the proper authority a permit will be issued!

Mr. JOHNSTON: There will be no necessity for a separate application for each show. To some extent that removes my objection. At the same time I feel that this is unnecessary legislation which will unfairly interfere with the holding of entertainments of this character throughout the State.

Mr. WRIGHT (Willyama) [9.50]: I shall oppose the bill because I regard it

as a tiddliwinking measure. The Minister, I am sure, proposes it in all sincerity for the good of humanity, but it will serve no useful purpose, and will only count as another Act of Parliament with which to feed lawyers. If all halls must be licensed before a charge for admission can be made, there is no necessity for the bill. In my electorate there is a building which the police say is neither fireproof nor foolproof, and the police are so officious that they decided no meeting shall be held there. The trouble is that you get officious police. If you always have men of common-sense, there might not be cause of complaint. In the case of the Ministerial department there may come a time when there will be an officious Minister. In small country places, far distant from Sydney, having one or two policemen, it may be quite impossible for persons to obtain a permit to hold a meeting if the meeting does not commend itself to the policemen. Even, however, if the police approve of the meeting and of the hall, it will take some days to communicate with and receive a reply from the department in Sydney. We all know how swiftly Government departments work. If there is no telegraphic communication entertainments will have to be abandoned.

Mr. WEARNE (Namoi) [9.58]: I think it very necessary that legislation of this character should be passed. The bill is in the interests of the very people whom hon. members opposite want to assist. I hope, however, that the Government will take into consideration the distance that a number of country centres are from the city. In the far outlying places cinematograph shows are given. In many of these places there is no licensed building available. The entertainments are mostly given for charitable purposes, and I hope provision will be made that the local police shall be instructed, in cases of urgency, to telegraph their report on any application so as to facilitate the issue of a permit. Sometimes it would take a week for a letter to be sent to Sydney and a reply returned.

Mr. LOUGHLIN (Burrangong) [10]: I appreciate the motive which has apparently actuated the Minister in introduc-

ing this bill, which at present is certainly necessary so far as Sydney is concerned. In making laws of this description, however, we have to remember, as one hon. member has pointed out, that when you get up country, regulations which are necessary in a crowded centre become very irksome and not very valuable. I would suggest as a good idea that the Minister should so arrange that the bill would not apply to little bush entertainments where not more than eighty or a hundred people are gathered together. If he does think it necessary to make it apply to these, I would join with the hon. member for Namoi in suggesting that the permission of the local police officer would be quite sufficient, particularly if that officer were present at the entertainment. I do not think any great danger need be apprehended from fire at country shows.

Mr. QUIRK (Rozelle) [10.4]: I look upon this proposal as a step in the right direction with regard to safeguarding the lives of people who attend shows of this description. One matter which I consider should receive attention at the hands of the Minister is one which, I believe, has caused some trouble between the Chief Secretary's Department and the proprietors. I know of instances where instructions have been given by a local council to have alterations made in some of these buildings, only to find that the inspector from the Chief Secretary's Department has overriden all that the Local Government Act required the proprietor to carry out in the way of alterations. Some provision ought to be made whereby the whole of the details of necessary improvements would be decided by the Chief Secretary's Department. As things are at present, on the one hand we have reports by the police from time to time, while on the other hand we have a gentleman in the Chief Secretary's Department coming forward and pulling down all that the local government authorities have required proprietors to carry out. Much trouble and expense to the proprietors could be saved if the management and control were directed from the one centre. The proposal is one which should commend itself to every hon. member who believes, as I do, that the safety of human life is

the first consideration. The fire-screens already provided at some of these places are quite insufficient, and we have just heard some of the results when a stampede has taken place. Everything that can be done should be done to avoid danger from this source. I hope the Minister will take into consideration the suggestions I have made. I intend to support the proposal because, as I have said, I believe it is a step in the right direction.

Mr. J. STOREY (Balmain) [10.9]: I wish to ask the Minister whether it is proposed in this resolution to bring these halls under the Theatres and Public Halls Act?

Mr. FULLER: No. It only provides that cinematographic shows shall not be conducted in unlicensed premises unless the Minister gives permission!

Mr. J. STOREY: But, for the purpose of carrying that provision into effect, do you propose to put them under the Theatres and Public Halls Act?

Mr. FULLER: Yes. It will come in as an amendment of section 27 of the original Act!

Mr. J. STOREY: The motion says "to amend the said Act." But it does not say in what direction it is proposed to amend the Act.

Mr. FULLER: Only for the purpose I have indicated!

Mr. J. STOREY: That being the case I shall raise no objection to the introduction of the bill.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution reported and agreed to.

Bill presented and read a first time.

CARELESS USE OF FIRE (AMENDMENT) BILL.

In Committee:

Mr. FULLER (Wollondilly), Colonial Secretary [10.15], moved:

That it is expedient to bring in a bill to amend the Careless Use of Fire Act, 1912; and for purposes consequent thereon or incidental thereto.

He said: I feel sure that this resolution will commend itself to hon. members, more particularly those who represent country constituencies and know how disastrous is the effect of fire, particularly in the summer-time. The object of

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the bill is to give power to make regulations by which the burning-off operations necessarily conducted in the country, for clearing purposes particularly, shall be allowed only under certain conditions imposed by the municipal or shire councils. These councils are in favour of the bill. They are very anxious that power should be given to them to control these burning-off operations, so that loss of property may be prevented as much as possible. Under the provisions of the present Act there are regulations in force in regard to certain municipalities and shires, which regulations give them power of partial prohibition in connection with the matter to which I have referred; but it appears, according to the opinion of the Crown Solicitor, that the power which the municipal and shire councils have at the present time extends only to cases where the property of some other person is endangered and may be injured or destroyed. If it is not shown that there is any prohibition, it virtually means that so long as such property is not endangered, burning-off operations may proceed at any time. To get over the difficulty which has been pointed out by the Crown Solicitor, I am now asking for leave to bring in a bill to amend the Careless Use of Fire Act so that regulations may be passed by the municipal and shire councils which will give them power to allow these burning-off operations to take place only under conditions which will be imposed by them for the safety of people's property as much as possible. I think it is a desirable object, and that all hon. members will agree with it. That is the sole object of the bill.

Mr. J. STOREY: The bill gives extra powers only to municipal and shire councils?

Mr. FULLER: Yes.

Mr. J. STOREY: No extra power to the Government?

Mr. FULLER: No.

Mr. J. STOREY: Do you propose that the farmers in the different centres of a shire shall obtain permission from the shire council before they can do any burning-off?

Mr. FULLER: Yes; I wish to give the municipal and shire councils power

to frame regulations so that burning-off operations, which are very disastrous in summer-time, owing to the careless way in which people start fires, shall not take place except under regulations which will control these operations in such a way that the safety of people and their property shall not be endangered.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution reported and agreed to.

Bill presented and read a first time.

UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGES (AMENDMENT) BILL.

In Committee:

Mr. JAMES (Goulburn), Minister of Public Instruction [10.23], moved:

That it is expedient to bring in a bill to amend the University and University Colleges Act, 1900.

He said: This is a short bill that has been asked for by the Senate of the Sydney University. Under the Act as it stands, the University has no power to grant degrees in Theology and Divinity, and this bill is intended to confer upon the authorities here the same power that is enjoyed in connection with the universities in England.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution reported and agreed to.

Bill presented and read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S VISIT TO AMERICA.

Motion (by Mr. JAMES) proposed:

That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. LANG (Granville) [10.26]: Last week I asked the Attorney-General whether he had a cablegram from the Premier saying that there was an opening for his services in another country as a munitions organiser. He said that was absolutely untrue.

Mr. JAMES: So it is!

Mr. LANG: In to-day's newspaper it is reported that the Attorney-General has had a cable from America to visit that country in connection with military matters. I asked him, if that was so, what was his reply to my previous question. I could not proceed further under the rules of the House when the Attorney-General replied that it was not correct that he had an invitation to go to England. The report in *Hansard* shows

that I asked if the offer did not apply to another country, and the fact that the Attorney-General proposes to go to America shows that the statement in my question was true.

Mr. JAMES: It is not in connection with munitions at all!

Question resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 10 October, 1917.

Apiaries (Amendment) Bill—Conveyancing and Law of Property Bill.

The PRESIDENT took the chair.

APIARIES (AMENDMENT) BILL.

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, and (on motion by the Hon. J. Garland) read a first time.

CONVEYANCING AND LAW OF PROPERTY BILL.

The Hon. J. GARLAND: I had hoped to be able to go on with the second reading of this bill to-day; in fact I am ready to do so, but yesterday a deputation from the council of the Law Institute, which, as hon. members know, is the representative body of the solicitors of this State, waited upon me with the request that the bill should not be proceeded with for some time. They pointed out that it was a measure vitally affecting them in the practice of their profession, that it proposed a number of very drastic changes in the law, that it was a bill of great complexity, and of considerable length, and that they had not had sufficient time to go into the matter and report their views. I am bound to say I am very disappointed at not being able to go on with the measure straight away, but I felt that there was justice in their claim. They asked that under the circumstances I should undertake to give them four weeks to thoroughly investigate the matter.

The Hon. J. WILSON: Does that mean next session?