

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 10 OCTOBER 1917

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

WEDNESDAY, 10 OCTOBER, 1917.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN (Hon. W. F. Taylor) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

NEW MEMBERS.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN announced that he had received from the Governor a letter, dated 10th October, intimating that His Excellency had been pleased to summon to the Council—

Walter Russell Crampton, Esquire, of Brisbane;

Henry Llewelyn, Esquire, of Gympie;

William Halliwell Demaine, Esquire, of Maryborough;

Gerald Page-Hanify, Esquire, of Brisbane;

Hamilton Cuffe Jones, Esquire, of Brisbane;

Lewis McDonald, Esquire, of Brisbane;

Irvine Perel, Esquire, of Brisbane;

William James Riordan, Esquire, of Brisbane; and

Richard Sumner, Esquire, of Brisbane.

The following hon. gentlemen were then introduced by Hon. P. Murphy, and, having produced their writs of summons and oaths of allegiance, they subscribed the roll and took their seats:—

Hon. W. R. Crampton;

Hon. G. Page-Hanify;

Hon. H. C. Jones;

Hon. L. McDonald;

Hon. I. Perel; and

Hon. W. J. Riordan.

At a later hour Hon. R. SUMNER was introduced by the Secretary for Mines, and, having produced his writ of summons and oath of allegiance, he subscribed the roll and took his seat.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I desire, on behalf of the Government, to offer my congratulations to the hon. members who have just been appointed to this branch of the Legislature. The hon. gentlemen who have just taken their seats are well known to the public of Queensland, and I am quite satisfied they will prove an acquisition to this House in every way, and prove worthy of the positions to which the Governor in Council has thought fit to appoint them. I also desire to offer the hon. members my personal congratulations, because I know them well, and I feel sure that they will fill their positions with credit and do all that is required of any gentleman who may be appointed to this House.

* Hon. P. J. LEAHY: Probably it will not be out of place if I, a comparatively young member of this Chamber, also offer my felicitations to the new members. (Hear, hear!) As we all know—probably the new members do not know it at present, but they will know it in time—this is a non-party Chamber. (Laughter.) If there is any person at all who is supposed to be a somewhat keen politician, or if there is any group of such persons, perhaps I am one of them. I may say this, however, that, whether inside or outside of Parliament, I have always been as friendly with my political opponents as with my political friends. I

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have always held the view that life is too short for political animosities. We cannot all see the same way either in religion or in politics. There will inevitably be differences of opinion; there will be conflicts of opinion; but, after all, it is from the conflict of opinion that we get truth, and surely truth—whether political or other truth—ought to be the main object we seek. I remember when a very important man who is now a member of this House was appointed to this Chamber, a friend of his, with a sense of humour somewhat like that possessed by the Secretary for Mines, congratulated him in these words: "I delight to think that you are at last an honourable man." That hon. member was an honourable man before he came here, and I suppose that all these gentlemen were honourable men before they entered this Chamber; but it certainly does not detract anything from their honour to be elevated to the high position that they occupy now. As I said before, no doubt there will be conflicts of opinion. Speaking for myself—and I think most of us can say the same thing—I have endeavoured to do my duty as I have seen it. We have to remember that in this Chamber we represent the whole of the people of the State. We may make mistakes—that is the lot of every man who is human—but I do not think that we make many mistakes. At any rate, there is one advantage which will spring from having such a large number of new members, full of vigour and energy, and perhaps some of a militant type, added to this Chamber. We shall have very free and I have no doubt very interesting discussions upon all the topics that come before us. In this branch of the Legislature I have frequently known—in fact, I may say it is the general thing—arguments to influence votes. I was for many years in the other place, but I am not sure that I ever heard an argument influence a vote there. It might influence a man's opinion, but it did not influence his vote. Arguments I have heard in this Chamber have often influenced my vote, and it is quite on the cards that some of these new members, especially if they take to quoting poetry like the Minister does, may offer sound reasons which will alter my opinion in some respects. May I also say in all friendliness that it is possible that some of the opinions we express here may in some way make a slight impression upon the new members, who, I hope, come into this Chamber with open minds. I have only again, in conclusion, to congratulate the new members upon the high and dignified position to which they have been called.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. A. G. C. HAWTHORN: I also wish to offer my congratulations to the gentlemen who have joined us to-day, and I am very pleased to see them here. I have said before in this Chamber that I thought it was the duty of the Government to appoint new members to replace those who have left us for one reason or another. It will relieve the Minister from a tremendous responsibility, and I am very pleased to see him smiling so much this afternoon.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am more pleased than you are. (Laughter.)

HON. A. G. C. HAWTHORN: I can assure the hon. gentleman that I am perfectly pleased. I am glad to see the benches filled, and I am sure this accession to our numbers will lead to more discussion and

fuller debate, with the result that legislation will probably be still further improved by going through this House. I hope that the new members will be here for many a year, and that I shall be here with them. I do not look upon their appointment as a forerunner of the abolition of the Council. Again I say I am pleased to see them here, and I hope they may long remain with us.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. P. MURPHY: Now that the leaders of the various political parties in this Chamber have spoken, I do not think it will be out of place for some of the followers to say a word or two. Lately, although the weather has been getting warm, I have felt rather cold over here by myself, especially during the absence of my only companion in supporting the Government, the Hon. Mr. McDonnell, who is away just now. I am very pleased that these gentlemen have been appointed. I know most of them, and I am quite certain that they will do their duty honourably and well in this Chamber. My only regret is that there are not a lot more of them.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: I suppose on the principle that you cannot have too much of a good thing.

HON. P. MURPHY: Exactly. The Hon. Mr. Leahy has anticipated what I was about to say.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: I can read your thoughts sometimes.

HON. P. MURPHY: The recognised leader of the Opposition made the remark that there is no party in this Chamber. Perhaps there are no parties here, but on occasions there are some signs of it. The Hon. Mr. Hawthorn said he welcomed the new members here most heartily. I also welcome them just as heartily. I have no doubt that they will be here for a long time, and I hope that I shall be here a long time with them.

HON. A. A. DAVEY: I cannot let the opportunity pass without adding my congratulations to those of other hon. members. I remember that, when I was first appointed to this Council, I had very little knowledge of its proceedings. I have been known to most people in Queensland for a great number of years, and it has always been my endeavour to do the best I could for the interests and wellbeing of the whole community. When I had the honour of being appointed to this House I was not particularly gushing over it. I did not feel that it was a place for me at all. However, when I got the call I felt it was my duty to come, and I came here with ideas that I had gained from careful investigation or from conversation with people who held similar views to myself. But I came here with a wrong idea entirely of the character of this House. I came here after listening to a lot of the claptrap that had been talked throughout the country, expecting to find that this House was a House of fossils and incompetents. When I came here I found, to my surprise, that I had been misled. I found that this House had been wrongly named, as there are hon. gentlemen here who have come forward with democratic proposals, so democratic in fact that they flabbergasted many alleged democrats in the country. In short, my experience of this House has been that it is a democratic House. It has been a democratic House ever since I came here—not that I take credit for making it so. I am

free to confess that I never studied the proceedings of this House until I was appointed to it. I can safely say that it is true of many supporters of the Labour movement, and the democratic movement throughout the country, that they take too much for granted. I was perfectly surprised after I came here to find how democratic this House was. This has always been a democratic House, and has always done its utmost for the furtherance of the interests of the whole of the people. So far as party is concerned, I have said before, and I say now, that there are no parties in this House. Of course, if the Government want to make parties here, they can easily make it a party House, but hitherto it has not been a party House at all. That is proved by the divisions and the debates which have taken place here. I congratulate the new hon. members, and I want to say in all sincerity that I have reason to believe that they are open to conviction and open to follow the truth, and I think that, if they follow the debates that take place in this House, the tendency as time goes on will be that they will support ninety-nine out of every hundred proposals that emanate from the so-called "fossils" and "conservatives" of this place. I think it is a good thing that the vacancies have been filled up. Personally, I feel proud of being a member of this House. I did not feel particularly proud at first, because I did not think it was a House that anyone cared very much about. I hope that we shall work together, apart from any party considerations, and that we shall consider only the interests of the whole community, and not of a section of the community. If we do that, we shall be a happy family. I am certain that our debates will be more interesting. I hope we shall have a happy time together, and that our deliberations together will prove to be beneficial to the country. (Hear, hear!)

* HON. B. FAHEY: I also desire to convey my congratulations to the hon. gentlemen who have entered this Chamber by virtue of appointment by the Governor's warrant. I do not know any of the hon. gentlemen personally, but, judging by their appearance, I am sure that in time they will prove a credit to debates in this House. I hope that the rarified atmosphere of this House will not disagree with the political views of the hon. gentlemen. I hope that they will be here to do what is required of them with credit to themselves, and that is an assistance to the hon. gentleman who leads this House. I have suggested to that hon. gentleman more than once, while he has been carrying out his duties here, that he should have more assistance from those who represent his political views.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: He has done very well, all the same.

HON. B. FAHEY: He has done very well indeed—better probably than many other men would have done under trying circumstances. The hon. gentleman has often had my sympathy.

HON. P. MURPHY: And your support?

HON. B. FAHEY: Occasionally. I am not a party man. Let me tell my hon. friend who just interjected that ever since the present party came into power there is no one in this House who has ever seen the hon. gentleman vote against that party. If there is any indication of party feeling in this House, I would like to know where it

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comes from, because the hon. gentleman has been consistent in voting and speaking in favour of the present party in power. I compliment the hon. gentleman on his consistency. We know, however, that "Charity begins at home." When the hon. gentleman says that there are parties in this House, if he analyses his own feelings, he must admit that he is setting the example. I hope the hon. members who have been appointed to this Council this afternoon will be as consistent as the Hon. Mr. Murphy. I hope also that they will do their duty as creditably as he has done. I may say that for some years I have scarcely had a conflict of opinion in this House. When I first came into it I was on my legs four or five times a day.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: It is because we will not fight you. We know you are always willing to fight.

HON. B. FAHEY: Not that at all. It is because the parties have not been so well divided as they were when I first came here. When I was first appointed to the Council we were fourteen against twenty-eight, and we fought them so successfully that we were responsible for passing all the democratic Acts that now grace the statute-book of this State. Again I congratulate these hon. gentlemen. I hope we shall have a pleasant time together, and edifying debates; they carrying out their views, and other gentlemen—myself included—carrying out our views, but all for the credit of the House and good of the country. (Hear, hear!)

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: I am sure that all members of the Council are only too happy to welcome the new appointees to the atmosphere of freedom that exists in the Legislative Council. (Hear, hear!) Here it is open to anyone to ask his political opponent to go to the refreshment-room with him or to tell him to go to another place.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: You don't go to the refreshment-room, do you?

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: There is such an atmosphere of freedom here that an hon. member is free to do as he pleases. It is unusual for members to be appointed to this House during the session, but then this is an unusual Government. We are glad that the Government have taken the occasion, although tardily, to seize the opportunity of carrying out at any rate one of the mandates of the country given to them on 5th May last, when the country said that they wished the Legislative Council to continue, and, as a corollary, that they wished its members to be kept up to the maximum number of forty-four. I am glad that the Government, even though late, have awakened to their duty in this matter, and have appointed nine hon. gentlemen to assist in the debates of this House, and to relieve the rest of the members from the onerous duty of assisting the Minister to get Bills improved and passed through this Chamber. I feel sure that the House will welcome the accession to its debating power. Without offering any criticism of the appointments at all, personally we all agree that the mining interests in this House are not as well represented as they should be.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The shipping interests are.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: I am not referring to politics at all. I might refer to the late lamented Hon. Lewis Thomas,

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for instance. If we look through the list of those who have taken part in the debates in this House, we shall find that there are very few men who know much about mining except some, perhaps, who have lost money in shares. (Laughter.)

HON. P. J. LEAHY: It shows they don't know much, or they would not lose their money.

HON. T. C. BEIRNE: Did you ever lose any money yourself?

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: I have lost some money at times in mining.

HON. I. PEREL: Anybody who has lost money should be welcomed in this House.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: I hope the hon. member will lose none by coming here. I am glad the hon. member has joined the ranks of the voluntary labourers for the good of the country. I do not know if there are any representatives of the farming interests amongst the new members, because we must remember that it is mining and agriculture, with the help of good seasons, that pulls Queensland through its times of crises. Personally I have not the pleasure of the acquaintance of all of the hon. members who have just been appointed to this House, but I can say that, no matter how distinguished any man may have been before he came into the Council, the fact that he is appointed here in every case adds honour and distinction to him. I am sure we all take it for granted that the new members who have been appointed will be a strength to the debating power of this House, and that they will preserve the traditional courtesies of Parliament which have existed here for fifty years, and which, we hope, will exist for the next 100 years. I hope that the hon. members will assist us by devoting themselves whole-heartedly to the best interests of our beloved State. (Hear, hear!)

HON. W. R. CRAMPTON: On behalf of the new appointees, I desire to thank hon. members for the congratulations offered this afternoon. I must say that we are delighted to know from the assurances of our friends opposite that we have come to the home of democracy. (Hear, hear! and laughter.) All I can say on behalf of myself and my friends who have been newly appointed to this Council is that we sincerely hope that our political lives here will be short and sweet. (Laughter.)

HON. P. J. LEAHY: It is only the good that die young, so you are quite safe. (Laughter.)

INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT OF 1916 AMENDMENT BILL.

FIRST READING.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: I beg leave to present the Bill, and move—That it be now read a first time.

Question put and passed.

MOTION THAT THE BILL BE PRINTED.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: I beg to move—That the Bill be printed.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Are you not going to explain your reasons for introducing the Bill?

[4 p.m.]

HON. P. J. LEAHY: The Minister interjects that I should explain the reasons for the Bill. I am not aware that we explain the reasons on the first reading of a Bill. I may tell the hon. gentleman, if the Presiding Chairman will permit me, that this is a Bill to provide that there shall be no preference to unionists or to anybody else.

Question put and passed.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: I beg to move—That the second reading of the Bill be made an Order of the Day for Wednesday next.

Question put and passed.

REQUISITION OF SHIPS BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: On Friday last we were asked to deal with this Bill. What was it we were asked to do? We certainly knew nothing, except from the verbal explanation of the Minister, as to the character and object of the Bill. We were asked to pass the Bill, with no promise that we should have time for calm deliberation on its contents, or that we should have opportunities to study what we were then asked to rush through. We, none of us, had then seen the Bill, but we understood sufficient, I think, without the Bill to conclude that it was calculated to make a considerable difference in the future operations of the responsible Ministers of the country. If they could do in one case what this Bill was alleged to empower them to do, they would be able afterwards to do it in other cases. It was not only our duty to consider whether the Government should be at liberty to settle questions of that particular nature, but it was our duty to consider whether the Bill should be made a precedent, and so influence the future actions of the Government when they found themselves in some particular difficulty with a large institution. To me it seems, and I think it will seem to many other hon. members, as if the Government wanted to create a precedent which would justify them in future in carrying out their policy, and what they have proclaimed to be their policy—nationalisation of all the important industries of the State. It looks to me like an attempt to lay violent hands upon an important public industry, and we were asked to authorise that action by passing a Bill through all its stages in one day. It had, I believe, passed through all its stages in another place in the same day. Now, if we are going to make a revolutionary change in the methods of our administration, no matter what the object may be, we should at least have reasonable time to consider such a measure before we commit ourselves and the country to it. That explains the reason why this Bill is before us to-day. When it was introduced it was never intended to be here to-day except as a completed Bill. We refused to pass it through all its stages in one day. We refused, also, to suspend the Standing Orders in order that it might be so passed in one day. When hon. gentlemen seriously consider the unusual and extraordinary thing we were asked to do, just to meet some sudden emergency, we must realise that we have a right to know what we are expected to do and what we are invited to do, and not have to go blindfolded into an experiment—for it really

was an experiment—without any time to consider what the consequences might be to the country. The Bill was passed through its first reading, and the second reading stage was postponed until to-day. It is said to be—

“A Bill to empower the Government of Queensland to requisition the use of ships for the purpose of adequately resuming, restoring, continuing, and carrying on the coastal trade between the ports of Queensland, and for other purposes incident thereto or consequent thereon.”

We now have the opportunity of debating whether the policy and the principle embodied in the Bill are the right things for us to institute on the short notice that we have had. Even now it is a very short notice, but we are not asked to pass it through all its stages. I have said that it is a revolutionary measure, and in regard to our interstate relations and operations it is especially of that nature. Instead of kindly and helpful sentiment, had we passed the Bill as we were asked to do, it would only have led to recriminations, and probably to some bitter execrations and a good deal of enmity. It is purely a party measure.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: In the interests of the people—do not forget that point.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: You are always talking about the people. The hon. gentleman never brings anything up here without saying that.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Because we represent the people.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: And yet the hon. gentleman tells us to our faces when we demur that we do not represent the people.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: So I do.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: We are told again and again by the hon. gentleman that we do not represent the people—that we are always opposing them and representing our own class.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I never used the word “class,” but I say that you represent vested interests.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: Do you not represent vested interests when you represent what you call “the people”? I do not know how many members in another Chamber now belong really to the horny-handed toilers, and workers, and wage-earners of this State. What proportion is there?

HON. I. PEBEL: A greater number than you see in this Chamber.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: I am asking the Minister if he will be good enough to tell us.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Minister defines “worker” in a broader sense than that.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: I think you will give a broad definition of “worker,” as applied to anybody who will come and do your political work if he is paid for it. I do not want to go on that tack, but, if the hon. gentleman wants to go on it, I am prepared to follow him. I am prepared to say that, when we are asked to come here and pass a Bill through all its stages, as we were, in one day—purely a class measure

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—then we have a right to demur if we think fit. I presume we have a right to use our free will.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Did I not appeal to you on non-party lines?

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: But what is the use of appealing on non-party lines when you bring forward an expressly party measure? Somebody here said that the measure was an anti-capitalistic measure, and, when we are challenged in that way, we must stand up to the challenge. But the question now is—not whether we are really a partisan Chamber or not—we have this Bill before us now. We refused to pass it through all its stages in one day, and I think we have reason now to be thankful that we did. We got some very valuable arguments yesterday with regard to this Bill, and there are just two or three points to which I would like to refer before going any further with my criticism. The Bill purports to include “all regulations, proclamations, and Orders in Council made thereunder.” That is one of the controversial clauses in the Bill to which we have been objecting. We do not want to be caught by any sort of guile, even in the form of a Bill, and we do not want to be compelled to accept as of the same efficacy as any clause in this Bill any regulations or Orders of the Governor in Council which may be afterwards made. We have objected to that before, and we should object to it in connection with this Bill. I shall not enter into the legal merits of the action which it is proposed to take under this Bill; probably the events themselves have gone past that stage. But, supposing we had passed this Bill last Friday, and put it in the power of the Ministry to do what they intended and what they wished to do, what might have happened by this time? Would it have pacified anybody? Would it have soothed the angry feeling occasioned by the strike? Would it have reconciled the people who had become estranged from each other over industrial matters? Not a bit of it! It would simply have made things worse. A good deal might be said about the strained relations which have existed in connection with shipping, but I am not going to enter upon that question; but, as was pointed out by one hon. member yesterday, this proposed legislation is somewhat arbitrary, if it is nothing worse than that. Take this proposal, for instance—

“Every such requisition by the Minister as aforesaid shall be in writing signed by him, and shall be directed to the owner of the ship, and shall be effective if delivered personally to the master of the ship concerned, or sent by post, letter, or telegram to the said master, or delivered or sent by post addressed to the owner of such ship at or to the principal place of business of such owner within the State, or, if such master or owner cannot be found or there is no such place of business, if such requisition or a demand as herein-after provided is affixed in some conspicuous place upon such ship.”

This legal phraseology may be all very good, but what is to happen supposing the master of the ship is not there? Supposing he is out of reach for some hours, or possibly a day or two, what is going to be done with the requisition, and what is going to be done with respect to penalties in the

case of no notice or action being taken of the requisition? Then subclause (5) of clause 3 reads—

“The Minister shall be the sole judge of the necessity or expediency of making any such requisition,”

and so on. This requisition is to lay violent hands upon most valuable property. Possibly it may be a very expensive steamer. The Minister may take possession of that, and there seems to be no power on earth to stop him, if this Bill passes. The Minister only has to make a requisition and see that it gets into the right hands, and then he can take this subsequent action—

“Forthwith upon the making of any such requisition as aforesaid the Minister shall become entitled to the possession of the ship so requisitioned, and the owner thereof and all his agents, managers, masters, attorneys, servants, and workmen respectively shall, without any delay, hindrance, obstruction, claim, demand, or objection whatever, give immediate and peaceable possession of such ship to the Minister.”

I read that just to show what we were expected to do without ever having seen the Bill. We were expected to pass it within two or three hours last Friday and make it the law of the land, knowing nothing whatever as to what the effect would be. Then subclause (9) reads—

“He may, by means of any requisitioned ship, carry on a coastal shipping trade, and may make and carry out contracts of affreightment, and execute and deliver all necessary and usual shipping documents, and may exercise all such powers, authorities, and discretions, and do all such acts and things as a private shipowner carrying on business in Queensland by means of ships has or may exercise or do.”

There, at once, you make the Minister the head and chief of a monstrous monopoly. If we had passed that, we should just have created a monopoly that would have suited the Government. We should have done what I believe they are desirous of doing—what they have proclaimed to be one of their objects in life—and that is to nationalise one of our great public industries. The Minister told us on Friday that he thought it was necessary that the shipping industry should be nationalised. We were expected, in one sitting, to give the Government power to do all that, though we might have been doing something very mischievous, very dangerous, very ridiculous, and that might involve the Government, and probably other people, in very serious trouble. I think the Council did an exceedingly wise thing when it refused to pass this Bill through all its stages last Friday afternoon. (Hear, hear!) Had we passed the Bill then, we would have done something that would have aroused bad feeling, that would have aroused strife and contention between employers and employees. I think we have saved the country from that, and our action then shows that the members of this branch of the Legislature are not so utterly devoid of common sense, so utterly devoid of character, judgment, loyalty, and patriotism, as we are said to be by some people. I think we did a very wise and judicious thing for the country then. I do not care to dwell on what the special motive of the Government was in introducing this Bill. I think we all

. [Hon. F. T. Brentnall.]

know what that motive was, although very little was said to us about it when the second reading of the Bill was moved; but I would like to refer hon. members to one or two extracts from "Hansard." During a debate on a subject related to this Bill, the Secretary for Mines said—

"The Government and members of this Chamber must go further, because we owe it as a duty to the people of Queensland and to the country, when we know that losses are being sustained and that great inconvenience is being caused to our people, and industries, such as the sugar industry and fruit industry, are being hampered up North, to do something to relieve that inconvenience. We know that these people are being inconvenienced, because they are being victimised and brought to the brink of ruin by the action of the shipping companies."

That is a sweeping allegation. Was there any necessity for it? Was there any necessity for delaying the action which the Government proposed to take? Why did they act so impulsively—so suddenly; and why such a desperate hurry over it? In asking us to pass the Bill through all its stages in one day, the Government almost expected us to stop here till any hour of the night in order to complete this business. Why was that done?

HON. I. PEREL: Because the people were starving.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: Never mind about people starving; I am talking about the motives of the Government. If the people were starving, were they not starving a week ago?

HON. I. PEREL: The more shame if they were forced to starve a week before. The Government were trying to relieve them, at all events.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: Had they been starving a fortnight or a month before? If the people were starving, all the more shame to the Government for letting starvation go to that point. Why did they not take action three or four weeks before? I am not the only person in this community who holds that opinion, and holds it very strongly. But there was something at work—if the hon. member wants to know I will tell him what it was—there was some information which had come to the Government just then which impelled them to take action, otherwise they would have found they had been left behind. They knew well enough what that was, and events have proved that that view was correct. We knew it here, and told the Minister, that by Monday those steamers would be running.

HON. I. PEREL: You have been telling us a lot of things.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: And they would have been running before if they had been allowed to run. Some of them are not allowed even now to run, although the owners are quite willing to run them.

HON. I. PEREL: Alleged owners—not real owners.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: We were told also by the Secretary for Mines—

"The position is that there are a number of cargo ships in the north of

Queensland which have been tied up for the last eight or nine weeks."

That is not my statement; it is the Minister's statement. If those steamers had been tied up for eight or nine weeks, whose duty was it to try and remedy the trouble?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We were trying. We tried all the methods possible before this action was taken.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: Well, the Government were awfully slow about it. They were working in the dark, and they did not let the people know, although the people wanted to know.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Don't you read the morning papers?

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: All at once they woke to the fact that, if they did not put this Bill through in one day, and get their hands on those vessels, they [4.30 p.m.] would be out of their reach the next day, and especially by the following Monday, and that they would have lost all the honour and glory and all the opportunity of showing what they were prepared to do.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You are not stating the case rightly at all.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: I believe that is the secret of the whole thing. The Minister also said—

"The Government could compulsorily acquire the ownership of the ships, and the ships would then have to be State-owned ships."

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I did not say that that could be done under this Bill.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: The Hon. Mr. Leahy then interjected—

"You are hotel-owners and station-owners."

And the Secretary for Mines went on—

"And we should be shipowners. If there is anything that the State should own, it is the shipping."

There is another portion of the Minister's speech where he refers to the fact that, if the Government were the employers of all public industries, then the necessity for strikes would be done away with.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: Are there not strikes on the railways?

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: You can hold your own opinions about that. I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that he was asked last Friday if the railway dispute up North was settled.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: He does not know.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The railways are running, and the men working. Is that not sufficient settlement?

HON. I. PEREL: It is not settled because there are no men in gaol yet.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: Thank you, Mr. Presiding Chairman, for protecting me. I asked the Minister a question and somebody else interjected.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The railways are running and the men are working. Do you want any further settlement than that?

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HON. F. T. BRETNALL: Are the objects for which they struck settled? The men struck for higher wages, for retrospective wages, and for award rates during the time they were on strike. Has all that been conceded to them?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. gentleman knows as well as I do.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: Why not announce the terms?

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: We can get no answers from the Government at all. If I gave notice of a question to-day, I would not get an answer to-morrow.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Why should you be concerned so long as the railways are running?

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: I have reason to be concerned. I will ask another question if the hon. gentleman will give me a straightforward answer.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I always do.

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: You did not do so on Friday. You put another hon. gentleman off two or three times, and you gave as evasive an answer to-day as your lips could frame.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: The Minister did not frame the answer. It was given to him.

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: I would like to know from the Minister if the strike up North is settled.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Is not the strike settled when the men are back at work and the railways running?

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: Then why did the Government send for His Honour Mr. Justice Higgins? And why are you trying to get another judge to come up here if it is settled? If the hon. gentleman told me that the settlement was arranged conditionally, I would not ask another question.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You are always after details. Why not deal with the big things?

HON. B. FAHEY: The strike is settled, but the dispute between the men and the Government is not settled.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: Why cannot the Minister be frank and give us the terms of the settlement?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They will be given in due course.

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: There was a quotation that I wished to refer to, but I cannot find it and I shall have to give it from memory. Last Friday the Premier of this State made a remark in reply to a question in the other House, and I was very much surprised to hear such a reply coming from him. He said, "Have I not the right to employ whom I like and on what terms I like?"

HON. P. J. LEAHY: Hear, hear! I heard him say that. Why should not everybody else have the same right?

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: When the Premier said, "Have I not the right to employ whom I like and arrange the terms?" he meant that he wanted to employ unionists.

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That has been the very thing that has caused all the trouble. Have other people not also the right to employ whom they will if men are willing to work for them? All that has been taken out of the hands of everybody else.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The shipping companies prevented us from using what labour we liked on the "Allinga" and the "Hopewell."

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: If the hon. gentleman wants to drag us back, we can go back to the time when the ships arrived at the wharves at Sydney and Melbourne, when the men were met there and were taken away from their work. They left their work half finished. Who was responsible for that? Was it a Minister of the Crown, or was it the secretary or boss of a trade union?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That is where the lockout came in.

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: If the Premier of this State has a right to employ whom he will and at what wages he likes, have we not all the same right?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There was a public necessity for it in the Premier's case.

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: When the Minister was talking here on Friday afternoon I interjected, "Just reverse the position and see how it will work out."

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Premier's attitude was to employ labour in the interests of the people.

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: I am not talking about taking the ships at all. The question came up about the use of labour, and the Premier said, "Have I not the right to use what labour I like?" There is an anomaly in connection with this business, and there is a little grim irony in connection with the Northern railway strike. This morning I looked through the report of the Commissioner for Railways, and I noticed that during the last twelve months there has been increased expenditure in every possible direction in connection with the railways. The Minister has the right to employ whom he likes and pay what wages he likes out of the public Treasury, but the deficit on the railways on 30th June last was £734,997. Why? Because the Government had control of that public utility. Suppose the Government got possession of the steamers and ran them for twelve months, the money would all come out of the public Treasury.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: What has that got to do with the labour on the boats?

HON. A. G. C. HAWTHORN: A good deal, because you cannot control your own State labour on the railways. What about the porters at Wallangarra?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Premier said that the employers and shipping companies could employ whatever labour they liked.

HON. F. T. BRETNALL: It was union labour that the Government wished to provide for the "Hopewell." The business before us is very serious. The Minister asked us to pass this Bill on the ground of the public welfare and the public interests. Are we going to pass it on those

grounds, or are we going to pass it because we deem it necessary? Are we going to pass it because the Government think it advisable to do so? The word "necessity" has not been used that I am aware of. Are we going to pass this Bill because the Government would like to get power to take possession of all the ships on our shores?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is our duty to pass it in the interests of the sugar-growers in the North.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: It is our duty to deal with it on its merits.

Hon. F. T. BRETNALL: If the Government recognise it to be their duty to do it now, why did they leave it until they knew this trouble was just about to end? Why did not the Government take action six or seven weeks ago? We know quite well that, when the unionists went to work and found that they had to work with non-union men, they refused to work. It is seven or eight weeks ago since the railway strike began. Why did not the Government deal with the matter then?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Premier lost no time.

Hon. F. T. BRETNALL: You should have fixed up the business straight away; but you could not agree to all the demands of the unionists, and there was a compromise effected. We know that the Government were determined to get Mr. Justice Higgins up to deal with it, but they failed. The hon. member may see these things in another light, but we cannot close our eyes to what has happened, and the public cannot close their eyes. Whatever the hon. gentleman may think about the people or the representation of the people, I can tell him that the people are thinking for themselves in these matters, and they are reading for themselves.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The people are behind the Bill.

Hon. F. T. BRETNALL: I do not think that this Bill ought to become a statute of Queensland. I think we should be putting a very dangerous power into the hands of the Government to be exercised suddenly sometimes, and sometimes, perhaps, as things have been handled here, and some subterfuge used as a sort of blindfold to those who are responsible for the management and use of these vessels, and serious harm might be done to the public and to the owners of the vessels all through some rash, impetuous action such as the Government were taking last Friday morning. On those grounds, if the Bill goes to a division, I shall vote for throwing it out and having nothing whatever to do with it.

Hon. G. S. CURTIS: I listened carefully to the speech delivered by the Minister yesterday in moving the second reading of the Bill. I looked for some sufficient reason for the introduction of such a measure, but the Minister failed to give it. I understood the main reason for the introduction of the Bill was the alleged lockout of the men by the companies—that the steamship companies were responsible for the trouble by reason of the fact that they had shut out the men. That was the Minister's main contention. It was contended on the other side by the Hon.

Mr. Thynne and the Hon. Mr. Fowles that that was not the case. I think that their contention is absolutely proved by the statement made by Mr. Burke, the president of the Australian United Seamen's Union, at the Trades Hall on Monday last, as reported in the "Courier" this morning. He gives the case away, so far as the Government are concerned, in connection with this Bill. He said that, first of all, the seamen went out, and afterwards the wharf labourers went out, in spite of the advice they had received from their friends that it was not desirable that they should do so. Such a statement coming from the president of the Australian United Seamen's Union settles the point that it was not the companies who were blamable for the cessation of the shipping trade of the State, but that the trade unionists went out and paralysed the whole business of the country. The Minister seemed desirous of clouding the issue to a great extent. The matter of the wheat to be shipped in the "Hopewell" does not affect the question. That is a subsidiary matter altogether. The main question is: Who is liable for the fact that the shipping trade of the country was paralysed? That is proved by the statement of the president of the Australian United Seamen's Union on Monday last in the Trades Hall. It is absurd on the face of it to suppose that the shipping companies would desire to stop their ships and cease trade, because it would involve them in tremendous loss. To contend that they are responsible for it seems to me in the highest degree absurd. If labour was available to work the vessels, no doubt the shipping companies would have been very pleased to go on. If the Government offered to supply the companies with labour, possibly it was on conditions which the companies could not see their way to consent to. To justify the introduction of the Bill, it was incumbent upon the Government to make out a far better case than they have done. The Government now try to save their faces on account of their failure to do what they should have done. If they had been an independent Government, they would have stood up for the rights of the community as a whole; but they are not able to do that, being the humble servants of the Trades Hall. An independent Government would have said to these men when they went out: "You have acted unwisely and in a way that we cannot approve of. You will do the country a large amount of injury, and bring a great amount of suffering on innocent persons in the State, and, if you do not resume work, we will assist the companies to obtain the necessary labour to start their business." That is what the Government of New South Wales did the other day. Mr. Fuller, the Acting Premier, intimated to the men that, if they did not resume work within a certain time, other persons would be employed to do the work. That should have been done by the Queensland Government, but, being the humble and obedient servants of the trade unionists of Queensland, they were unable to take any independent action in the matter. The Queensland Government have lost one of the greatest essentials of an independent Government—that is, the power of initiative. They are not able to take the initiative in anything for the benefit of the country without the consent of their masters outside. The strike in New South Wales has been very justly described as a strike conceived in a

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spirit of sedition and disloyalty to the country and the Empire, and that has been absolutely proved. We do not claim that all the trade unionists in New South Wales and Australia are imbued with that spirit, but their leaders are, otherwise such a strike could not have taken place at a time like the present, when we are fighting for our lives against Germany. The men in Queensland who went out in sympathy with the men in New South Wales must be classed in the same category as those in New South Wales. The strike has caused a great national loss to Australia, and renders Australia less able to do her share in contributing to the Empire's fighting effectiveness in the war. Every day that these men refrained from working there was a great loss. I saw the statement in the Sydney "Morning Herald" last week that, up to that date, 40,000,000 working hours had been lost through the strike, doing tremendous and incalculable injury not only to Australia but to the Empire. It seems to me that the Queensland Government are more blamable than the men for aiding and abetting them in the holdup of the shipping. They must be classed in the same category as the men who are responsible for the upheaval. With regard to the Bill itself, there is no doubt that it is a monstrously absurd, unreasonable, and tyrannical proposal—more particularly so far as the staffs of the companies are concerned; and I question whether, if it got on the statute-book, it would be good law so far as the shipping companies' servants are concerned. I do not think any State Parliament—any subordinate Legislature—can pass a measure of that kind which would be good law. I believe it would be void, being in excess of the competency of the State Parliament. I do not think any subordinate Legislature can compel people to work against their will. The Hon. Mr. Thynne yesterday suitably stigmatised this Bill as a measure which, if enacted, would make slaves of a lot of people. It would compel them to work against their will for the State Government, subject in case of refusal to tremendous penalties. I think it is a sound doctrine of constitutional law that any law made by a lawmaking body in excess of its competency is simply void, and I believe that that part of the Bill which relates to the men in the employ of the companies would be void and of no effect, even if it were placed on the statute-book. Under the British flag men are not chattel property, and cannot be dealt with in the way proposed in the Bill. The Imperial Parliament in Great Britain might possibly be able to do it, being an omnipotent Legislature and there being no limit to its powers; but for the Legislature of a State in Australia, which is a dependency of the Empire, to pass such a Bill is absolutely absurd. It is often said that there is a soul of goodness in things evil, so we may hope that eventually good may come out of this evil, and that trade unionism will be purified and made to perform only its legitimate functions. It must abandon the idea of becoming the master of the State. I feel perfectly certain that the people of Australia will never tolerate any attempt being made by revolutionary unionism to become the masters of the State. We will recognise *bonâ fide* industrial trade unionism within legitimate bounds. I regard the Bill as an absurdity and a monstrosity, which, if placed upon the

statute-book, would be in the highest degree discreditable to the State. It would do an act of great injustice to the shipowners, and what is proposed to be done with regard to the staffs of the companies is too ridiculous to be seriously discussed. It only shows how tyrannical a Labour-Socialist Government would be if it could do as it liked, and was not restrained, as it is, by the Legislative Council of Queensland. We can imagine what the result would be if the Government went in for a State shipping business from the way in which they manage the railways and the fact that they are unable to control the State railway servants. It would be the same in connection with ships. If we ran the ships on trade union principles, and a vessel got into a dangerous situation, jeopardising the ship and cargo and valuable lives, the probability is that the master would not be allowed to say what was the best to be done. He would have to call the crew aft and take a show of hands to determine what should be done in order to save the ship and cargo and the lives of those on board. It is not too absurd a thing to imagine that that would be demanded in connection with the management of State-owned ships, especially under a Labour Government. It

would be a farce and an absurdity [5 p.m.] and a source of immense loss to the country. I do not believe in State-owned railways or State-owned ships at all. I consider they are a great mistake. I agree with ex-President Roosevelt of the United States of America. I believe in Government-controlled railways, but not State-owned railways or State-owned ships, as State ownership brings into existence a large class of officials who, by combination, and owing to the fact that they have the franchise, would be able to become the masters of the State, which would be a very undesirable thing in any country. It would be very much better to adopt the system which prevails in England, where the railways are owned by companies. Through the keen competition between the companies the public get the benefit of a splendid service. They get moderate fares and freights, and civility and attention, and I may say that civility and attention are not always conspicuous in the management of State railways in Australia. I saw some very severe comments in the "Australasian" some little while ago in connection with the State-owned railways of Victoria. If they are not able in a small State like that to ensure the necessary attention and consideration for the convenience of the public, it must be a much more difficult matter in a vast State like Queensland. I say deliberately that State servants should not be allowed to strike; and I speak more particularly of railway servants. State servants enjoy regularity and security of employment; they are well paid, and they possess certain privileges, and now an Arbitration Court has been specially set up for their benefit, it appears to me; and under those circumstances I hold that they should not be allowed to strike, and I hope that before long a law will be passed, as one of the results of this tremendous upheaval down South, which, among other things, will debar State servants, and more especially railway servants, from making war upon the general community by striking. We can imagine what the result would be if a Labour Government were running a large shipping business

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under trade union principles, and on the "Government stroke" principle. What discipline and efficiency would there be—especially discipline? I am afraid discipline would be very slack upon State-owned steamers. I would emphasise the point that one of the results of State-owned railways—and it would be aggravated by the establishment of a State-owned shipping business—would be to multiply the official class of the country, which is a bad thing, especially in a democratic country where every man has a vote, and where they would be able to combine and use their political influence in such a way as to become an absolute danger to the community.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: Is not the navy State-owned?

HON. G. S. CURTIS: The navy is not run on democratic principles, as State-owned ships would be.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is State-owned.

HON. G. S. CURTIS: It is not run on union principles, as State-owned ships would be. If the navy were run on the same principles as the Northern railways in this State, I am afraid the Empire would not last very long. I have seen it stated a good many times—and especially since this outbreak in New South Wales—that all the unions are to be consolidated into one big union. In my opinion such a thing should not be permitted by the State. What would they do it for? Their object would be that they would then be able to make war upon the State whenever they were unable to get all that they demanded. I say deliberately that any party which is prepared, on the slightest provocation, to throw the commerce and trade of the country into confusion because they are unable to obtain all they require, is not entitled to hold high office in Australia. I hope that good will eventually come out of this recent trouble. Of course, it is not ended yet, but I think it soon will be, and that trade unionism will be placed upon a better footing. We are all in favour of trade unionism within legitimate bounds, but we do not want a trade unionism which is dominated by dangerous agitators and others who are disloyal to the Empire and to this country. The unions should not be allowed to combine in one great union, as they would thereby become a perpetual menace to the welfare and the safety of the country. Let us have industrial unionism and all that it is legitimately entitled to, but nothing beyond that. Glancing through the Bill, I do not see any provision for indemnifying the shipping companies against any damage to their property while in possession of the Government. That seems to be a very serious omission. The Bill seems to be an ill-conceived and ill-digested document. If it got on to the statute-book, I am afraid it would cause a lot of litigation before very long. Without some provision for compensation for damage, it is a most shameful proposal. You propose to coerce the companies into handing over their property to the Government; you propose to take possession of their ships and make no provision for indemnifying the companies against loss in the case of injury to their property; and, further than that, there is no right of appeal against the dictum of the shipping comptroller. I do not think that, if we search the annals of legislation throughout the British Empire

for very many years past, you could find such a ridiculous and absurd proposal as this, and a proposal for which there is absolutely no justification. The *raison d'être* for the Bill—that the companies are responsible for the stoppage of the shipping business of the country—has been absolutely disproved by a great authority in his way, whose statement at the Trades Hall last Monday evening was published in to-day's "Courier." That statement cuts the ground completely from under the feet of the Government, and is a most complete reply to the case which was attempted to be made out by the Minister. I agree with the views expressed this afternoon by the Hon. Mr. Brentnall, and think that if we pass the second reading of the Bill we would be approving of the principle of the Bill, and I do not think that would be a right thing to do. If we do not believe in the Bill, we should act in a straightforward way, and reject the Bill on the second reading.

HON. A. G. C. HAWTHORN: I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

The re-sumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

FARM PRODUCE AGENTS BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: I beg to move—That this Bill be now read a second time. Before proceeding with the details of the Bill I might point out to hon. members that the reason for changing the order of business was to suit the convenience of hon. members who are interested in the Wages Bill. One hon. member circulated a number of amendments in the Bill, and, as he is not here now, I did not wish to take an unfair advantage of his absence. As a matter of fact, I told the hon. member that I did not think we would be able to go on with the Wages Bill before 6 o'clock, and on that understanding he went away. I thought it better then to proceed with the second reading of the Bill now before us. The principle of this measure is not unfamiliar to hon. members, inasmuch as a similar Bill, namely the Stock and Farm Agents Bill, was introduced in 1913 by the late Government. That measure, however, was not passed. The provisions of that Bill for the registration of stock agents proved unacceptable to this House, and the Ministry proved to be not very keenly interested in the measure which they themselves had introduced.

The reasons which were set forth by the then Secretary for Agriculture still hold good, and still justify the introduction and passage of this measure. The Bill is necessary in order to safeguard the grower, the consumer, and the honest produce agent. The Hon. John White, in 1913, quoted a flagrant case, which had just then been before the court, in which an agent had been receiving one sum of money for his client's produce, and had reported to his client the receipt of a smaller sum. I heard of a similar case quite recently where a fruit farmer saw his bananas sold at the market for 4½d. a dozen, and, when he got his returns, they showed that they were sold for 2½d. a dozen.

HON. G. S. CURTIS: Could you have done better?

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The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am saying that this man saw his bananas sold for 4½d. a dozen, but he only received 2½d. a dozen.

Hon. F. T. BRENTNALL: The man who did that ought to have been prosecuted.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am stating a fair case, and I know that no hon. member of this Chamber would tolerate such a proceeding as that. If legislation can be introduced to prevent that, I think that every hon. member in this Chamber would welcome it.

Hon. G. S. CURTIS: Let him send his bananas to another agent and see if he can do better. Competition amongst agents would settle it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I think that an honest agent is necessary for the distribution of produce. If we can do anything by legislation to prevent dishonesty in the distribution of our produce, then it is necessary that that legislation should be introduced.

Hon. G. S. CURTIS: Let the producer go to some other agent. They are not all like that, surely.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I do not say that they are all like that, but the Hon. John White quoted one case which was before the court at that time, and I quoted another case.

Hon. G. S. CURTIS: "One swallow does not make a summer."

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. gentleman wants that agent to be allowed to continue, but I say that he should be prosecuted, and the Hon. Mr. Brentnall agrees with me. We should have legislation on the statute-book of this State to prevent dishonesty, as far as possible, in the distribution of farmers' produce. Men have to go out in the broiling sun, and they have to withstand droughts and take all the risks of the seasons in producing commodities for the consumers who live in the cities.

Hon. W. STEPHENS: And also have their butter taken from them by the Government.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I think that these men deserve some protection from the Legislature. This is the first Government that has made an honest attempt to encourage primary production and secure for the primary producer a fairer share for his products than he has been receiving in the past.

Hon. W. STEPHENS: Your Government did not start the Central sugar mills.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We have before this Chamber a Bill similar to this, called the State Produce Agency Bill, which provides for the distribution of farmers' produce by the State. I believe that we should also have a State Export Agencies Bill, although hon. members this afternoon have objected to the Government bringing in a Requisition of Ships Bill. We should have a State line of steamships to carry the farmers' produce, but I know I would be out of order if I discussed the question of State shipping while we are dealing with this measure. Another form of mischief which has to be combated is that of the buying in of produce by an agent, or ring of agents, who subsequently dispose of

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it. A third instance of the evils which are to be cured by this measure is that agents have before now paid clients' money into their own accounts instead of trust accounts, and frequently, without any design on their part, such money has become attached along with the agents' private money by some process of law. The position of the client in such a case is clear enough. He has his remedy against the agent, but it is possible in such circumstances that the agent has no money left, and in any case the client would be put to considerable inconvenience and expense in recovering what is his own.

The provisions of the Bill are simple and self-explanatory. The essence of the measure is contained in clause 4, which provides that no one is to carry on, or to notify that he is carrying on, the business of a farm and produce agent, unless he is licensed. A license fee is fixed, and, although we in this Chamber may differ regarding what fee shall be paid, that is a matter on which hon. members can express their opinion, and we can amend it in Committee.

Hon. H. TURNER: What are you going to do with the money raised from license fees? Are you going to pay it into the consolidated revenue, or utilise it for the benefit of the producer?

Hon. G. S. CURTIS: The Bill is intended to raise more revenue.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is not altogether a money-making Bill, because the fees will be very small.

Hon. A. G. C. HAWTHORN: You will want an inspector or two.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We have a pretty fair staff of agricultural inspectors now. Clause 4 provides that in any proceedings against any person for a breach of the Act the onus of proof is thrown upon the person charged. It provides that where a firm is carrying on business it is sufficient for one member of the firm to be licensed on behalf of the firm. Clause 5 contains provisions for the issue, effect, and duration of licenses. The fee for every license, and for every annual renewal thereof, is to be £1, unless the applicant already holds an auctioneer's license. I think it will be agreed that this charge is reasonable and not in any way prohibitive.

Hon. G. S. CURTIS: Do you shut private people out altogether?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No. This is a private produce agents' Bill, but we are making each agent register and pay a license fee of £1. I think that an agent carrying on a farm produce agency business can afford to pay a fee. If my memory serves me correctly—I think it was in Dr. Kidston's time, when the Hon. Mr. Hawthorn was a member of the Ministry—that a deputation of farm produce agents waited upon the Premier, and asked for legislation of this kind. I know that the deputation was a strong one, and that it was organised at Toowoomba, but I forget whether the deputation waited on the Premier in Toowoomba or in Brisbane. They asked that legislation be introduced on similar lines to this Bill, and they said that they were willing to pay a license fee of £10, because they wanted some protection.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: How long ago was that?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I cannot say from memory.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: Was it two years ago? They expected better things from this Government.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It was before this Government came into office.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: Oh, I can quite understand it then.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Hon. Mr. Hawthorn was in the Ministry.

Hon. A. G. C. HAWTHORN: I think it was in the time of the Denham Government.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: Things have changed since then.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Things have also changed here a little bit, and I think the change is for the better. The hon. gentleman is drawing me off the thread of my argument. The point I am making is that the produce agents deputationised the Premier of the day and asked that similar legislation to this be introduced, and I know they were willing to pay from £5 to £10 annually.

Hon. A. G. C. HAWTHORN: £1 is not excessive.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No. I think it only right that auctioneers and farm produce agents should be registered, so that the country producers can be protected against the pocket-book commission agent, who pays no fees, and who is here to-day and gone to-morrow. The agents themselves have asked for this Bill.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: They did not ask for all the provisions of this Bill. They did not ask for the dragnet clause.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am introducing this Bill because I have the greatest sympathy with the producer.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: We all have.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I believe it will secure for him a better price for his produce.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: Tell us about the fish market and the price of fish.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I know the difficulties the people have had to contend with in the Kingaroy district. We all know the difficulties a producer has to contend with in the initial stages of his farm. A man who goes out and tackles the scrub must have a big heart. He must be a brave man to tackle all the difficulties that confront him.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: We are all with you there.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: If there is any legislation we can introduce that will give him a fair opportunity of securing an improved price for his commodities, then we should introduce it, and I am sure it will meet with the approval of this House.

Hon. A. G. C. HAWTHORN: It makes me smile when I think of the benevolence of your butter transactions.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We have been instrumental in bringing about a great improvement in the dairying industry.

Hon. W. STEPHENS: You spoil it. I know many who are fattening now, and have knocked off milking because you stole the butter.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am satisfied that since our Government came into power there has been stability in the dairying industry. I know that prior to the Labour Government coming [5.30 p.m.] into power the price for butter or cream was not uniform. One week the producer would get 7½d. per lb., and the next less, and sometimes more. Now there is uniformity in price.

Hon. W. STEPHENS: I do not think so.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Anybody can say to-day that cream is bringing a good price.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: Don't you know that that is owing to war conditions, and that it won't last.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I know something about the dairying industry. I know that when a dairy farmer gets a good cow which can earn from £1 2s. 6d. to £1 7s. 6d. every month; that is not bad. If they earn £1 a cow per month they do well.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: They do not do that in winter.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They average £1 per month all the year round.

Hon. W. STEPHENS: Not all the year round.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: A cow on good grass will very nearly average £1 a month, and if a cow does that it does very well. No one can say that the dairymen are not doing fairly well. The produce business is one demanding the highest probity and integrity, and no one can object to the slight restriction which is placed upon entry into the business. Clause 6 imposes a restriction on an agent purchasing consignments, either directly or indirectly, without having previously obtained the consent in writing of his client. This is to prevent the manipulating of the market by agents. Clause 7 deals with the application of trust moneys, and provides that all balances due to a client which are held by an agent must be paid into a trust account. A breach of this clause is punishable by a penalty not exceeding £50. Provision is made that the moneys paid into such trust accounts shall not be liable to be attached or taken in execution by any other creditor of the agent. The remainder of the Bill consists chiefly of provisions for the effective administration of the measure. I do not think I need go any further into the Bill. Hon. gentlemen will have an opportunity of criticising it in detail in Committee, and probably there may be some amendments suggested in Committee that will improve the Bill. If so, I shall be only too pleased to accept the suggestions. I believe that I am introducing a Bill which meets with the approval of most hon. gentlemen.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: It is much less objectionable than most of your Bills.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: In our desire to do something for the primary producer, I am sure that we shall have the support of hon. gentlemen in this Chamber, although we may differ in our methods of doing it. The Bill is not a very long one, and there may be some amendments suggested which will improve it.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: I have got two or three.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: But I shall have to oppose any amendments moved with a view to destroy the Bill. I do not

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anticipate opposition myself until I meet with it. I do not believe in meeting trouble half way.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: It comes soon enough without meeting it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: But I may stress the fact that it is the intention of the Government to do something to help those engaged in the business of agents, and who—the honest agents—in their turn will help the primary producers; and we want to do away with any dishonesty by legislation.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: Are you doing fairly by those the co-operative companies under this Bill?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: That is open to doubt.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am one of those who believe in encouraging co-operation. I believe it is a step towards socialism.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: I think it is the exact opposite of socialism.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I differ from the hon. gentleman; I think it is towards it. I beg formally to move—That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. W. STEPHENS: I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I beg to move—That the Council do now adjourn. The first business to-morrow will be the adoption of the report of the Select Committee on the Opticians Bill, then the consideration of the Wages Bill in Committee, and the resumption of the debate on the second reading of the Farm Produce Agents Bill, to be followed by the debate on the State Produce Agency Bill, and after that the Requisition of Ships Bill.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-one minutes to 6 o'clock.