

Mr. STUART-ROBERTSON: What are the two sections the Minister proposes to eliminate?

Mr. DRUMMOND: Sections 6 and 7, which deal with the provision for casual vacancies, and the substitution of more workable provisions.

Mr. DAVIES (Wollongong) [10.43]: I cannot understand the urgency of this bill, and the Minister has not given us much explanation in regard to it. I do not think he knows much about it himself. We know no more about it now than we did before he spoke.

Mr. DRUMMOND: I cannot answer for the hon. member's intelligence. It is purely a formal bill!

Mr. DAVIES: We should have had more explanation than the Minister has given us. We have not had a chance to go through the bill. The Minister did not tell us why he wishes to reduce the term from five years to four years. In regard to the number of councillors, the women councillors should be in the same number as the men. I do not see why the women should not have the same representation as the men.

Mr. DRUMMOND: There is nothing to prevent that, but there must be a minimum of four!

Mr. DAVIES: It looks as though there will be a preponderance of males on the council, and I think the women should be as numerous as the men.

Mr. DRUMMOND: May I point out this bill does not interfere with the old Act in any respect. The old Act provides that there shall be at least four women on the council. There may be any greater number that they may themselves choose to appoint.

Mr. DAVIES: Why not lay down definitely in the bill that the number of women on the council shall be the same number as the males.

Mr. DRUMMOND: It does not lay it down at all. It is in the old Act. This bill only deals with the new system of providing for the elections, not with personnel!

Mr. DAVIES: You have not told us what are the by-laws which qualify persons to vote. I consider the Minister

[*Mr. Drummond.*

should have given us a better explanation than he has given in introducing a bill of this character.

Mr. DRUMMOND: You will get it in the Committee stage. I have just given an explanation sufficient to indicate the general purposes of the bill!

Mr. DAVIES: It is customary when introducing a bill for the Minister to give a full explanation. Unfortunately it has not been done in this case and that is why I complain. Hon. members should be in a position to give an explanation to the electors for every vote they cast. In my opinion, the main weakness of the bill is in the fact that the number of women councillors provided for is not so great as the number of men.

Mr. DRUMMOND: It is a women's college and the electors are practically all ladies!

Mr. DAVIES: Yet a preponderance of men are on the council which controls it. The position is absurd. In a democratic age when women have the franchise yet the men are allowed to have the principal say as to how this college shall be conducted.

Debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 2 December, 1927.

Printed Questions and Answers—Questions Without Notice—Metropolitan Water, Sewerage, and Drainage (City Members) Bill—Electrical Contractors and Electricians' Licensing (Amendment) Bill (Second Reading)—Crown Lands (Homestead Farm) Bill (Second Reading).

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair.

PRINTED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

EARNINGS OF THE BLIND.

Mr. SHANNON asked the COLONIAL SECRETARY,—Will he bring before Cabinet

for discussion, and report to Parliament, the advisability of increasing the wages and pensions of married blind workers, so that married blind workers can receive at least the basic wage from all services?

Answer.—The matter will be placed before Cabinet for consideration of the hon. member's suggestion that the whole facts should be reported to Parliament.

COUNTRY TROTTING CLUBS: CLASH DATES.

Mr. K. O. HOAD asked the COLONIAL SECRETARY.—(1) Is it a fact that the country trotting clubs are languishing because of non-suitability of dates, known as clash dates? (2) If the only way to overcome this is to permit of night trotting, will he consider the granting of said permission?

Answer.—(1) It has been so stated by representatives of country trotting clubs, but the Gaming and Betting Act does not provide for allotment of racing dates by the Government. (2) The matter will receive consideration.

PEAKHURST SANITARY DEPOT.

Mr. STANLEY asked the MINISTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH.—(1) Will he ascertain whether it is a fact that a nightsoil dump is in operation at Peakhurst, where Hurstville and Kogarah councils are dumping nightsoil within 100 yards of residences, and which is also in close proximity to a dairy? (2) Will he have inquiries made with a view to having this dump removed to some more suitable place?

Answer.—(1) The nightsoil depot at Peakhurst was approved by the Board of Health in 1913, and has been used ever since by the Hurstville municipality. The nightsoil from Kogarah municipality is being deposited there as a temporary measure, which will be discontinued within the next few months. There is only one cottage in close proximity to the depot. It is about 100 yards distant, and is occupied by a man employed at the depot. The dairy is between 200 and 300 yards away from the depot. (2) The depot will be kept under observation by departmental officers.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

EMPIRE EXCHANGE.

Mr. STUART-ROBERTSON: I wish to know whether the Premier has yet seen the article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 30th November, to which I previously called his attention, regarding Mr. J. E. Darling, Director of the Midland Bank, London, who has imposed on himself the task of endeavouring to bring about a closer relationship in regard to Empire finance. Is he in a position to announce the intention of the Government, and can he say whether he intends to give the public an opportunity of expressing an opinion? If the Government decides to take no action, will the Premier offer the fullest facilities to citizens who desire a closer alliance of the Empire on the all important question of finance so that they may take advantage of Mr. Darling's visit?

Mr. BAVIN: I am sorry to say I have not had time to look into the question. If the hon. member will give me a copy of the article referred to I shall be pleased to give it my attention. I am not in a position to indicate what attitude the Government will take up in the matter, but if any responsible person comes here on a mission the object of which is to improve the financial position of this part of the Empire or of any other parts of the Empire I shall be glad to do what I can to assist him.

RAILWAY AND TRAMWAY RATES.

Mr. C. A. KELLY: Is the Premier in a position to inform the House whether the forecast which has been published as to the intentions of the Railway Commissioners in regard to increasing railway fares and freights is correct? Is it a fact that the Cabinet has agreed to an increase of railway fares in the country? If so, is not this action in direct conflict with the promise made to the people at the last election that under no circumstances would country railway fares be raised?

Mr. DAVIES: On the same question. Is it a fact that there is a proposal to increase the rates charged for workmen's

weekly tickets, and, if so, will the increases apply to workers' weekly tickets issued in the country districts?

MR. BAVIN: I would ask hon. members to refrain from the practice which is increasing in this House of asking another question on what is represented as being the same question. It is very difficult when one question is followed by another to be sure that one is giving proper attention to the first question. As I desire to give the fullest information to hon. members I am calling attention to the fact that it is very often difficult to give a sufficient answer to two questions which are not always strictly on the same subject. In answer to Mr. Kelly I may say that as it is included in the Commissioners' suggestions, it is proposed to raise country periodical fares by about 7 per cent. That decision has been arrived at for the reasons set out in the Commissioners' memorandum.

AN HON. MEMBER:

MR. BAVIN: It includes passes over all lines—commercial travellers' tickets and all tickets of the kind. The cost of those tickets as appears from the Commissioners' memorandum is very low proportionately to the daily tickets. I regret the extreme necessity for the raising of the cost of these tickets, but it is only a very small increase and applies only to periodical tickets. It is not in any way an infringement of the spirit of the promise given by the Government that country fares would not be increased.

AN HON. MEMBER: You said you would reduce them!

MR. BAVIN: I hope that before long we shall be able to carry out that promise. I should like hon. members to understand that this increase has been assented to by the Government as an emergency measure to meet the special situation that has arisen this year. The financial position of the railways is set out fully in the Railway Commissioners' memorandum. It is shown there that as things are it is anticipated there will be a deficit of about £1,500,000 on the working of the railways during this financial year, and as the prospect is that there will also be a very heavy deficit on the ordinary

governmental revenue account, the Government felt it was not justified in allowing that deficit to be added to to such an enormous extent as is forecast by the Railway Commissioners. The Government regrets very much to have to take this step, but there is no escape from it.

As to Mr. Davies' question the increase will, as I understand it, apply to all workmen's weekly tickets. If the hon. member will compare the cost of those tickets with that of second-class periodical tickets—some figures are given in the statement by the Commissioners to us, and I shall be very happy to give them—he will see that the present cost of workmen's tickets is very low. We considered we were justified in allowing the increase in the cost of workmen's tickets, seeing that we were raising the price of second-class periodical tickets. Under the new system the cost of workmen's tickets will be very much below the cost of second-class periodical tickets. We had to diminish the discrepancy between the two classes of tickets.

MR. RATCLIFFE: Is it a fact that the tramways have during the past four or five months shown a profit on their working?

MR. BAVIN: I am not aware of the results of the working of the tramways during the past four or five months, and can only say that for the last financial year they showed a very heavy loss. I do not think the hon. member is right in suggesting that there has been a profit on their working during the last four or five months. I do not think it is possible to arrive at any conclusion as to whether they have worked at a profit or a loss for so short a period of the year, but I know there is a very heavy estimated loss on the whole financial year.

MR. CAHILL: In view of the fact that the Government has shown sympathy with the employers by remitting taxation amounting to about £3,000,000, will the Premier show the same sympathy with the users of workmen's weekly tickets, most of whom are basic wage earners?

MR. NESS: On the same question. Will the Premier give serious consideration to the suggestion put forward by the hon. member for Eastwood that the

Railway Commissioners should be consulted in regard to the desirability of reducing fares on the railways and tramways between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., with a view to allowing women and children to derive the benefit of reduced rates and to increasing the railway revenue by diverting traffic from motor buses to the railways and tramways?

Mr. BAVIN: With regard to the question asked by the hon. member for Dulwich Hill, the Government will certainly give consideration to the matter, although primarily it is one that concerns the Railway Commissioners. I will see that the suggestion is brought under the notice of the Railway Commissioners, as I regard it as well worthy of consideration. The hon. member for St. George is under a misapprehension with regard to the action of the Government in remitting the balance of the levies provided for under the Family Endowment Act. The hon. member seems to think that was done out of consideration for the employers, whereas it was done out of consideration for the employees. Fortunately as a result of that consideration a large number of persons are now employed who would have been unemployed if it had not been for the action of the Government. I can assure the hon. member that he has no more sympathy with the employees than the Government has. So far as the increased rates for weekly tickets are concerned, if the hon. member will look at the figures contained in the statement of the Railway Commissioners published this morning, he will see that the rates hitherto charged for workmen's weekly tickets have been so much below those charged for second-class periodical tickets, which have to be purchased by a very large number of employees who cannot use workmen's tickets, and I am sure he will agree that such a disparity is unfair. The increases which have been suggested by the Railway Commissioners and accepted by the Government in workmen's weekly tickets are the lowest the Commissioners can suggest which would have any appreciable effect on the railway revenue.

An HON. MEMBER: Why not put up the first-class fares?

Mr. BAVIN: An hon. member suggests that we should increase first-class fares. The answer to that is that to increase first-class fares any further would practically put a stop to first-class travelling, and would result in a decrease, rather than an increase, of revenue. As a matter of fact, it is quite possible that if first-class fares were decreased there would be an increase in the number of persons travelling first-class. However, that is a matter for the Railway Commissioners to deal with. All the Government has done has been to accept the lowest possible recommendations of the Commissioner. Unfortunately, the Government has to deal with conditions which were created by the preceding Government, but when our policy has had a chance to develop I believe its effect will be such that it will be possible to bring about a reduction of fares.

MOTOR TRAFFIC: CITY.

Mr. GOLDSTEIN: I desire to ask the Colonial Secretary if the Traffic Department has submitted to him certain regulations affecting motor traffic in the city which will mean practically the prohibition of the parking of motor vehicles in many streets of the city? Will the Minister before gazetting any such regulations call into consultation representatives of those bodies which represent motor users so that arrangements may be arrived at to regulate the city motor traffic with as little inconvenience as possible?

Mr. BRUNTNEILL: It is not intended to gazette any regulations respecting motor traffic until the whole matter has been considered fully, and every person who feels able to give information afforded an opportunity to supply it.

SYDNEY CORPORATION COMMISSION.

Mr. BADDELEY: I desire to ask the Premier whether he has seen the report in the Sydney papers with regard to Mr. Collins asking for a salary of £10,000 per annum in connection with a position

on the City of Sydney Commission? Is the hon. gentleman in a position to disclose the actual facts to this House?

Mr. BAVIN: I have not seen the report to which the hon. member refers. I hope shortly to be in a position, if that is what the hon. member desires, to state the names of the gentlemen who will be appointed to act as members of the commission which is to carry on the administration of the city of Sydney.

WYANGLA DAM.

Major REID: Is the Minister for Agriculture in a position to inform this House what is the intention of the Government in connection with the construction of Wyangla dam, which has been promised by many Governments in the past?

Mr. THORBY: A bill dealing with this proposal has been prepared. I am going very carefully through it, and there is one further matter I wish to consider before placing the measure before Cabinet. It is in connection with the recommendation covering the Crown land which will be served by the scheme if carried out.

UNDERGROUND RAILWAYS: ADVERTISING SPACES.

Mr. GOSLING: In reference to the request I made a few days ago regarding the provision of a subway overhead bridge from St. James station to Macquarie-street, for which I suggested the use of revenue from advertising spaces, seeing that fares have now been raised, will the Minister for Railways ask the Commissioners to call tenders for advertising space at St. James station and use the funds thus derived for the construction of such subway or bridge?

Mr. BUTTENSHAW: I shall consult the Railway Commissioners as to the best course to pursue to get the most revenue from advertising spaces. If it is desirable to call for tenders I shall certainly ask them to do so.

HOSPITALS AND NEWSPAPER TAX.

Mr. BOOTH: Has the Premier's attention been drawn to the fact that some

of the newspaper companies of this State have donated to the public hospitals the halfpenny tax on newspapers? Is he also aware that the usual custom of subsidising all donations made to the hospitals has been departed from? In view of the depleted finances of the hospitals, will the Premier see that the usual custom is followed, and that all donations are subsidised by the Government?

Mr. BAVIN: I am not aware of the circumstances to which the hon. member refers, and cannot give any answer until I ascertain what is the position. I have no doubt this Government will follow the usual practice with regard to subsidising hospitals, but I cannot give any undertaking whatever until I have looked into the question.

GOVERNMENT TOURIST RESORTS.

Mr. BRUNTNEILL: On the 24th November the hon. member for Mudgee asked a question concerning the practice of booking accommodation early in the year at the tourist resorts for the Christmas period. I have now obtained a report from which it appears that the allotment of accommodation at the resorts under the control of the Government Tourist Bureau is arranged on the principle of "first come, first served." The hon. member's suggestion that a portion of the accommodation may be reserved for those unable to make early bookings is not considered by the Bureau authorities to be advisable or practicable. The whole of the accommodation at the Hotel Kosciuszko for the Christmas season had been reserved prior to the 1st November last, but there are at the moment a few vacancies at Jenolan Caves House for that period.

COOK'S RIVER IMPROVEMENT.

Mr. NESS: Can the Minister for Public Works inform the House whether the necessary plans and levels have been taken for the completion of the scheme of dredging Cook's River? Has the order for a new and modern dredge, as promised by the late Minister for Public Works, Mr. Flannery, been put into execution? If so, when is that dredge

likely to be finished, and is it the intention of the Minister to place a sum of money on the Estimates this year for carrying out that necessary work?

Mr. BUTTENSCHAW: I am not quite sure of the position, but I believe that the dredge has been ordered, and the work is now being prepared.

FAMILY ENDOWMENT.

Major CONNELL: Has the attention of the Premier been drawn to the fact that a considerable number of claims in the Family Endowment Department have not yet been finalised, although some of them were lodged as far back as August? In view of the fact that a large number of the claimants are in need of the money, will the Premier endeavour to have matters expedited, so that all these claims may be met before Christmas?

Mr. BAVIN: I am not aware of the circumstances to which the hon. member refers, but I have no doubt that there are some claims which have not yet been decided. I can only say that we are doing our utmost to expedite the payment of claims. But, as I pointed out the other day, it is necessary that they should be investigated before they are paid, and I am quite sure that the hon. member will recognise that necessity.

An HON. MEMBER: There is great delay!

Mr. BAVIN: The hon. member may think there is great delay, but the fact remains that whereas the previous Government, during its term of office, paid claims amounting, approximately, to £15,000 after the Act came into force, the present Government, during its term of office, has already paid out £75,000.

INTERMEDIATE HISTORY EXAMINATION.

Mr. DRUMMOND: A few days ago the hon. member Mr. Weaver addressed a question to me, drawing my attention to a direction to candidates at the head of the History paper set for the recent intermediate certificate examination. This direction is as follows:—

Candidates are required to answer two questions from each of the sections A, B,

C, and D. Question No. 5 in each section is optional for candidates from Intermediate Commercial High Schools. The total number of questions to be attempted by any candidate to be not more than eight.

The hon. member Mr. Weaver inquired whether I was aware that grave injustice was being inflicted on many pupils who sat, owing to some supervisors advising that question 5 was open to all candidates.

In reply, I wish to say that I have consulted the chairman of the Board of Examiners, and can assure the hon. member that no injustice will be done to candidates who attempted this particular question, irrespective of what school they came from. I was not aware that some supervisors advised that question 5 was open to all candidates, but if they did so their advice, in my opinion, was quite sound. I am informed that the examiners intended that candidates could take any two questions in each section, a fifth question being inserted to meet the special needs of pupils following the commercial course. In previous years the question paper was divided into five sections—A, B, C, D, and E—the E section being set for commercial school candidates. The examiner states that the only change this year has been the redistribution of section E among the other four sections, this giving all candidates from non-commercial high schools a further option in each section. He adds that he cannot understand any candidate or supervisor reading an implied compulsion in the instructions. The hon. member may rest assured that all candidates who answered two questions from each of the four sections will receive full credit for their work.

WATERSIDE WORKERS' OVERTIME STRIKE.

Mr. J. C. L. FITZPATRICK: Is the Premier aware that at the present time there is a great hold-up on the water frontage? In the event of the strike being carried to a conclusion and many thousands of men rendering themselves unemployed, throwing their wives and children into a condition of penury, in which case it will be looked upon as being

an absolute obligation on the part of the Government to keep these people who have prevented themselves from being employed, is he going to undertake that the general public shall pay for the keep of people who have broken the law?

Mr. SANDERS: Has the Premier made representations to Mr. Bruce, stating his wish to co-operate with the Federal Government in trying to end the present unsatisfactory state of affairs? Will the Premier also make representations to Mr. Bruce that he is prepared to co-operate in taking a secret ballot of the men who are affected in order to ascertain their real wishes?

Mr. BAVIN: I am, unfortunately, aware of the existence of the trouble to which the hon. member for Orange has referred. I desire to say at once that the Government will certainly not hold itself responsible for the maintenance of men who are breaking the law and refusing to work. Of course, I cannot lay down any final general rule as to cases in which relief will or will not be given, but, before giving any relief, according to the usual practice of the Government, we shall do our best, to ascertain that the circumstances under which relief is sought will justify giving it. In a case where a man is breaking the law and refusing to support his family, when work is available for him, he will not be entitled to receive relief.

In reply to Mr. Sanders' question, I have to say that, in response to a request from the Prime Minister which was made, I imagine, in pursuance of a resolution which was passed by the Federal Parliament, I have assured Mr. Bruce that this Government will be quite ready to co-operate with the Federal Government in endeavouring to maintain the law and inducing the members of the Waterside Workers' Federation to obey the law and carry out honorably the agreement it has made. This Government will co-operate with the Federal Government in any way in which it usefully can do so in order to give effect to that intention.

UNEMPLOYMENT.

Mr. BADDELEY: With reference to the statement he made the other day, that single men had the same right as married men to apply for rations, is the Colonial Secretary aware that applications for rations have been made to the department by single men, who have been turned down?

Mr. BRUNTNEILL: My department has simply set out a scale of rations, applications for which are dealt with by the Labour and Industry Department. It is true that some hon. members opposite have supplied me with the names of single men who it was alleged had been refused rations. All the cases brought under my notice up to the present have been referred by me to the Labour and Industry Department, and the reply I have received clearly proves that the fault does not lie with the department. In some cases it can be proved that single men obtained rations from the department and have been known to sell them afterwards.

Mr. DAVIES: You are not going to starve everybody because of that!

Mr. BRUNTNEILL: Everybody is not being starved. I am assured by the department that every *bona fide* person who applies for rations is supplied.

Captain DUNN: Would that apply to the men whose names were supplied?

Mr. BRUNTNEILL: I am unable to say. The names were not given to me, but the statement has been made that rations have been supplied to single men who have been known to sell them. Another case that comes to my memory is one which was referred to by an hon. member on the other side of the House, I think two days ago. He supplied the name and address of an individual—I think the name was Clarke—which were at once submitted by me to the Department of Labour and Industry, with the request that it take steps to see that relief was given. The man was called up to get his rations, but up to this morning he had not appeared at the department. I am prepared to deal with every case on its merits, to send it on to the Department of Labour and Industry, and, if rations are refused, to supply

hon. members with the reasons. I think hon. members are entitled to that information.

**CATTLE SLAUGHTERING:
HOMEBUSH.**

Mr. CARTER: Is the Minister for Public Health aware that a custom obtains at Homebush whereby cattle trucked from Queensland are slaughtered when in a state of coma? Is the Minister aware that this is brought about through heat apoplexy, accentuated by arsenical poisoning through absorption? Is he also aware that the carcasses of these animals are sent into the city for human consumption? Will he take steps to prevent this practice from being continued in the future?

Dr. ARTHUR: As the matter appears to be a very complicated one, the hon. member will have to give me time to look into it.

**METROPOLITAN WATER, SEWERAGE,
AND DRAINAGE (CITY MEMBERS)
BILL.**

Mr. BAVIN (Gordon), Premier and Colonial Treasurer [3.7], moved:

That leave be given to bring in a bill to declare vacant the seats of those members of the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage, and Drainage Board who were elected by the aldermen of the city of Sydney; to make further provision as to the qualification for election as a member of that board; to amend the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage, and Drainage Act, 1924; and for purposes connected therewith.

He said: The proposed amendment of the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage, and Drainage Act is a corollary of the Act we have just passed to place the affairs of the Sydney Corporation under a commission. The City Council has elected two members to represent it on the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage, and it is now proposed that the commission, which has displaced the Council, shall appoint two representatives to the board in place of those now sitting as representatives of the City Council. We think it would be quite wrong in principle to leave on the board the two gentlemen who have been elected by the Council. We do not think it right that

men who have been appointed by the Council, which Parliament has decided shall be suspended, should remain in their present position. The new body which is to take the place of the Council will have the right to reappoint the two gentlemen referred to if it desires to do so; but it is only consistent that the new body which is to carry out the administration of the city should have the right to appoint its representatives.

Mr. LANG (Auburn) [3.10]: I regret that the leader of the Government has seen fit to pursue this policy right to the last possible inch and to take the utmost advantage that he can of the Government's position. When one puts aside heat and calmly surveys all that the Government has done under the name of repudiation, admitting, too, that there may have been some sort of sincerity in the Government, and that one might have accepted its statements as being truthful, one is forced to the conclusion that the Government is influenced in its views regarding the previous Government by an unwarranted bias towards the belief that everything the retiring Government did was wrong. The Government having removed the City Council now wants to remove from the Water and Sewerage Board the people's representatives who have been in their present position for some time under the authority of an Act of Parliament. The nominee body that is to be given control of the destinies of the greatest city of the Southern Hemisphere, that is to look after the safety of the people and administer millions of money of the city, is now to be given the right to place its nominees on the Water and Sewerage Board. This measure proposes to remove two members of the board who were first of all elected to the City Council by electors of Sydney, and then placed by the City Council of Sydney on the Water and Sewerage Board. In passing I may say that I am not aware who those two representatives are or whether they are Labour or non-Labour men.

Mr. SHANNON: They are both Labour men!

Mr. LANG: I was not aware of that. I was addressing myself to the principle that those aldermen were elected to the City Council and were placed by that legal and proper body on the Water and Sewerage Board in the same legal and proper way as the other members of the Water and Sewerage Board were placed in their positions. That is the class of appointment which it is now proposed to revoke. I ask hon. members on the Government side to be cautious and not to allow the Government to go too far. I am reminded by Mr. Shannon that the present representatives of the City Council on the board are Labour nominees. I believe that is not sufficient to induce the Government to remove them. It is not because of their political sympathies that the Government is going to remove them, but I ask hon. members on the Government side to cast their minds back to the time when the Labour Government made an appointment which won the approval of New South Wales, of Australia, and of the British-speaking world, inasmuch as it was non-political and was an appointment that would redound to the credit of any Government. I refer to the appointment of Lord Chelmsford as Agent-General for New South Wales. Now he is to be removed and is to be replaced by a politician, Sir George Fuller. That appointment will smell in the nostrils of all right-thinking people, especially as it supersedes an appointment made by the last Government of a man who stands high in public life.

Now we come to these two appointments made by the City Council of Sydney, the fairest city in the world. The two men happen for the time being to be Labour representatives, and apparently there must be something wrong because they are Labour representatives. It puts me in mind of the time when there was always something wrong about this country of ours, because it was "Colonial." People who came to this country sneered because of the humble origin of this great country of Australia, and to-day there are sneers against those who give their allegiance

[*Mr. Lang.*

to the great Labour movement. The name "Labour" must be anathema to the Premier. I ask hon. members on the Government side not to be led too far. Under no circumstances would I be a party to this proposal. I would rather go out of political life altogether than do such an act as the present Government is doing. I would never under the name of reviewing—the lawyers' trick word for repudiation—do the act that it is proposed in this bill to do. I ask hon. members on the Government side to ask these "mad mullahs" to cry halt. History will show that when you commence to use the guillotine you never know where it is going to stop. I object and I am going to object to these acts of repudiation. I am going to say the King can do no wrong and I mean it. When the King did these acts he did no wrong. But here is the Government coming along and asking Parliament to say that when the King's representative did certain acts he did wrong. If there has been any mistake—I say there has been no mistake—it would be better to let some little mistake go by the board than to lower the prestige of a British community, to sully our honour and integrity, and to destroy the sacredness of a contract entered into by the Government and the country. The Government is repudiating contract after contract by Act of Parliament after Act of Parliament—this can only be done by Act of Parliament—so as to prevent our own citizens from getting what they could get from any ordinary individual or corporation. They could get compensation from any individual or corporation for such an act as this Government is now doing. But for the Act of Parliament the Government would be compelled to pay compensation. Because of that the Government passes an Act of Parliament to deprive men of their ordinary rights as citizens, their common rights in the courts of the land, their ordinary rights of equity and justice. I enter my protest. My duty compels me to say I am opposed to the bill, and I shall take every step that the Government will permit and the forms of the House will allow to oppose the

measure. I am also prepared to oppose any further act of repudiation which is calculated to bring British prestige and British traditions down to the gutter in the way that is being done day by day by the Premier.

Mr. SHANNON (Surry Hills) [3.20]: I rise to enter my protest against the action of the Premier in introducing this bill. In the first place I should like to know what urgency there is for it. In his opening remarks the hon. gentleman gave us no idea that there was any urgency in this matter. I carefully read his policy speech, and in it I saw no reference to the fact that he wanted to remove representatives of the City Council from the Water Board. In the Governor's speech there was no reference to it either. For the life of me I cannot understand why the Premier is rushing this matter through. The only reason I can surmise is that it is an act of repudiation, as the leader of the Opposition has said, and the Premier wishes to remove these two representatives because they are Labour men.

Mr. BAVIN: If you tell me they are Labour men I will believe you, but I do not know whether they are or not!

Mr. SHANNON: The Premier well knows that they are Labour men. He knows their names and who elected them.

Mr. BAVIN: I do not know their names!

Mr. SHANNON: One is named Green, and the other is named English. It is a strange thing that the Premier should attempt to remove two men from the board and give the right to a commission which is not yet appointed to nominate two others in their stead. Rumour says that the person who is to take the place of one of the two Labour aldermen is already nominated, in the person of a Government supporter in the Upper House, who formerly represented the Government on the Water Board.

Mr. BAVIN: What is his name?

Mr. SHANNON: Mr. Bryant, the Government Whip in the Upper House. That is the rumour which is going around town. It is a peculiar thing that he happens to be the Whip of the Govern-

ment party in the Upper House, and previously represented the Government on the Water Board.

Mr. BAVIN: He is certainly not the Government Whip in the Upper House!

Mr. SHANNON: He whips them up, though. Personally I think this policy of repudiation has gone too far. Since taking office the Premier has done nothing but remove men from positions to which the Labour Government appointed them. He started by removing the seven industrial inspectors. He removed the two rural inspectors, and then he removed Mr. Kay. He chopped off the heads of twenty-six aldermen in the City Council, he removed Mr. Treble from office, he proposes to remove Mr. Piddington, and now he wants to remove two Labour aldermen from the Water Board.

Mr. BAVIN: I wish I could remove your misapprehensions!

Mr. SHANNON: You will not succeed in doing so by the way you have been carrying on for the last three weeks in this House. If Mr. Collins is one of the nominees in connection with the City of Sydney Commission, how will he know whom to appoint? A man who comes from the other side of the world will probably have to take instructions from you or your Government.

Mr. BAVIN: If he does, he will probably get very good and wise instructions!

Mr. SHANNON: You will get someone with Nationalist sympathies, whom you are anxious to placate by putting him in a job where he will get good remuneration. Assuming for the moment that the city elections had taken place yesterday—the day set apart for the election of aldermen—and that the Civic Reform party had by any accident been returned to power, which I doubt, Aldermen Green and English would have continued in their positions on the Water Board until their term of office had expired. Perhaps hon. members on the other side of the House may think that unfair, but let me say that it worked the other way three and a half years ago.

When the Labour party was returned fifteen strong, three years ago yesterday, Alderman Arthur McElhone represented the City Council on the Water Board. He continued in office for five and a half months, until the new board came into existence. Although he is not a Labour man the Labour aldermen did not remove him from his job on the board. But as soon as Mr. Bavin gets into power and removes the City Council by appointing a commission, he wants to remove the two Labour aldermen from the Water Board. One of them has only fifteen months to run, and the other was elected unopposed only three months ago by the City Council. The Civic Reform party, which is really the left wing of the National Association, did not nominate anyone against him on that occasion. Alderman Green has therefore nearly four years to run, yet Mr. Bavin wants to remove him from office. If the state of parties on the Water Board were fifty-fifty, I could understand the Premier's object, but the Water Board, under its reconstitution by the Fuller Government, is now some eighteen strong, and among them are only two Labour men. Therefore I do not see that it could be anticipated that the Labour aldermen on the Water Board were going to introduce Labour principles there.

I trust that the Government will withdraw this bill. It certainly appears to me that some outside influence must have been brought to bear in connection with the matter. The Premier must have been aware when he introduced the Sydney Corporation (Commissioners) Act that the City Council had representatives on the Water Board, yet he made no provision in it for removing them. Section 2 of that measure distinctly states:

The Commissioners may exercise any of the following powers, that is to say, they may—

- (d) elect an eligible person as a member of the Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board in any case in which but for this Act the aldermen of the city of Sydney might so elect.

Therefore the Premier, or whoever was responsible for the drafting of that

[Mr. Shannon.

measure must have known that the City Council had the right to nominate two aldermen to the Water Board. Apparently at that time, however, the hon. gentleman was quite prepared to allow the two Labour representatives to remain on the board till the expiration of their term of office, and gave power to the new commissioners—who will take office, I understand, when Parliament goes into recess—to elect persons to represent them when the term of office of the present representatives had expired. Therefore, it seems very much as if strings had been pulled by some outside organisation and pressure brought to bear on the Premier to introduce a bill to remove the two Labour aldermen from the board because they are Labour men. That is the only reason I can see, and I say it is nothing more or less than an act of repudiation. The Premier is setting an example to the Labour party, when it returns to office after the next elections, to carry out the same policy as this Government has introduced.

Mr. KNIGHT (Hartley) [3.29]: We are all surprised at the Premier introducing this proposal. Ever since Parliament met we have had nothing but revolutionary measures—much more revolutionary than anyone on the Labour side has ever thought of. During the elections the Government told the people that the Labour party were the only people who were adopting revolutionary and direct-action methods. The Premier quite recently said that some of our members had learned the meaning of the word “repudiation” since they had been in this House. If we never knew anything about repudiation before coming to this House we have had many lessons during the short period we have been here. Every action of the Government has been an act of repudiation of one kind or another. It appears to me that the Government is going through all the departments with a fine-tooth comb, to find out all those persons who have Labour sympathies, so that by legislation it can remove them from the positions they hold. The Premier said that one of the reasons why these men should be removed from the Metropolitan

Water, Sewerage, and Drainage Board was because they had been appointed by a Council which was going out of office. That is a very poor excuse. I was expecting that we should have heard from the Premier some reason for his action.

Mr. GOLDSTEIN: They are the elected representatives of a Council which is no longer in existence, so how can they claim to represent the Council?

Mr. KNIGHT: I expected to hear the Premier give some reason for the introduction of this measure, but Mr. Bavin, on behalf of the Government, gave no reason at all; he merely offered some very weak excuses. The same thing applies to other measures which the Government has rushed through the House with such brutal urgency. It appears now as though anybody in any Government department who shows any sympathy with the Labour movement is going to be put out of his position. These representatives were elected by a Council that has been beheaded by this Government, so the Premier says that the appointees also should be removed. Mr. Bavin expects us to believe that he did not know that they were Labour men, appointed by a Labour Council. Surely the Premier does not expect us to believe that. If he does, then I marvel at his innocence and simplicity. In this measure and others the Government has shown a remarkable sense of simplicity, or else the quintessence of hypocrisy. If what Mr. Bavin says is going to be the policy of this and all Governments that when a Government which has appointed men to certain positions goes out of office, either by effluxion of time or by the vote of the people, all its appointees are to be removed, then it will necessarily follow that appointments made by the present Government will have to be annulled by the succeeding Labour Government.

Mr. GOLDSTEIN: The Council representatives on the Water Board were elected on a certain qualification, and they no longer possess that qualification. They got their positions because they were aldermen!

Mr. KNIGHT: The men who will get these positions now will get them be-

cause they are supporters of the present Government, and for no other reason. Yesterday we were told it was wrong that unions should be the playthings of any Government. But this Government and previous Nationalist Governments have brought into existence "scab" unions, which have been the mere playthings of their political party.

Mr. FOSTER: What about "scab" Ministers?

Mr. KNIGHT: The hon. member knows something about them. The present action of the Government carries the word of repudiation too far, and will in a very short time act as a boomerang upon hon. members opposite. The most unreasonable and outrageous thing any Government could contemplate is to repudiate appointments made by a previous Government, and dismiss the appointees. It establishes a dangerous precedent, and if that is the attitude of the present Government it cannot blame the Labour party, after the next elections, when the Labour party comes back with a majority as it will do, for adopting the same course.

Mr. SANDERS: The hon. member is an optimist!

Mr. KNIGHT: Every hon. member on the Government side of the House knows that the Labour party will come back to power after the next elections. Most of them know also that the Government is going too far in this matter. The Government is going to extremes in its vindictiveness and spite, which will rebound upon the next elections. We were told yesterday that hon. members supporting the Government do not believe in compulsory unionism. Many hon. members on the Government benches do not agree with the present act of repudiation, but they are compelled by their caucus to support the Government. Then they tell us that they do not believe in compulsion, or in men being compelled to be members of a union. But they do believe in men being dismissed because they are members of unions.

Mr. J. R. LEE: That is absurd!

Mr. KNIGHT: The Government's very action proves it. The measure it passed yesterday proves it.

Mr. GOLDSTEIN: That is not correct!

Mr. KNIGHT: It is perfectly correct. I could bring instances to prove that the Broken Hill Proprietary Company dismissed men because they were members of a union. What has happened since this Government came into office? Within a few weeks there was an act of repudiation. It passed a law to dismiss six inspectors who had been appointed by the Labour Government. Then it dismissed two hut inspectors, also appointed by the Labour Government.

An HON. MEMBER: What has that to do with this measure?

Mr. KNIGHT: It has a lot to do with it, because this is another act of repudiation. The Government repudiated the appointment of Mr. Kay, and of Mr. Treble.

Mr. J. R. LEE: Does the hon. member believe in the appointment of Mr. Kay?

Mr. KNIGHT: I have heard nothing from the Government side of the House against Mr. Kay's qualifications and his competency to carry out the duties of his position. The Government made a complaint and I listened for some justification of its action, but I heard none. The Government has taken the franchise from the people of Sydney. It has done it for one reason, and one reason only.

An HON. MEMBER: Because corruption was rampant!

Mr. KNIGHT: It was because the Government knew perfectly well that if the citizens of Sydney retained their franchise the City Council would be under Labour rule for all time.

Mr. GOLDSTEIN: If that were so, it would be a serious reflection on the citizens of Sydney!

Mr. KNIGHT: Who appointed the hon. member as the sole judge of what the people of Sydney want or what they ought to have?

Mr. GOLDSTEIN: I am giving my opinion!

Mr. KNIGHT: The hon. member has no right to force his opinion on the citizens of Sydney by legislation. The

[Mr. Knight.

Government has abolished the City Corporation comprising twenty-five or twenty-six aldermen.

Mr. TRESIDDER: Because they were corrupt!

Mr. KNIGHT: Who told you they were corrupt?

Mr. TRESIDDER: We have proved it over and over again!

Mr. KNIGHT: You have proved nothing of the kind. Further, the measure which was passed last night was designed for the purpose of humiliating Mr. Piddington and shifting him from the position of chairman of the Industrial Commission. The Government has taken from the six chairmen of conciliation committees the right to vote, which is another act of repudiation and humiliation.

Sir THOMAS HENLEY: Those committees are only a farce!

Mr. KNIGHT: In the hon. member's opinion, all committees which are not working for the Nationalist party are a farce. The Government is trying to humiliate these chairmen as a preliminary to shifting them from the positions they now hold, simply because they were appointed by a Labour Government. Yet this is the party which told us frequently, prior to the elections, that the Labour party stood for repudiation. They were unable to give one instance where the Labour party ever stood for repudiation. Through the press and from every platform they have tried to link up the Australian Labour party with the Soviet Government of Russia, because that Government repudiated the debts of the Imperial Russian Government. They said it was a dreadful and a horrible thing to do.

Sir THOMAS HENLEY: What do you think about it?

Mr. KNIGHT: It was not a bit worse than the repudiation by your Government of all the things that were done by the previous Government. If it was wrong for the Soviet Government of Russia to repudiate the debts of the autocratic Government which preceded it it is equally wrong for the present Nationalist Government to repudiate the appointments made by the previous Labour Government. Since I came into

this House I have learned more about repudiation than I ever thought it was possible to learn. I warn the members of the Government party against allowing prejudice and personal spite to be carried so far as to repudiate every appointment made by the previous Government. Those whom they cannot dismiss they humiliate and place in an intolerable position, so that they will resign. The Government is setting a precedent which will act as a boomerang. It is about time that some members of the Government party, who do not agree with this policy of repudiation—and I know quite a few of them who do not agree with it—took a definite stand. The facts is, they are compelled by their caucus to support measures with which they have absolutely no sympathy. If they desire to show themselves to be true representatives of the people they will, sooner or later, have to refuse to follow a Premier and a Cabinet which carries on this outrageous policy of repudiation. It will be a sorry day when the whole of the public service is placed in such an uncertain position that the officers of that service will be subject to being removed by each succeeding Government as it comes into office. If that is to be the policy laid down by this Government, it means that the public service will be deprived of some of its best men, because men with high qualifications will not go into a service when there is no security of tenure, and when they know that their appointments will only last during the reign of one Government. If this policy is persisted in by the Government, and if future Governments follow the same course, the public service will be in a state of perpetual turmoil. I hope the Government will hesitate before continuing this reckless policy of repudiation. The Nationalist Government came in, allegedly, to bring about peace, harmony, and contentment in the community. It is unfortunate that up-to-date every one of its acts has tended to bring about disruption, dissension and discontent in industry and throughout the public service. It is time hon. members put a brake upon

the Premier and his cabinet, and stopped them from going headling into political oblivion.

Mr. TONGE (Canterbury) [3.50]: The latest victims whose heads are to be cut off by this Government are Aldermen English and Alderman Green, who have proved themselves to be competent as members of the Water Board. They have been members of that Board for some time, and they understand its ramifications, policy and administration, and, from the business point of view, there is no reason why they should be removed. Who will be appointed to the board by the commission which is to control the affairs of the City Council? It will either appoint men of the same political faith as the Government, or the members of the commission themselves will sit on the Water Board as the representatives of the City Council. The members of that commission will have plenty to do without bothering about the Water Board or any other board. If they do not take seats themselves upon the board they will appoint officers of the Council, thus taking them away from their work. The whole community is interested in the administration of the Water Board, and it is a backward step on the part of the Government to interfere with Alderman English and Alderman Green, simply because they are Labour men. They were appointed in a constitutional way, and they should be allowed to retain their seats on the Water Board for the next two years, or until such time as the Greater Sydney scheme is brought into operation—that is, if the Government intends to bring it into operation. Neither Alderman English nor Alderman Green has been charged with incompetency. They are just as competent as any of the suburban aldermen who sit on the Water Board. The only reason they are being removed is because they are Labour men. Speaking on the Industrial Arbitration Amendment Bill the hon. member for Wollongong referred to the Americanisation of the civil service of New South Wales and the various boards which are functioning throughout the State. The Government is playing with a double-edged sword,

which the Labour Government will be able to wield when it regains possession of the Treasury benches after the next general election.

Mr. GOLDSTEIN: We are not afraid, because we have made no political appointments!

Mr. TONGE: My answer to Mr. Goldstein is that this is an act of political repudiation. The hon. member cannot say one word against the competency of either Alderman Green or Alderman English as members of the Water Board. He cannot say anything to their detriment in comparison with other members of the board.

Mr. GOLDSTEIN: I can say this: These men were elected to the Water Board by a body which we think should not exist!

Mr. TONGE: Notwithstanding what the hon. member says, these gentlemen could have been left on the Water Board until the Government brought in the Greater Sydney scheme, which it says it is going to bring in within the next two years. To remove them simply because they are Labour men is an act of repudiation. The Government is creating a very dangerous precedent. Already it has dismissed the industrial inspectors appointed by the Labour Government, it has got rid of Mr. Kay and Mr. Treble, and even the Agent-General is not immune. Now the City Council representatives on the Water Board are to go. The precedent which has been established will open the way for the next Government to remove from the public service and from boards and commissions all the appointees of this Government. What the Government has done will have the effect making public servants who are not of the rank and file seize every opportunity to get out of the service and enter private employ, because their positions in the public service will not be secure.

Mr. J. R. LEE: Did you agree with the slaughter of Mr. Stevens?

Mr. TONGE: I was not in Parliament at the time, and I took no part in the affair. I would remind the Minister for Justice, however, that Mr. Stevens dismissed twenty-six Treasury clerks who

[Mr. Tonge.]

had from twenty-five to thirty years' service. He threw those men on the labour market for no reason whatsoever.

Mr. J. R. LEE: Is that why you slaughtered him?

Mr. TONGE: I told the Minister that I played no part in that affair. As a matter of fact, I know nothing about it. All I know is that Mr. Stevens discharged twenty-six clerks, a number of whom were members of an organisation of which I was an officer at the time. In dismissing those clerks Mr. Stevens did wrong. Mr. Stevens held the highest position in the Treasury, and if he was put out because he was not carrying out the wishes of the political head of the department he had to take the consequences of his action. It is the duty of every public servant to carry out the wishes of the Government of the day, whether it be Labour or Nationalist. As I said, I was not a member of the House at the time of the Stevens affair.

Mr. J. R. LEE: But you supported the leader of your party who put him out!

Mr. TONGE: Whilst I have no time for repudiation, and whilst I think there should be no interference with those appointed to the public service, or to boards or commissions, and that no public servant should be dismissed for any reason except incompetency or misbehaviour, I consider that Ministers should have the right to choose those occupying positions such as private secretaries to Ministers and publicity officers, who are engaged in a confidential capacity. Every Minister should have the right to choose his own personal staff. In my opinion the Minister who does not do so is very foolish.

So far as I am concerned, I would abolish the Water Board altogether. If I had my way every member of the Water Board, including Sir Thomas Henley, would go, because I think the Water Board should be under a Minister responsible to Parliament and the people. As a matter of fact, we have too many boards carrying out functions which ought to be carried out by men directly responsible to Parliament. Under the present Act, the Water Board has too much power. For instance, it

can go on the market to borrow money in competition with the Government. That, in my opinion, is altogether wrong.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. TONGE: I know, Mr. Speaker, that I am somewhat out of order, and I will discuss the motion before the House. I say that the Government cannot show that either Alderman English or Alderman Green is incompetent. The Government cannot show that these gentlemen have not carried out their duties just as efficiently as have other members of the Water Board. That being so, there is no necessity for the introduction of this bill.

Mr. JAMES MCGIRR (Bankstown) [3.29]: I do not want to let this motion go through without putting on record my protest against the action of the Government in repudiating appointments made by the previous Government. Whilst the Labour Government was in office it did not repudiate any appointment made or agreement entered into by the Nationalist Government which preceded it.

Mr. J. R. LEE: What about the removal of Mr. Oakes from the Board of Health and Sir Arthur Cocks from the Agent-Generalship?

Mr. JAMES MCGIRR: The Minister knows as well as I do that owing either to ill-health or to incompetency Sir Arthur Cocks resigned from the Agent-Generalship, and decided to return to this country. We are rapidly approaching a state of affairs when no person will be prepared to accept a position in the Government service because he will know that as times goes on a new Government of a different political complexion may come into power and repudiate his appointment. We have had experience quite recently which shows us that the American system of "spoils to the victors" is being brought into operation by the present Government. The action of the Government will afford the fullest justification to the Labour party, which will before long again come back to power, for displacing public servants whose political views do not accord with its own. We know that Labour Governments have been ham-

pered and harassed by officers in the various departments who have held opposite views, but no attempt has been made to visit the resentment of the party on these officers by dispensing with them. The only case that can be mentioned in this connection is that of Mr. Stevens, who showed himself to be a partisan, and who, owing to his political views, has now achieved the position of an Assistant Minister over the heads of many members of the Nationalist party who have rendered good political service in this House for many years. The reward which Mr. Stevens has received for his services when he was in the Government service may be taken to indicate clearly what Mr. Lang had to contend with when he was in the Treasury. The Government has gone so far with class legislation that the consequences of its actions will be far-reaching, and the public will very soon realise the mistake it made at the last election in giving the Nationalist party the control of the Government. The charges for workmen's weekly tickets are to be increased, and this must be regarded as a purely partisan move. There are many men in the Bankstown electorate who, during the Labour regime, were advised to go out into that district and build homes for themselves and who now find that with the advent of a Nationalist Government their conditions of life are being made almost intolerable. The Government is now proposing to bring about an absolutely ridiculous position which will reflect grave discredit upon it. The two representatives of the City Council on the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage, because they are known to be Labour supporters, are to be displaced and two nominees of the commission, which is itself a nominee body, are to be placed on the board. There is no justification whatever for such a step. We have heard many serious charges hurled at the City Council, but these charges have been founded mainly on hearsay, and have not been supported by any reliable evidence. The hon. member for Coogee and the hon. member for Randwick have been foremost among those who have brought charges against

the City Council, but we have heard of irregularities in connection with the administration of affairs in the Randwick municipality. If it was a proper thing to condemn the City Council on hearsay evidence and to take the affairs of the city out of the hands of that Council, there would be equal justification for pursuing a similar course in the case of the Randwick and other councils regarding which statements of a damaging character have been made. The whole position is becoming intolerable, and as soon as the public realise what the Government is doing the better. The legislation which has already been passed this session is sufficient to indicate the lengths to which the Government is prepared to go. Prominent among the Acts which have already been passed is the Family Endowment Amendment Act, under which Mr. Treble will be deprived of his position as Commissioner for Family Endowment. The sole complaint so far as Mr. Treble is concerned is that his salary is too high. No suggestion has been made that he is not capable of administering the very important department which has been entrusted to his charge. This is the first occasion on which I have heard objection made to the payment of a good salary to a man who has proved his competency as Mr. Treble has done. A few pounds more or less in the way of salary is a matter which should not be taken into account in the case of a man who has proved his fitness for his job. Mr. Treble has given twenty years of his life to the public service and has proved himself an efficient officer, but the Government, believing that his political views do not coincide with those of the Nationalist party, are giving vent to their spleen and their antipathy to the Labour Government by dispensing with Mr. Treble. It is doing this in order to afford gratification to its supporters in York-street. Two and a half years ago the Government appointed an officer of the Department of Labour and Industry, an ex-member of Parliament, Mr. Swiney. He carried out his duties well, but this Government came in and threw him out. The Government has clearly shown that

capable and honest officials who carry out their duties well and satisfactorily are to be thrown out if they are opposed to the Government in politics. The newspapers state that the Premier has made an offer to a Mr. Collins, a man from another country, who is unknown in Australia and who does not understand Australian conditions. The Government has offered him a position on the Civic Commission. Naturally he has heard of what the Government has been doing lately, and in view of what the Government has done to other public men—Mr. Treble, Mr. Piddington, and others—he fears that the same sort of thing may be done to him by some other Government and therefore he has not accepted the position.

MR. BAVIN: How do you know all that?

MR. JAMES MCGIRR: From my reading of the newspapers. The morning newspapers which support the Nationalist party state that Mr. Collins has been approached. I am surprised to hear the Premier deny it. I presume Mr. Collins has outstanding ability, but men of that type are not prepared to accept positions offered by this Government for they fear that what has happened to others at the hands of this Government may happen to them at the hands of a succeeding Government. If it is the accepted policy that with every change of Government men are to be thrown out of their jobs I hope the Labour Government, which will follow the present Government, will put out of office those appointees of the present Government who retard the progress of the Labour movement.

MR. J. R. LEE: I move:

That the question be now put.

The House divided:

Ayes, 42; noes, 39; majority, 3.

AYES.

Arkins, J. G. D.	Chaffey, Captain
Arthur, Dr. R.	Drummond, D. H.
Bate, H. J.	Fitzpatrick, J. C. L.
Bavin, T. R.	Foster, W. F.
Bennett, W.	Glasgow, C. F. S.
Best, E. C.	Goldstein, H.
Bruntnell, A.	Hedges, W. W.
Bruxner, Lt. Col.	Henley, Sir Thomas
Budd, A. E.	Jackson, J.
Buttenshaw, E. A.	Jaques, H. V.
Carter, H. C.	Kilpatrick, M.

[Mr. James McGirr.]

Lee, J. R.
Main, H.
Marks, E. S.
Martin, L. O.
Missingham, W. T.
Ness, J. T.
Pollack, A. J.
Reid, Major
Ross, J.
Sanders, E. L.
Shand, Major

Stevens, B. S. B.
Thorby, H. V. C.
Tresidder, E. P.
Vincent, R. S.
Walker, R. B.
Wearne, W. E.
Weaver, R. W. D.

Tellers,
Reid, A. A. E. E. V.
Walmsley, B. C.

NOES.

Baddeley, J. M.
Booth, G.
Burke, Frank
Burke, Michael
Butler, W. J.
Cahill, J. J.
Cameron, R.
Clyne, D.
Connell, Major
Connolly, P.
Davidson, M. A.
Dunn, Captain
Ely, W. T.
Evatt, Dr.
Flannery, M. M.
Gosling, M.
Hoad, K. O.
Horsington, E. M.
Keegan, T.
Kelly, C. A.

Knight, H.
Lamaro, J.
Lang, J. T.
Lazzarini, C. C.
McGirr, James
McKell, W. J.
Murray, D.
Mutch, T. D.
O'Hearn, W. F.
Olde, B. C.
O'Sullivan, M.
Quirk, J.
Ratcliffe, W. J.
Shannon, T. J.
Stuart-Robertson, R. J.
Tonge, A.
Tully, J. M.
Tellers,
Scully, W. J.
Stanley, F.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That leave be given to bring in the bill—put. The House divided:

Ayes, 43; noes, 39; majority, 4.

AYES.

Arkins, J. G. D.
Arthur, Dr. R.
Bate, H. J.
Bavin, T. R.
Bennett, W.
Best, E. C.
Bruntnell, A.
Bruxner, Lt. Col.
Budd, A. E.
Buttenshaw, E. A.
Carter, H. C.
Chaffey, Captain
Drummond, D. H.
Fitzpatrick, J. C. L.
Foster, W. F.
Glasgow, C. F. S.
Goldstein, H.
Hedges, W. W.
Henley, Sir Thomas
Jackson, J.
Jaques, H. V.
Jarvie, Major

Kilpatrick, M.
Lee, J. R.
Main, H.
Marks, E. S.
Martin, L. O.
Missingham, W. T.
Ness, J. T.
Reid, A. A. E. E. V.
Reid, Major
Sanders, E. L.
Shand, Major
Stevens, B. S. B.
Thorby, H. V. C.
Tresidder, E. P.
Vincent, R. S.
Walker, R. B.
Walmsley, B. C.
Wearne, W. E.
Weaver, R. W. D.
Tellers,
Pollack, A. J.
Ross, J.

NOES.

Baddeley, J. M.
Booth, G.
Burke, Frank

Burke, Michael
Butler, W. J.
Cahill, J. J.

Cameron, R.
Clyne, D.
Connell, Major
Davidson, M. A.
Dunn, Captain
Ely, W. T.
Flannery, M. M.
Gosling, M.
Hoad, K. O.
Horsington, E. M.
Keegan, T.
Kelly, C. A.
Knight, H.
Lamaro, J.
Lang, J. T.
Lazzarini, C. C.
McGirr, James

McKell, W. J.
Murray, D.
Mutch, T. D.
O'Hearn, W. F.
Olde, B. C.
O'Sullivan, M.
Quirk, J.
Ratcliffe, W. J.
Scully, W. J.
Shannon, T. J.
Stanley, F.
Stuart-Robertson, R. J.
Tonge, A.
Tully, J. M.
Tellers,
Connolly, P.
Evatt, Dr.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.
Bill presented.

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

Ayes, 39; noes, 35; majority, 4.

AYES.

Arkins, J. G. D.
Arthur, Dr. R.
Bate, H. J.
Bennett, W.
Best, E. C.
Bruntnell, A.
Bruxner, Lt. Col.
Budd, A. E.
Buttenshaw, E. A.
Carter, H. C.
Chaffey, Captain
Drummond, D. H.
Fitzpatrick, J. C. L.
Glasgow, C. F. S.
Hedges, W. W.
Henley, Sir Thomas
Jarvie, Major
Kilpatrick, M.
Lee, J. R.
Main, H.

Marks, E. S.
Missingham, W. T.
Ness, J. T.
Pollack, A. J.
Reid, A. A. E. E. V.
Reid, Major
Ross, J.
Sanders, E. L.
Shand, Major
Stevens, B. S. B.
Thorby, H. V. C.
Tresidder, E. P.
Vincent, R. S.
Walker, R. B.
Walmsley, B. C.
Wearne, W. E.
Weaver, R. W. D.
Tellers,
Foster, W. F.
Jackson, J.

NOES.

Baddeley, J. M.
Booth, G.
Burke, Frank
Burke, Michael
Butler, W. J.
Cahill, J. J.
Cameron, R.
Connell, Major
Connolly, P.
Davidson, M. A.
Dunn, Captain
Ely, W. T.
Gosling, M.
Hoad, K. O.
Horsington, E. M.
Keegan, T.
Kelly, C. A.
Knight, H.

Lamaro, J.
Lang, J. T.
Lazzarini, C. C.
McGirr, James
Murray, D.
O'Hearn, W. F.
Olde, B. C.
O'Sullivan, M.
Quirk, J.
Ratcliffe, W. J.
Scully, W. J.
Shannon, T. J.
Stanley, F.
Stuart-Robertson, R. J.
Tully, J. M.
Tellers,
Clyne, D.
Tonge, A.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.
Bill read a first time.

Question—That the bill be printed and the second reading stand an order of the day for to-morrow—put. The House divided:

Ayes, 40; noes, 35; majority, 5.

AYES.

Arkins, J. G. D.	Marks, E. S.
Arthur, Dr. R.	Missingham, W. T.
Ball, R. T.	Ness, J. T.
Bate, H. J.	Pollack, A. J.
Bavin, T. R.	Reid, A. A. E. E. V.
Bennett, W.	Reid, Major
Bruntnell, A.	Ross, J.
Bruxner, Lt.-Col.	Sanders, E. L.
Buttenshaw, E. A.	Shand, Major
Carter, H. C.	Stevens, B. S. B.
Chaffey, Captain	Thorby, H. V. C.
Drummond, D. H.	Tresidder, E. P.
Fitzpatrick, J. C. L.	Vincent, R. S.
Foster, W. F.	Walker, R. B.
Glasgow, C. F. S.	Walmsley, B. C.
Hedges, W. W.	Wearne, W. E.
Henley, Sir Thomas	Weaver, R. W. D.
Jackson, J.	
Jarvie, Major	<i>Tellers,</i>
Kilpatrick, M.	Best, E. C.
Lee, J. R.	Budd, A. E.

NOES.

Baddeley, J. M.	Lang, J. T.
Booth, G.	Lazzarini, C. C.
Burke, Frank	McGirr, James
Burke, Michael	Murray, D.
Butler, W. J.	Mutch, T. D.
Cahill, J. J.	Olde, B. C.
Clyne, D.	O'Sullivan, M.
Connell, Major	Quirk, J.
Connolly, P.	Ratcliffe, W. J.
Davidson, M. A.	Scully, W. J.
Dunn, Captain	Shannon, T. J.
Ely, W. T.	Stanley, F.
Gosling, M.	Stuart-Robertson, R. J.
Hoad, K. O.	Tonge, A.
Horsington, E. M.	Tully, J. M.
Keegan, T.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Kelly, C. A.	Cameron, R.
Lamaro, J.	Knight, H.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS AND
ELECTRICIANS LICENSING AMEND-
MENT BILL.

Motion for suspension of standing orders agreed to.

SECOND READING.

Lt.-Colonel BRUXNER (Tenterfield), Minister for Local Government [4.45], moved:

That this bill be now read a second time. He said: My reason for asking the House to put through this measure in one day is mainly due to the fact that next week

I have to attend a meeting of the Federal Aid Roads Board at Canberra, and I desire to have this matter cleared up so that I may be able to get away. The bill entails a very slight amendment of the Act. Briefly, the position is this: Section 15 of the Act reads:

(1) From and after a day to be appointed on the recommendation of the board by the Governor, and notified in the *Gazette*, the following provisions shall have effect:—

(a) No person who is not a licensed electrical contractor or a licensed electrician shall undertake or carry out electrical installation work.

(b) No electrical contractor or electrician shall employ any person to carry out electrical installation work who is not an electrical contractor or a licensed electrician.

(c) Nothing in the paragraphs (a) or (b) of this subsection shall prevent the employment of or the carrying out of electrical work by an apprentice working under the supervision of his master under regulations made under the Industrial Arbitration Act, 1912, as amended by subsequent Acts or any other Act governing the electrical industry in the State.

(2) This section shall bind the Crown.

A notification was inserted in the *Government Gazette* of the 16th October, 1925, appointing 1st February, 1928, as the day upon which the provisions of section 15 shall have effect. That is to say, after 1st February next, no workman who is not licensed under the Act can either carry out work or be employed on a work covered by the provisions of the Act. That date was recommended by the Electrical Contractors and Electricians' Licensing Board. The board originally recommended the 30th September, 1927, but that date was not considered advisable, as it did not allow sufficient time for the issue of licenses to all who were entitled to receive them, and those without licenses would have been debarred from working as contractors or electricians until licenses had been issued.

Mr. GOSLING: Is there any provision with regard to the competency of these men? I presume they must be qualified tradesmen?

Lt.-Colonel BRUXNER: I will explain the position. When the draft proclamation under section 15 was referred to the late Attorney-General, Mr. Lysaght, he gave it as his opinion that the appointed day should be the 30th June, 1928. I have here his minute suggesting that date as being the proper date, in order to give reasonable time. The board disagreed with him and ultimately decided on 1st February, 1928. My predecessor, Mr. Keegan, by a proclamation, proclaimed that date. Representations have now been made to me by the board and by the electrical contractors that there are a number of anomalies in the Act which will militate against its successful operation, but there is not time during this session to fully review the Act and remove the difficulties which have been put forward.

Mr. D. CLYNE: Did the board think that previously?

Lt.-Colonel BRUXNER: It did. As a matter of fact, the board has acquainted my department from time to time of various difficulties which have arisen, which to my mind render it necessary to amend the Act before it goes into operation. [*House counted.*] The board is this month holding an examination under the Act. Some 4,000 applicants are to be examined, and in addition there are some 6,000 applicants for certificates without examination from men who have been engaged in the work. As a matter of fact, the board has nearly 11,000 applications to deal with. If the Act is brought into operation it will mean that between now and 1st February next the board will have to issue licenses to some 4,000 applicants after examination and to about 6,000 applicants without examination—

An HON. MEMBER: Is the board doing that work?

Lt.-Colonel BRUXNER: The examinations are being commenced this month. In view of the fact that certain amendments to the Act are necessary, the Government, on my advice, decided to practically adopt Mr. Lysaght's suggestion, the only difference being that I appointed the 31st July instead of the 30th June as the date on which the Act should come

into operation. That extra month will give us time to review the whole position and get advice of the board and interested parties on both sides. We can then amend the Act in any direction considered necessary. It is quite probable that we may be able to bring the Act into operation before 31st July, but I allowed that extra month so as to enable the House to meet and put an amending bill through, if necessary. [*House counted.*]

There is no power under the Act to permit of any notification under section 15 being either varied or cancelled. Subclause (1) of clause 2 provides for the rescission of the notification published under section 15. Subclause (2) empowers the Governor to appoint another day on which the Act shall come into operation, namely, 31st July. For the information of hon. members I have obtained from the secretary of the board a copy of the resolution carried by the board in order to show that it recognises the necessity of a number of important amendments. The resolution reads:

That this board places on record the fact that it recognises the necessity for a number of important amendments in order that the Act may function as originally intended; but that the board is unable to express any opinion upon the foreshadowed amendments until such time as they are placed before them.

The other night it was hinted that it was the intention of the Government to deal with the present chairman of the board. I can assure hon. members that that is not so. So far as the proposed amendments are concerned, I do not wish to make any statement with regard to them at this juncture, because I hope that during the recess I will be able to get the benefit of the experience of all the parties interested. I can assure the House that as regards the safety of the public and employees, the Government will not in any way relax the safeguards provided by the law.

Mr. LANG (Auburn) [4.55]: I regret that the Government feels itself called upon to postpone the operation of the Electrical Contractors and Electricians Licensing Amendment Act. Anyone with

Parliamentary experience does not like these postponements for the simple reason that they always seem to have the "Kathleen Mavourneen" stamp upon them—it might be this week, it might be next week, it might be for ever. As a matter of fact, the coming into operation of this Act has already stood over for three years, and now it is to be postponed for a further period of six months. I hope that what we used to say about the motor train will not apply to this Act—that when it does start running it will break down.

LT.-COLONEL BRUXNER: Your Government was in office during two of those three years!

MR. LANG: During those two years we brought in an amendment of the Act to further protect the public by providing that those who carried out electrical installation and wiring should be qualified artisans, whether they worked for contractors or themselves, in the homes of the people, in workshops, or in public buildings. We wanted the public to feel that electrical installation work was carried out by competent men. The board will issue the necessary certificate and the examinations will take place this month. I think that the certificates should be issued early in the new year, and then we should have certified men to go into the people's homes to carry out electrical installation work, but the operation of the Act is to be postponed for six months, which is something I very much regret.

What the Minister says with regard to the necessity of further amendments to the Act is true. I accept what he said, but, at the same time, I feel that it would have been better to have let the examinations go on, have the certificates issued, and the anomalies cleared up in the amending Act. Be that as it may, I am not going to strongly oppose this bill, because I gave my word to the Minister that we would help him to get this particular measure through. I accept the Minister's word that there are not going to be any executions or repudiations—no more than simple amendments to the Act in order to make it

[*Mr. Lang.*

conform with the requirements of the board. The letter which the Minister read from the secretary of the board shows that the board considers that amendments are necessary, and, that being so, I am not going to offer any strenuous objection to the postponement of the date of the operation of the measure. Electricity for lighting and power purposes is a matter of the first importance to the people of New South Wales. Electric light and power installations are not confined to the metropolitan area, and I hope it will not be very long before they are established throughout the length and breadth of New South Wales. In progressive communities the use of electric light and power enters into the daily lives of the people to such an extent that every effort should be made to see that public safety is safeguarded. I have a recollection that a few weeks ago a man discovered a leakage in an electricity main at Rose Bay. A certain gentleman made a great fuss about having just saved the life of his little child. A hullabaloo was raised in the press because it was believed that the danger had been brought about owing to neglect of duty on the part of the City Council. Prominent headlines were used and a great to-do was made about the neglect of the City Council; but upon inquiry it was found that the defect had nothing whatever to do with the City Council. It was a case in which a small electric service was laid on to a cottage, by a contractor who had finished his job, had been paid and gone away. Owing to some fault in connection with the carrying out of the work there was danger of the occupants of the house being electrocuted. Everyone knows that very strong currents of electricity are carried along these wires and cables, and that even to experts the strength of the currents is to some extent an unknown quantity. I recollect reading of the case of a child of 2 or 3 years of age who was playing with a small power point in its home, and who was killed owing to the electrical connections having been improperly put it by an incompetent electrician. The dangers are increasing every day. Even

those persons who in the ordinary course of household duties do their ironing with electric irons are exposed to danger.

The dangers of electrocution are ever present and the least we can ask is that those who carry out electric installations shall hold certificates which give assurance that they are qualified. We ask some guarantee of qualification in the case of an ordinary clerk, a book-keeper, or an engineer, and in almost every trade it is required that workmen shall serve an apprenticeship and obtain a certificate of some sort. In the case of electrical connections, not only is it necessary that the work should be carried out in a satisfactory manner from the point of view of its completeness, but that the risk to human life should be reduced to the lowest possible point. There can be no hardship imposed on men who are engaged in electrical work if they are required to show that they are skilled and qualified. I would not place the responsibility on the contractor for the reason that he may employ a man whom he believes to be most competent and may be justified in that belief by the references produced by the workman. That, of course, is not sufficient. What we require is that a certificate shall be issued by some competent authority to show that a workman is well qualified to carry out his job. If a man who has shown himself to be qualified proves careless or does not display sufficient interest in his work to do it properly, his certificate should be reduced down to the lowest possible grade. If the man concerned should continue to show carelessness and fail to do his work satisfactorily, his certificate should be cancelled altogether. The certificate should give the contractor a guarantee that the man he is sending to do his work will be competent to carry it out.

I recollect that when the amending bill was going through the present Minister for Agriculture realised the necessity and importance of having electricians certified as being fully competent to carry out their work. The hon. member was a keen supporter of the amendment which insisted upon electrical mechanics being fully qualified, and this

fact gives me more faith in the statement of the responsible Minister that the Government intends to merely postpone the operation of the measure for a short time in order that some anomalies may be removed. The last Government set up the board which has done its work very efficiently and has brought matters up to date. The Act contains a provision that where a man has been engaged for some years in electrical work he shall not be required to undergo an examination, but his experience shall be taken as evidence of his being qualified and entitled to a certificate. In all other cases, however, men must qualify by examination. Electrical installations are increasing in number and power and the danger to human life is becoming greater. The more widespread the use of electricity the greater the necessity for protecting the lives of the people. No hardship will be inflicted on men who have been earning their living as electricians for a number of years, because all they will have to do will be to apply for a certificate on the strength of their experience and the certificate will be issued to them. I hope that the provisions of the amending bill brought forward by the Minister will be confined to removing anomalies and making the Act more effective. If a bill of that character is introduced I can assure the Minister of the whole-hearted support of hon. members on this side of the House. We shall give him our utmost assistance in any action he may take to bring the Act into force at an early date so that more effective protection may be granted. [*House counted.*]

Mr. D. CLYNE (King) [5.10]: I regret that the Minister has not more clearly told us the reasons why the operation of the Act is to be postponed, but I am glad he has stated very frankly that it is not his intention to alter its provisions. I also regret that he was not a little more explanatory in stating the object of the bill. The safeguards contained in paragraphs (a) and (b) of section 15 are the minimum necessary for the security not only of workmen but of the general public. If those safeguards are not to be enforced at once I would urge on the

Minister to compel contractors to see that the men they place in charge of installation work shall at least hold supervising licenses. If the Minister will promise to do that it would remove my objection to the bill. The possibilities of electricity are unlimited. Electricity is rapidly replacing steam in commercial and industrial life. Right throughout the country it is being applied to the work of production and it is also being applied to the requirements of domestic life. Light and power for domestic purposes are now generally supplied by electricity. Therefore we must provide a measure of security for the general public as well as for the men engaged in the work of installation. Any disability under which contractors or other employers may labour as the result of the operation of paragraphs (a) and (b) of section 15 of the Act are adequately provided against by paragraph (c). It is due to the public generally that no action, either by legislation or administration, shall be taken to remove from the Act the adequate protection of the public on the one hand and the workmen engaged in the industry on the other.

Mr. CAHILL (St. George) [5.14]: The Minister has told us that the amendments proposed in the Act have been suggested by the board itself, but he has given us no real reason why the proclamation of the Act should be postponed. When the original bill was before the House all the issues were put before members of the House and the public, and it was generally conceded that those who work on electrical installation or are in any way associated with it should be licensed and competent men. Now the Government proposes to annul what has been done in that respect for at least six months. We shall go on until the 31st July just as we were before the passing of the Act. If it was dangerous six months ago to allow unlicensed men to instal electricity, it is equally dangerous now. Electricity is fast taking the place of steam in this and other parts of the world. In practically every suburb the Railway Commissioners have erected substations or transformer stations in which men are forced to work at highly danger-

ous tasks. Unqualified or incompetent persons might meet with instantaneous death there. If the Minister would tell the House exactly what difficulties have been met with by the board we should be in a better position to understand the bill. But at present I cannot see why the present applicants should not be registered. I understand a number of persons have applied for registration. Why should not the board register them and why should not the Government proclaim the Act as from the 1st February and let those men get to work? The Minister knows that even if the Act is not proclaimed until the 31st July there will be some people who will even then not have taken the necessary steps to become registered electricians. Yet the law will have to be applied. No doubt in connection with the first prosecutions the board will not be harsh and the Crown will be content, as it has been in the case of some other new laws, if the offenders are given a warning. That being so, why should not the Act be proclaimed on the 1st February and electricians be given to understand that they must be registered before they can carry out electrical installations? What are the difficulties that have induced the board to recommend the postponement of the proclamation of the Act?

There are one or two other matters in connection with the Act that I may not be permitted to discuss now. The Minister has said he intends to further amend the Act.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am sorry I cannot allow the hon. member to discuss future amendments of the Act. The scope of this bill is restricted to the time when the Act is to come into operation, and the hon. member must confine his remarks to that subject.

Mr. CAHILL: When the measure was before the House all were agreed as to its necessity. The Minister now says that Mr. Lysaght, when Attorney-General, believed that the correct date for the coming into operation of the Act was 30th June. He told us the board was opposed to that date, and believed February was the correct date for its coming into force. Now the Minister

[Mr. D. Clyne.

tells us the board recommends that it should be postponed from 1st February to some date not later than 31st July.

Lt.-Colonel BRUXNER: I did not say the board recommended that!

Mr. CAHILL: Men who have served their time to electrical work are complaining day by day against encroachments on their preserve. Not only is the Act causing that, but it is bringing the trade into disrepute by reason of the fact that people who have a slight knowledge of electricity think that by wiring houses, in which work there is not a great amount of danger, they can then take on an electrical contract, and are full-blown electrical mechanics. Those are the men who in many instances are responsible for danger in the electrical world to-day. I would urge the Minister at the earliest possible date to proclaim the Act and have its provisions brought into force. Everyone is agreed that it is urgently needed in order to protect those engaged in the industry, and; in addition those people whose work is interdependent with electrical work must also be protected. It is most essential that people in charge of electrical installations, or in any way connected with electricity, should be qualified, and they can only prove their qualification by coming before the board and being granted a certificate of competency.

Lt.-Colonel BRUXNER (Tenterfield) Minister for Local Government [5.23], in reply: I want to make the position quite clear. The passing of this bill will not prevent the examinations being held by the board.

Mr. LANG: The examinations will go on?

Lt.-Col. BRUXNER: The examinations will go on. Nor will it affect the issue of licenses by the board—that will still go on. But after licenses are issued the public will be in this position, that they can ask a man whether he is licensed, and if he is not they need not employ him. What the bill does is to postpone the penal provisions of the existing Act. That is to say, a man can be employed without a license up to 31st July.

Mr. D. CLYNE: Where a contract is not licensed, will it ensure that the man in charge shall have a supervisory license?

Lt.-Colonel BRUXNER: The Act provides for that, but until it is actually proclaimed there will be no penal provisions in operation. I would like to point out the absolute urgency of protecting the public. The Electrical Contractors Act was passed in 1924. It did not go so far as the subsequent Act passed by the late Government, but it did definitely compel every contractor to have a license before he could instal electricity. The late Government did not put the Act into operation at once, and it was eighteen months before the amending Act was passed which is now being dealt with. I do not want to mislead the House. I have been asked definitely to state what amendments are necessary. In my previous remarks I said the Government is reviewing the whole position. I pointed out to the Government that unless action was taken to postpone the penal provisions we should not be in a position to deal with the Act at all, but that the penal provisions would operate. I suggested that we should take this time in order that the Government might have a full opportunity of seeing whether the Act requires amendment. I also wish to say that the amendments will not be confined to those suggested by the board. I give hon. members the assurance that where the safety of the public and of employees is concerned, the Government will not relax in any way. Safety will be ensured all the time. I was asked by the hon. member for St. George if I could quote definite instances of difficulty which the board has encountered. We are faced with the position that under the Act as it stands, a boy of 16 can apply for a license as a contractor, and there is nothing to prevent the board from granting it to him if he has fulfilled the conditions.

Mr. CAHILL: How could he fulfil the conditions at 16 years of age?

Lt.-Colonel BRUXNER: He can. We have actually had a case of that kind. The difficulty is that he is a minor under the law, and you cannot put him in a position of responsibility. There is another

case, which is really more serious. Quite a number of men are employed, mainly in the country, dealing with what electricians term "dead wire." Under the Act these men have to become licensed, or else lose their job. The board does not intend that. That would affect quite a number of men. I do not want hon. members to think I can make a definite statement as to the amendments which are to be made, but so far as the safety of the general public and of employees is concerned, I have the assurance of my colleagues that the Government will not relax any measures to ensure that.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

(Mr. BATE in the chair.)

Clause 2 (Rescission of notification).

Mr. LANG (Auburn) [5.31]: I want to ask the Minister a question in regard to a matter mentioned by the hon. member for St. George. I can see the danger of it. Under the present Act, if a person has not been following the calling of an electrician for twelve months, he is out of it. There may be a number of applications from men who at present have been out of the business for six or seven months, and if the bill is postponed for a further six months they would have no opportunity of obtaining registration. May we have an assurance from the Minister that the postponement now provided for is not going to prevent those men from being registered?

Lt.-Colonel BRUXNER: That is so!

Mr. CAHILL: At present a man who has been out of the business for twelve months is debarred from getting a license!

Lt.-Colonel BRUXNER (Tenterfield), Minister for Local Government [5.33]: I intend to consult all parties, in order to remove any existing trouble, and to prevent any injustice. I want to make the measure as perfect as I can, with a view of ensuring the safety of everybody.

Mr. LANG: Nobody will be penalised simply because of this bill postponing the coming into force of the Act?

[Lt.-Colonel Bruxner.

Lt.-Colonel BRUXNER: Of course not.

Clause agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and passed through its remaining stages.

CROWN LANDS (HOMESTEAD FARM) VALIDATION BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. BALL (Corowa), Minister for Lands [5.38], moved:

That this bill be now read a second time. He said: This is simply a bill to validate the title of a small homestead farm of about eighty acres in the Newcastle district. It is necessary in order to give a proper title to the land. It is a very small area and, as a matter of fact, it is a very small thing altogether.

Mr. CONNOLLY: Is there any mineral or coal on the area?

Mr. BALL: No, it is simply a small homestead farm.

Mr. BOOTH: It has been stated that there is valuable coal under that land. Is that a fact?

Mr. BALL: I do not know what is under the ground, and I do not think anybody else does. At present it is only a farm, and, but for a pure accident, there would have been a proper title to the land. It seems to me somewhat ridiculous that such a matter as this could not be dealt with without having to pass an Act of Parliament, but there is no other means of giving a proper title to the land, and it is only reasonable that we should give it.

Mr. BOOTH (Kurri Kurri) [5.40]: I do not intend to oppose the measure, but I think the House is entitled to fuller information than it has got. If it was only a question of giving a settler a right to his title I would not say anything, but it is a well known fact that for many miles around Awaba there are very valuable coal-bearing areas.

Mr. BENNETT: This does not give him the right to the coal!

Mr. BOOTH: I want to make sure that it does not. If the Minister will give us a definite assurance that it does not, I will say nothing more. I think that further investigations should be

made, because, as I said, there are valuable coal seams in and around the Awaba district.

Mr. BALL: This does not give him a title to any coal there may be under the surface. It only gives him a title to a homestead farm!

Mr. BOOTH: How many acres?

Mr. BALL: Eighty acres!

Mr. BOOTH: How far underground do his rights extend?

Mr. BALL: To whatever depth the law provides!

Mr. BOOTH: The Minister ought to be more definite.

Mr. BALL: If you like I will postpone the consideration of the measure!

Mr. BOOTH: I do not want to have it postponed. All I want is an assurance from the Minister that if there is any coal under the surface of this area the right of the Crown to it will be preserved.

Mr. W. J. SCULLY (Namoi) [5.43]: Under what title did this man first acquire the land?

Mr. BALL: The whole matter is set out in the explanatory memorandum attached to the bill!

Mr. HORSINGTON: Did Brown fulfil all the conditions?

Mr. BALL: Yes!

Mr. W. J. SCULLY: You are giving this man a title to his homestead farm?

Mr. BALL: That is so!

Mr. W. J. SCULLY: What was the trouble?

Mr. BALL: It was forfeited as a homestead selection, and a homestead grant had been issued, but owing to some oversight the approval of the Governor to the forfeiture was not obtained!

Mr. LANG (Auburn) [5.44]: I wish to point out that the introduction of bills to give a particular person a title to his land is a practice which is becoming all too frequent. The Minister has not explained where the fault lies. It seems to me that officials of the Lands Department can make errors and then lightly come along and ask Parliament to rectify them. The Minister said that this individual was placed in this

position through no fault of his own. The Opposition has no desire to inflict hardship on any individual who finds himself in a position such as this through no fault of his own. The man who took up this homestead farm no doubt did all that was required of him in the ordinary way. He made all the necessary payments, and then when he wanted to convert it was found that there had been some mistake on the part of officers of the Lands Department, and that a proper title could not be given to the land. It is all very well for the Minister to come along here, and with hardly any explanation at all, ask us to pass this validating bill. I am quite ready to believe that a mistake has been made by the officers of the Lands Department, but there may be 100 other faults. There is an important principle involved. The Minister says this is only a small matter, but the principle is the same whether 80 acres or 80,000 acres are involved. I have no doubt that the man who is asking for this title deserves to have it. He may have been the victim of the greatest injustice. But we are entitled to know who are the officers responsible for all this trouble. The Minister should have given us the complete files in connection with this matter so that every member of this House might satisfy himself that he was doing the right thing.

Debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 6 December, 1927.

Metropolitan Meat Industry (Removal of Member) Bill—Family Endowment Statistics (Ministerial Statement)—Order of Business—Third Readings—St. Peter's Church of England Cemetery Bill (Second Reading)—Electrical Contractors and Electricians Licensing Amendment Bill—Industrial Arbitration Amendment Bill (Second Reading)—Metropolitan Water, Sewerage, and Drainage (City Members) Bill.

The PRESIDENT took the chair.