

or 10 o'clock at night and that is the end of it. The Goldfields people have not a lounge car.

Hon. E. M. Davies: They do not lounge. They are workers.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: They are not what are called lounge lizards. The Goldfields workers would not like to be called such a name so the Railway Department has not given them a lounge car. We must not overlook the fact also that the Westland provides foot warmers for passengers. On the other hand, there are people travelling from Esperance to Coolgardie for a period of 21 hours. Then when they get to Coolgardie they spend another 17 hours on the Kalgoorlie to Perth train. Those passengers include women with little children who have to sit up in the cold, and there are no foot warmers for them; but the people on the Westland are provided with foot warmers. Are the people of our State not good enough to receive some consideration of that kind? Through the municipal council we have asked for these things on many occasions but have been told that they cannot be provided.

The reason I complained about the Bunbury train is that in that district there is good road transport. I do not blame the people who are living down there. I would say, "Get the best you can," because we want progress. But they have good road transport and a diesel coach, and now they have this elaborate train. There are seven girls in attendance and one waitress who runs around with ice cream, and in addition there is a ticket collector. The cost must be terrific. If a person wants to travel to Armadale, however, he has to go to Perth and then hook back on a steam train. I want to stress the point that I consider people on the Goldfields have an equal right with Westland passengers, to a steel coach, and it is only right that this House should see that the taxpayers of Western Australia receive the same treatment as outsiders. Having brought the matter before members, I would ask permission to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

House adjourned at 9.41 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 2nd December, 1947.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions: Hospitals, as to Dr. Hislop's U.S.A. investigations	2304
State Housing Act, as to penalties for offences	2304
Assent to Bills	2305
Standing Orders suspension	2305
Bills: Charitable Collections Act Amendment, 1r.	2305
Co-operative and Provident Societies Act Amendment, 2r., remaining stages ...	2306
Coal Miners' Welfare, 2r., Com. ...	2306
Agricultural Areas, Great Southern Towns and Goldfields Water Supply, 2r. Industry (Advances), returned ...	2316
War Service Land Settlement Agreement (Land Act Application) Act Amendment, 1r.	2321
Countryside Areas Water Supply, 2r. ...	2321
Superannuation and Family Benefits Act Amendment, 2r.	2322
Road Districts Act Amendment (No. 3), 2r., Com., report	2328
Companies Act Amendment (No. 2), 2r. Wheat Marketing, Council's amendments ...	2330
Loan Estimates, 1947-48, Com. ...	2331
Annual Estimates, 1947-48, Com. of Supply, Votes and Items discussed	2332
	2340

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

HOSPITALS.

As to Dr. Hislop's U.S.A. Investigations.

Mr. MANN (on notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Has Dr. Hislop submitted a report of his investigations in America?

(2) If so, will it be made available to members?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes, the report may be seen at the office of the Commissioner of Public Health.

STATE HOUSING ACT.

As to Penalties for Offences.

Mr. GRAHAM (on notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

How many cases in respect of building breaches have been taken to court by the

State Housing Commission in each month of this year respectively?

The MINISTER replied:

January, 1947, 3; February, 1947, nil; March, 1947, nil; April, 1947, 5; May, 1947, 4; June, 1947, nil; July, 1947, 3; August, 1947, 1; September, 1947, 4; October, 1947, 7; November, 1947, 7.

BILL--CHARITABLE COLLECTIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Chief Secretary and read a first time.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Companies Act Amendment.
- 2, Land Alienation Restriction Act Amendment (Continuance).
- 3, Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment (Continuance).
- 4, Plant Diseases Act Amendment.
- 5, Rural and Industries Bank Act Amendment.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

The PREMIER: I move—

That during the remainder of the session the Standing Orders be suspended so far as to enable Bills to be introduced without notice and to be passed through all their remaining stages on the same day, all messages from the Legislative Council to be taken into consideration on the same day they are received, and to enable resolutions from the Committees of Supply and of Ways and Means to be reported and adopted on the same day on which they shall have passed those Committees.

This is the usual motion introduced at this stage of the session. Last year the present Leader of the Opposition introduced the motion on the 4th December. There are several more Bills to be brought down, but I do not think they are contentious. Most of them have only one or two clauses. I intend to discuss them with the Leader of the Opposition and give him an indication of their contents. If there are any that he thinks are contentious I shall arrange for them to be put high up on the notice paper at an early date so that they can be fully discussed.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Will the Premier say when the Government desires to finish the session?

The PREMIER: I would like to finish it at the end of next week, but I do not know whether that can be done. I would say, however, that the very latest date on which we should finish would be the 19th December and I am hoping we may finish before then. I hope the motion will be acceptable to the House with the assurances I have given.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Year after year about this time a similar motion is introduced. In some years it has been introduced as early as the middle of November. That was done the year before last. I have no objection to the motion as such if the Government can see any possibility of its expediting business. But when we look at the notice paper we find that it has reference to 10 Bills which have not been introduced. One of them I should think would be a counter-part of the Country Water Supplies Bill of last year, which contained 111 clauses. So I presume that this Bill will contain over 100 clauses.

The Premier: But they have been fairly well debated.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: They have not been debated on a Bill brought down by this Government. It may be a Bill entirely different from that introduced last year, and it certainly will differ in principle.

The Minister for Works: There is no difference in it except perhaps in its length.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The committee of managers of the Legislative Council caused to be lost the Bill introduced last year.

The Minister for Works: Obviously the contentious part of that Bill will not be included now.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I would draw the attention of the Government to the waste of time it has permitted. We have been asked, day after day, to consider Bills that will not be passed. The Government Railways Act Amendment Bill should never have been introduced, and my forecast is that it will not pass the Legislative Council. We have been asked to deal with all sorts of tiddley-winking and footling Bills that really did not matter at all, but that have taken up the time of the House.

The Premier: They have taken up very little time.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: They have taken up a great deal of time, and there are some Bills still on the notice paper with which I am sure the Government will not proceed. Had there been shown, some weeks ago, any determination to get on with the Bills that the Government wished to have passed, I am certain it would have received every co-operation from members on this side of the House. I therefore hope that we will forthwith be presented with a notice paper that will give a genuine opportunity of dealing with the business that the Government desires to have passed. Up till now we have been asked to waste eight or ten hours on Bills about which I doubt the seriousness of the Government. I hope that if the intention is to finish on Friday of next week—we have some important Bills on the notice paper, with five or six more yet to come—the Government will concentrate on those it desires to have passed. An early decision must be reached regarding those Bills that are not wanted.

Question put and passed.

BILL—CO-OPERATIVE AND PROVIDENT SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th November.

MR. MAY (Collie) [4.43]: The necessity for this short Bill arose owing to the progress that has been made by co-operative societies. The original Act of 1903 still stands, with the exception of a minor amendment made in 1926. The amount allowed as the maximum for any individual to hold as a shareholder remains at £200. The proposal under the Bill is that the amount a shareholder may hold in future shall be £750. The necessity for the amendment was brought to the notice of the Minister by a deputation from the co-operative society operating at Collie. That society has a membership of 1,676 and an annual turnover of £170,000. Members will agree that, in view of the rate at which the population of Collie and other centres is increasing, the turnover of the co-operative societies is likely to increase, thus

making the necessity for the amendment still more marked. We, in Collie, claim to have the biggest co-operative concern in the State, and I think that is borne out by the figures I have quoted.

One of the activities of that society is the building and purchase of houses. It has already gone to the limit of its reserves in providing properties for its members. If, as the Bill proposes, shareholders are allowed to contribute to the extent of £750, that will provide extra finance by means of which the society will be able to further its house building programme. It needs no words of mine to impress on members the necessity for increasing the number of houses being built at Collie. Coal is one of the basic requirements of the State, and members will realise that to a certain extent our progress is being retarded by the fact that we cannot produce sufficient coal to meet our needs. If the society is enabled, by means of this Bill, to increase its house building activities, that will result in an increase in the number of people able to make their homes in Collie and take up the occupation of coal-mining. That will be of great advantage to the State in helping us to supply the coal so badly needed. I commend the Bill earnestly to the House and sincerely hope it will be passed.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—COAL MINERS' WELFARE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th November.

MR. MAY (Collie) [4.51]: May I at the outset again express my regret that the Minister in charge of the mining industry has not a seat in this Chamber. I am satisfied that it is essential to have the Minister holding the portfolio of Mines in this Chamber to supply information on the spot about mining matters. The Title of the Bill refers to the coalminers' welfare fund and

I wish to ask the Minister how the measure will apply in the event of the coal-industry coming under Federal-State control.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The Government will fight that.

Mr. MAY: I am afraid the Chief Secretary cannot answer that question.

The Chief Secretary: Yes, I can.

Mr. MAY: I shall be glad to hear his answer later. The Bill has a threefold object—to create a fund for amenities, to appoint a board to administer the fund and to devise steps for creating the fund. The measure provides that a fund shall be created by charging a royalty of 1d. per ton on all coal won. The total won each year is under 800,000 tons and, even if the tonnage were to reach that figure, it would produce, in round figures, only £3,000. This is a very worthy objective, but I suggest that the amount be increased as the proposed royalty is insufficient for the purpose in view.

Ever since the industry has existed in Collie no effort has been made in any shape or form to provide welfare amenities for the men working in the industry. That is well known. I propose to read from the report of Mr. Wallwork, who last year was appointed a Commissioner to inquire into the coalmining industry. This will enlighten members about the amenities that should exist, but do not exist, in order to provide an attraction for men working in the industry. On page 51 of the report he said—

Social conditions: Workers at Collie are fortunate in that living and climatic conditions are generally good. Housing, when available, is fair and the natural facilities exist for adequate recreation. Primary education is well catered for. Collie is to the fore in sporting activities, largely due to the efforts of those concerned.

Meaning the individuals working in the industries.

For a town with the population of Collie, 7,000 approximately, and its importance in the economy of Western Australia, it has, up to date led a very Cinderella existence. Apart from the provision of usual Governmental undertakings, such as railways, roads, primary schools, hospital and water supply, it has looked after itself. This is a highly commendable state of affairs provided that sufficient encouragement is given to local bodies and the townspeople to continue.

It is a fact that the industry, which has been of such great value to the State, has put little back into the district which is its home. So

far as I am aware, there has been no substantial contribution ever made for the betterment of social conditions in Collie by either the mine-owners or the Government, that is apart from the usual Governmental activities. The mine-owners have no direct share even in this. There have been no outstanding bequests or endowments to cultural or sporting activities in the town and no provision of any amenities other than the bare necessities. Collie has no block of civic buildings such as a town hall, library and community centre. There are no suitable children's playgrounds. The recreation ground and golf links are barely fit for use. Hotel and boarding house accommodation in Collie are below standard. There is no high school and no attractive facilities for higher education of adolescents or adults. The establishment of a child welfare clinic is a long-felt want.

The fact that there is a well-conducted workers' club in Collie, that religion is well catered for by the bodies concerned, that the general health of the community is good and that private homes and gardens are generally well-kept are matters that reflect great credit on the stability of the town and its people rather than on the philanthropy of a grateful country.

There does not exist at Collie any welfare scheme resembling the British Coal Miners' Welfare Scheme, which operates for the benefit of the whole of the working community.

Those remarks were made by Mr. Wallwork as the result of his investigation into the coalmining industry. I suggest to the Government that the proposed royalty of one penny per ton is insufficient to meet the welfare amenities which it is intended to provide. Let us do the job properly. To do that, I suggest the imposition of a royalty of twopence per ton. As long as the industry has existed, no charge of any description has been made on it for the welfare of the men engaged in it and their families. If the Government is sincere in its desire to provide these amenities, then I ask it to increase the royalty in the way I have suggested.

The next point dealt with by the Bill is the creation of a board to administer the fund. It is intended to constitute the board of three members with the addition of a secretary. Of the three members one is to be the chairman, another the workers' representative and the other the mineowners' representative. On behalf of the people I represent, I take strong exception to any representation being allowed the mine-owners of Collie. Of the total production of coal from the pits at Collie by the companies not one penny has ever been put back into the town for the welfare of the men working in the industry. If the companies

are not sufficiently interested in the welfare of their workers, the men who make the profit which the companies distribute to their shareholders, I contend they are not worthy of consideration so far as concerns representation on this proposed board.

In place of a mineowners' representative, I suggest—in view of the fact that, among other things, the objects of the board are to be educational and cultural—the school teacher should be appointed to the board. That is the expressed wish of the men working in the industry, and I hope that at a later stage provision will be made for that appointment. The secretary of the board should be a person having a wide knowledge of the operations of the industry. I do not know whether the Government has any particular person in mind, but the people working in the industry have. They feel that as the secretary will be the chief executive officer of the board, he should be chosen because of his acquaintance with the purposes for which the board is being established. The men have a person in view who has that knowledge and I hope the opportunity will be afforded me later to indicate who he is.

The Bill next proceeds to provide for the way in which the fund is to be operated. We would like to know what will be the most urgent requirement that the board will be called upon to deal with. I suggest that the Bill should provide for the establishment of a local welfare committee representative of all interests at Collie. That committee could make representations and suggestions to the proposed board and point out which items are most urgent. There are many things lacking at Collie. The Government could do many things to make the industry more attractive. I think the Government realises only too well how unattractive the industry is. For instance, no opportunity is afforded boys who are leaving school at Collie and are desirous of taking up some profession to become experts in the coal industry.

At present, there is no inducement to parents to persuade their sons to enter the industry. We do not find at Collie what is to be found on the Goldfields, the School of Mines, which is an inducement to some youths to take up goldmining as a profession. When a boy leaves school at Collie and decides to go into the coalmining in-

dustry, he has no opportunity to gain the scientific knowledge which he should have if he is to become somebody worthwhile, especially worthwhile to the industry. As a result we have the spectacle of boys leaving the district. This is most undesirable.

We should give the Collie lads every opportunity and provide every inducement for them to take up coalmining as a profession, so that the industry may eventually benefit by their knowledge. There are many ways in which the industry can be made attractive. At present we have not a decent hall in which the people may congregate. That fact was made very evident to the Premier on the occasion of his visit to Collie. We had to go into a barn-like structure. Much as the Premier desired to speak to the people at Collie at that gathering, he could not make himself heard, not because there was any noise but because his voice went straight through the roof.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Why did you not take him out to the tree?

Mr. MAY: It was the Premier's first visit to Collie and I did not want to frighten him so that he would not come again. We have a large stretch of water at Collie, the Minninup Pool, but it has no facilities to make it attractive. There is not even a decent road to the pool, as the road board is too poor to provide one. We have a race-course and golf links, but both are in their initial stages owing to need of finance.

The Honorary Minister: There is S.P. betting under the trees.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MAY: The Honorary Minister need have no fear that the funds of this proposed board will be spent on the provision of S.P. betting facilities. I suggest to the Honorary Minister that the objects of this Bill are far too important for anything of that nature. I hope that at least the Honorary Minister will take the measure more seriously.

Mr. Hoar: Is the Honorary Minister looking for a bet?

Hon. A. H. Panton: I bet she is not!

Mr. MAY: If the Honorary Minister is so concerned—

The Honorary Minister: I am not.

Mr. MAY: —in regard to S.P. betting, I hope she will show as much, if not greater,

concern for the welfare of the men engaged in the industry and their wives and children. Those men are deserving of the amenities which this Bill proposes to provide for them. There is not even a decent road leading to the mines. At Kalgoorlie, the roads to the mines are bituminised and there are lawns around the mines. Every facility is provided for hygiene and to convince the workers that their work is worthwhile. It matters not what mine one may care to visit at Collie, the approach to it is littered with old iron and sand and in the winter time there is the mud. That should be altered. If the coal companies are not prepared to do something in this connection, then it is up to the Government to see that it is done and, if possible, to make sure that the coalmine owners pay their share towards it.

The Chief Secretary: They are doing that now, are they not?

Mr. MAY: The only thing I am afraid of with regard to the Bill is that the companies will escape responsibility. I was hoping to see something much more compact, much more watertight, that would have ensured that the companies, as well as the industry, would be forced to provide the amenities to which the men are so justly entitled. I desire to refer again to the findings of the Commissioner, Mr. Wallwork. At page 57 he says—

I find it necessary to refer to the loyalty of the mine-workers at Collie to the industry. The industrial record at Collie, particularly during the Second World War, is a tribute to the commonsense and reasonable outlook of companies, managers, union officials and men alike. This loyal and conciliatory attitude is shared by members of other unions associated with the coal-mining industry. A little encouragement in the shape of improved social and working conditions would consolidate the existing good feeling and pay dividends to the industry and to the State alike.

The Commissioner has summed up the position very well. These people have been loyal to the State year in and year out. They have been called upon to respond at different times when coal has been urgently required, and never once have they been found wanting. The Bill represents an opportunity to the State to do something for a section of the community which has done so much. The Commissioner in his final summing up states:—

In conclusion I wish to stress that mine-workers and the general community at Collie have pinned their faith on the promise of the re-organisation of the coal mining industry. Although not the worst in Australia, conditions at Collie are primitive when compared with the better mines in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. In Western Australia it is not a case of giving the men better conditions in the hope that production per miner will increase. Production per miner has increased remarkably. This increased production would not have been possible without the direct co-operation of superintendents, managers, under-managers, deputies, mine-workers in classifications other than that of miner, and members of kindred unions. In return they expect and deserve better conditions and amenities. If these are not forthcoming and the structure again collapses it will be difficult to regain the goodwill of the mining community.

The Commissioner, in those words, has summed up the position of our coalmining industry. He has stated, and rightly so, that it has been neglected for years. No proper supervision has been made for the winning of coal. A valuable asset of the State has been torn about with the one object of getting profits as quickly and as cheaply as possible. I regret to say that any profit gained from the coal that has been won at Collie has been gained only at the expense of the workers in the industry, and, to a lesser degree of an asset of the State. If this or any subsequent Government will pay attention to the requirements of those engaged in the industry, I venture to say that the State will never be in danger of industrial trouble in the coalmines.

After all, there is a limit to human endurance. These men are not fools. They realise what they are producing and know only too well what is the worth of the result of their labours to the State and to the mineowners. It is only natural that they feel they are entitled to some recompense. They are not asking for monetary reward, but for decent living conditions by which they can have something worth while for their families. What they ask can be provided under the terms of this Bill. I again suggest to the Government that it should not starve the funds to be provided under the Bill for the sake of an extra niggardly penny per ton. The industry can well stand it. An enormous amount of money will be required to make up the leeway caused by neglect in the past. In addition, there will be a certain amount of expenditure incurred in the administration and the operations of the board. As a

result, the amount that will be available at the rate of one penny per ton will be considerably reduced.

I draw the Minister's attention to the point I raised at the outset, that whatever may be done in the future in the coal industry, it should not in any way affect the objectives of the Bill. So far as I can see, there is no connection between this measure and any Commonwealth-State control that may be introduced. I ask the Government to maintain that position. At a later stage, amendments to the Bill will, no doubt, be moved, but for the present I shall content myself with commending the objects of the measure to members in the hope that something of a concrete nature will be done towards alleviating the position that has been allowed to grow up over the years with regard to the welfare of the men engaged in the coalmining industry of this State.

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville) [5.23]: Whilst I am prepared to support the principle of the Bill, I have a decided objection to one or two of the details contained in it. I asked the Chief Secretary, by interjection, when he was introducing the Bill, who was going to pay the one penny per ton royalty. My experience over the years has been that the Railway Commissioner always has a condition in his agreement with the coalowners that any increase in the cost of coal caused by the Arbitration Court, or any other instrumentality over which the owners have no control, is to be added to the price to be paid by the Commissioner. I suggest that this one penny per ton—which on the average production today will amount to about £3,000 per year—will not come out of the profits, if any, of the companies, but will be paid by the Railway Department under its agreement. The railways will, therefore, have an additional deficit of some £3,000 a year which the Treasury will have to find and which will eventually come back to the people of the State.

I have no great objection to the people paying that amount, but we should be honest in this legislation. The Bill should be redrafted so as to provide that the amenities shall be made available by a grant from Consolidated Revenue. We should not lead the people to believe, by legislation, that the companies are going

to subscribe one penny per ton—which is what the Bill does—for the purpose of providing amenities. The companies do not propose to do anything of the sort. On Friday morning someone in the street said to me, "I see you are giving the coal companies another knock by taking another one penny a ton from them." I say now, as I said to that gentleman, the companies will not lose another penny per ton, but that he will contribute his small share when he pays his taxes.

I have a decided objection to giving a company, by legislation, credit for something it does not propose to do. In view of that fact, I agree with the member for Collie. Why provision should be made for a representative of the companies to be on this board—they will be contributing nothing—is hard to understand. I am not particularly concerned whether the head teacher, or anyone else is on the board, but as the companies are not paying anything towards it, I see no reason why they should be represented.

The Chief Secretary: Are they not in the industry?

HON. A. H. PANTON: They are in the industry for the purpose of obtaining profits.

The Chief Secretary: That is what everyone is in it for. Is the worker in the industry for love?

HON. A. H. PANTON: He is there to get bread and butter for himself and his family, and that is all he gets.

The Chief Secretary: And his amusements and pleasures.

HON. A. H. PANTON: What pleasure does a man get at Collie?

The Chief Secretary: A good many of them get a motorcar trip to Bunbury at the weekends.

HON. A. H. PANTON: They do not get it for nothing. The companies operate in Collie, but there are few shareholders and proprietors, if any, who live there. They may be making profits out of coal, but they are not in the coal industry. I consider a man is in the industry when he has his coat and shirt off and is working in it. The Chief Secretary might argue that some of the big shareholders of goldmines in Kalgoorlie, living in the heart of London,

are in the goldmining industry. That is just the same as saying that shareholders living in Perth are in the coalmining industry at Collie. It is just so much—

Mr. Rodoreda: Do not say it!

Hon. A. H. PANTON: "Piffle" is the word I was going to use. We should be honest with ourselves and with the people of the State, and tell them that the Government is prepared to pay £3,000 towards assisting with the provision of amenities for the coalmining industry in Collie.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The railways will not like that.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I do not care. I do not think anyone would grumble much at the addition of another £3,000 to the deficit if it is to help the children, or whatever the purpose may be, in Collie. But let us be honest and tell the people that they are going to pay for it and not cover up the position as the Bill does.

The Chief Secretary: I said definitely in the House—

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The Chief Secretary said nothing until he answered my interjection. Any person reading the Bill without reading "Hansard" can only come to the conclusion that the companies will be paying one penny per ton. They will be doing nothing of the sort. Until such time as they are prepared to pay something out of their profits, I am not agreeable to their being represented on the board, which can be well organised without such representative. I agree with the principle of the Bill. The average amount which will be available at present is about £3,000 a year, but it will not go very far as we are to have a board and a secretary. I do not know whom the member for Collie has in mind, but I would assume—in fact, if I were betting down near those streets they talk about, I would have a bet on it—that the secretary will not draw any less than £7 to £8 per week, or at least not more than what the average miner would draw. The secretary will have a typist and a typewriter, official notepaper, and all the other requirements necessary to enable him to carry out the job properly.

Mr. May: The chairman will have his expenses, too.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: That will make it worse, if they have to pay members of the board.

The Chief Secretary: And also the miners.

The Attorney General: They will not get much.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I hope they will get a reasonable wage. I would not like the mine managers' representative to scab on the job.

The Attorney General: They will get paid well for adequate services.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: If they are to be paid adequately for their services, there will not be much left in the fund. However, this will be a start, and let us see that we start off properly. If this is going to grow, I can see the companies having more and more representation. I agree with the member for Collie and I am quite prepared to support the second reading of the Bill, but I hope it will be amended along the lines I have indicated. I do not see why the Government should not get all the credit for finding this amount of £3,000 instead of looking it up and suggesting that the companies are paying it. Let us take the credit ourselves as the representatives of the people of the State.

The Chief Secretary: And all other industries as well?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Never mind about the other industries. I am dealing with this industry, and I am getting very tired of the companies getting credit for what they have not done. When the Collie miners' pensions scheme was under consideration, we had to insert a special clause to make the companies pay their contribution towards it. Something similar should be inserted in this Bill.

The Premier: There are some private users of coal.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: There are very few. The Premier will find that something like 85 or 87 per cent. of Collie coal is used by the railways.

The Attorney General: At present.

The Chief Secretary: Or by other Government instrumentalities.

The Premier: The private consumers will greatly increase, we expect.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: When that happens, we can amend the legislation, but let us start off right this session.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Geraldton) [5.34]: I congratulate the Government on introducing the Bill, and, unlike the ex-Minister for Mines, the member for Leederville, I do not care who gets the credit for the benefits that may accrue to the Collie miners so long as they are provided with the amenities for which they have waited far too long. Listening to the member for Collie, one could not help being impressed by the fact that for many years they have evidently been forgotten by what one would be justified in saying was their own Government, one that proudly boasted that it had the conditions of the workers at heart, and yet allowed such a state of affairs to continue, as I stated in my speech during the Address-in-reply debate following on the remarks by the member for Collie himself. I maintain, with a degree of certainty, that he is a man who knows what he is talking about.

Mr. Hoar: That is more than you do.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: It amazes me to think that conditions down there are anything like those depicted by the member for Collie.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Does it amaze you that the men are working there under such conditions?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The ex-Minister went on to say—

Hon. A. H. Panton: Not so much about the ex-Minister; I am now the member for Leederville!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The member for Leederville covered a lot of ground which, with all due respect to you, Mr. Speaker, had nothing to do with the Bill.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is a reflection upon the Chair.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Now I want to address myself to the Bill, and the speech by the member for Collie reminded me of the lines: "Een the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer." I have been to Collie and it is a very nice little place. But, to listen to its member, surely it is lamentably lacking in civic pride, not only in its people but also in the civic authorities there. If

it does not own a decent town hall and other requisites of such a town, it would seem that the people there have never read Smiles's book on "Self Help." I have always understood that the Lord helped those that helped themselves. If the township that has been producing the wealth that Collie has for so many years, has not been able to do better for itself than was indicated by the member for Collie, it is time some new blood was introduced to infuse public life there with a better spirit and greater civic pride than are apparent now, and which are in evidence in other parts of the State where considerably less wealth is produced than at Collie.

Mr. Hoar: You had better speak about towns of which you know something.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: It was lamentable to hear the tale told by the member for Collie. I do not want to delay the passage of the Bill, but the Government, apart altogether from the fiddlywinking business of the ex-Minister for Mines, who wanted to know who was to get credit for this, must be congratulated upon introducing legislation, for which it must be given due credit.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And now you are going outside as soon as you have got your name into "Hansard"!

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [5.38]: Some of the observations which I propose to make have already been referred to by previous speakers. Collie, as a mining proposition, has been developed along lines that we experienced in the very early days on the Goldfields of Western Australia, when profits were the one objective and where economic pressure forced those employed in the industry to remain there at all costs. There has been a remarkable change in the attitude of mining companies in recent years. At one time, the value of human labour had no greater price than the mullock or timber which they used underground, and the companies cared little more for their welfare than they did for the materials I have referred to. Now the companies realise that if they want to get efficiency and the maximum amount of service from a miner, they must provide amenities for him, seeing that they constitute part of his industrial life. If we deny him that, we deny ourselves efficient and valuable service.

There has been a marked change in the attitude of companies on the Goldfields in recent years, and I speak particularly in respect of new companies. Now they are providing all forms of recreation free, such as beautiful swimming pools, cricket pitches, night tennis courts and club-rooms in which they provide various kinds of amenities. If the men so desire, they can engage in study with the object of improving their positions. One company in a Goldfields town in my electorate contributed approximately £2,000 in hard cash towards the erection of a hospital. While Collie can be considered a particularly old venture, surely the Government in introducing legislation of this sort might have set out to bring before the companies their responsibilities, having regard to the new era upon which we are entering. It seems to me as though this measure, as rightly said by the member for Leederville, is one which will provide a very limited amount of capital to do a particularly big job, and the companies are to be allowed to evade entirely any financial responsibility whatever.

The Attorney General: No; they have to do that under your regulations, which you brought down last year.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Minister knows it has been the custom down the years for any charge such as this to be passed on to the consumer. That is the general business practice. As a matter of fact, as mentioned by the member for Leederville, in the agreement entered into between the companies that produce the coal and the Government itself, a special clause was provided to enable them to pass on this financial responsibility.

The Chief Secretary: Why was that?

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not want the Minister to imagine that I am as old as Pharaoh, but I believe that has been going on for years.

The Chief Secretary: Because the profits of the companies are strictly limited.

Mr. MARSHALL: Why does not the Minister, who is representing the Minister for Mines, say that in the Bill? It is his responsibility; he introduced the legislation. As a businessman, he knows that it is a practice adhered to by all. Why not do

that rather than leave it open to lead people to believe the companies will pay the 1d. per ton, when they will do nothing of the kind? The Railway Department consumes about 90 per cent. of the coal produced at Collie. I know that the percentage may be declining with the increase of industrial institutions throughout the State, but certainly until recently the Government was consuming about 90 per cent. of the output. It goes without argument that the taxpayers generally will pay this additional amount, and no-one will take exception to that. However, I do suggest to the Minister in charge of the Bill that before it passes this Chamber a provision should be embodied in it setting out that an amount equivalent to that mentioned in the Bill as it stands will be contributed each year from the profits of the company. If that were done, we might start on a basis that would seem to warrant some degree of success.

For my part, I do not think the amount will be £3,000 a year, but, on 7,000 tons, it will be more like £2,500 a year. That is a very small sum, particularly when one gives consideration to the fact that there are practically no amenities in Collie today. I tell the member for Collie that the civic authorities there for many years have not fully carried out their responsibilities. In most towns we look upon the provision of town halls and public libraries as being the responsibility of the civic fathers. Apart from that aspect there should be cultural institutions, places where young folk can assemble for relaxation, recreation and study. That should very rightly be the responsibility of the companies that work this particular industry for the purpose of deriving profits therefrom.

At one time huge profits were derived from the production of coal and other mining propositions. Companies today are becoming more humane and reasonable and are devoting much of their profits to those they have in their employ. Here we have a Bill introduced without any provision to force the companies concerned to contribute a little, if only 50 per cent., or an equal amount compared with that which will be raised under the measure. That would be little enough for this fund to commence with. It is a step in the right direction. The principle is one we can all endorse.

Only those of us who are familiar with mining appreciate the necessity for facilities and amenities of this kind.

I introduced a Bill last session when sitting in practically the same seat as that now occupied by the Minister representing the Minister for Mines. I pointed out then that in the winter months at Collie the miners rarely saw the sunshine. When the days became longer they probably had an opportunity to do so, but day in and day out they go through two-thirds of their daily toil and never see the sun. That is most injurious to their health, and there is always an immediate possibility of danger ever surrounding them. Nothing we can do for these men who produce so much wealth which is so urgently required, can be too much.

I am surprised that the Minister has not developed more modern ideas in his Bill. Instead of asking the taxpayers entirely to pay the whole contribution—I am not complaining about the amount myself—I think the companies should be called upon to pay a similar amount. The total amount would be little enough for the board to commence operations with. I notice the Bill will make it lawful that the board, with the sanction of the Minister, may perform certain functions which I think come within the category of civic functions. Having regard for the very limited funds that will be available, I suppose the board will be careful how it spends its annual income as a result of this measure.

I do not think we should commence providing these particular amenities which are rightly the prerogative of the city fathers, to the exclusion of giving effect to those other amenities which are so urgently needed for functions which are also the prerogative of the civic organisation. The Bill is very loosely drafted in that respect. The only redeeming feature in it is that the Minister has some say in the expenditure. I join with other members in agreeing wholeheartedly with the principle of the measure. The Bill is long overdue. The features enunciated by the member for Collie find an echo in my own ideas on the subject. I sincerely hope that whoever pays we will realise that something is being done and being done in the immediate future. I also think that we shall need to

get someone else to make some contribution so that the board may be able to function effectively and properly.

Having regard to that I wholeheartedly support the Bill, and hope that the Minister will see that a provision is inserted in it not only to safeguard the penny per ton and see that it is not passed on, but that if it is passed on a further penny per ton is set aside from the company's profits, or alternatively that if the penny is not passed on a like sum be paid from Consolidated Revenue, whichever alternative the Government chooses. I do not think £2,500 a year is sufficient to allow the board to operate speedily enough to give the people of Collie a feeling of security that the amenities they have looked for for so long are about to be within their grasp within the near future.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—North Perth—in reply) [5.52]: If this industry were nationalised and became one that was operated by the Government, of course, this royalty would go by the board. I point out, however, that that is right against the policy of the existing Government. There is little likelihood of that occurring. While coal is being produced under private ownership this royalty will under the legislation, be paid. I want to make it clear that in the long run the public pays the cost of an industry. It does not matter what the industry is, the general public pays. If one industry is specially favoured that favour is furnished at the expense of all the other people in the community. That is only sound economics and everyone knows it. We have not yet reached the millenium where the people can get something for nothing.

If some people are given special treatment the other people of the State have to pay for it, and they do so. I suggest that what is proposed to be done for the Collie miners and which will be done at the expense of the community, is a fair and reasonable thing in all the circumstances. It is the first industry that I know of in Western Australia whose output has been charged with a royalty to provide special privileges for the workers engaged in it. Those privileges are outside the ordinary workers' conditions of the industry which are established and laid down by the Arbitration Court.

Mr. May: This is an exceptional industry.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That may be so. It may be that opinions differ on that point. In this case out of a charge paid indirectly by the community special amenities for workers are to be provided that are outside the scope of the ordinary conditions of employment. If they were inside the scope of employment, the Government would not interfere because those conditions are under the control of the Arbitration Court, with a view to doing justice between one industry and another. This Bill establishes a new principle, that special amenities are to be provided for the workers at the expense of the community as a whole. In the long run the community has to pay for the benefits that anyone participating in the industry may get out of it.

Mr. May: The companies on the Goldfields pay.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They pay because the goldmining industry is one that has a world market.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Could not the money come out of the coal companies' profits?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Say there were no profits!

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You know there are.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This is one industry where price fixing has been carried on for many years, and where the reward each company is to receive has been fixed by arbitration.

Mr. Styants: Their profit is automatically assured.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Everything the companies pay is passed on.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Not even the minimum price is assured.

Mr. Styants: It is assured all right.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Not at all. There was some comment about sports grounds etc. Such facilities are usually provided to the community by the local authority. They are supplied at the expense of the local community as a whole. Rates are charged on local properties and funds are raised by that means. To such funds the mines are also contributing. Heavy rates are paid to provide amenities of that nature. This is something over and above the amenities that are ordinarily provided by the local authority. One has to do justice to

workers as a whole. Already the coalminers have special privileges over and above those enjoyed by employees in any other industry in Western Australia.

Mr. May: What are they?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is the pension scheme whereby the miners receive a reasonable pension at the age of 60. This is the only industry in Western Australia in which such pensions are paid. The miners also have special accident privileges which are provided by law.

Mr. May: What are they?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I refer to the coal miners' accident relief fund.

Mr. May: The miners pay it themselves.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Only a proportion of the amount.

Mr. May: The largest part.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think the money is raised on a fifty-fifty basis. The coalmining industry has been given something that the workers on the roads, the workers in the fields, and other workers do not get. No-one can say that the work those other men do is not very arduous, just as is work in a coalmine.

Mr. May: Not only arduous in a coalmine, but dangerous.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There are many other industries which may be called dangerous to the health of the employees. Some remarks were made about the appointment of the secretary. That is a matter entirely for the board. There are several directions in which the board may spend its money. They may spend it for the physical, cultural and social well-being of the coalminers, for education and recreation and such other conditions that the board may think desirable. So they can practically use their moneys in what they consider the best method to give the required advantage.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What remuneration will the board get?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That has yet to be prescribed.

Mr. May: Who will make the recommendations to the board?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I suggest the board is there to determine that. Recommendations or suggestions will be submitted by anyone interested in coalmining

For instance, the union will have that opportunity, or any welfare committee of the miners.

Mr. May: Do you not think there should be a committee for that purpose?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This will be the committee for that purpose.

Mr. May: This is a board.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is the same thing.

Mr. May: The board may meet in Perth.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Will the Chief Secretary please resume his seat? These discussions must take place in Committee. There is too much conversation on the second reading. The hon. member can obtain the information he wants at the Committee stage. The Minister may resume.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I feel that this is a great industrial advantage. The coalmining industry has been chosen to be the first to enjoy it, and I think that the measure will prove a great benefit to that industry.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Establishment of the Coal Miners' Welfare Fund by contributions by mine owners:

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am wondering whether the Minister will report progress until tomorrow, because there are amendments to be drafted to this clause which it has not been possible to put on the notice paper.

Progress reported.

BILL AGRICULTURAL AREAS, GREAT SOUTHERN TOWNS AND GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. V. Doney—Williams-Narrogin) [6.7] in moving the second reading said: Last

year when speaking to the comprehensive water supply Bills introduced by the then Minister for Works, the member for Northam, and said—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise called attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I said last year that these Bills dealt with the costliest and the most spectacular works project ever foreshadowed by legislation in this State. I cannot with the same justification thus describe the proposal now before the House, for the reason that by the excision from the scheme for the country to the east of the Great Southern railway, the water to be supplied is reduced by over 50 per cent.; and, as a consequence, so too will the cost be reduced by over 50 per cent. that cost, which was to have been £9,500,000, is now estimated at £4,500,000; but it will be agreed, I am sure, that even so it is still a scheme of immense importance to the areas immediately concerned and, through those areas, to the capital city and the State generally.

On the occasion referred to, I said we should not delude ourselves into thinking that a scheme designed to bring water to some 60,000 people and to stock running on 12,000,000 acres of land, and which must later in the ordinary way of progress stand up to the needs of double and maybe treble those numbers, would be without its share of trouble, misunderstanding and opposition; such being, very strange to say, the fate of most schemes designed to benefit the people as a whole. Trouble, misunderstanding and opposition did ensue for, during their passage through another place, and despite very careful staff work by the Minister at that time, those Bills undoubtedly struck heavy weather, and ultimately went on the rocks. But the wise decision at that juncture by the Minister to institute salvage proceedings has led, or rather is leading, if we may judge by appearances, to approximately one-half of the scheme being saved.

Thus it is that today the Government submits to Parliament the modified scheme which, except in one important detail, is as recommended by Mr. L. F. Loder, the very able chairman of the Commonwealth Department of Works and Housing. Out-

side the contents of the two Bills, the major variation is that not yet is there to hand from the Commonwealth Treasurer the written consent that is necessary; but I think we are justified—in fact I am sure we are justified—in believing we are on the brink of favourable finality. No hitch of any kind has occurred during the negotiations; and there is this, too, that the amended scheme as now set out is based on the recommendations of the Commonwealth committee, the only departure from those recommendations being the substitution of a 30-inch main from the Wellington dam to Narrogin in lieu of the smaller size first thought desirable, the object being to anticipate and provide for the future extensions we feel sure will ultimately be sought. That provision has been very widely applauded.

I think it needs to be clearly understood that following its close examination of all the circumstances of the case, the Commonwealth committee readily agreed to the land east of the Great Southern being excised. Nor do I recall—and I might say I had discussions quite frequently with members of that committee and several times with its chairman—I do not recall that they in any way questioned the wisdom of the farmers' decision having regard to conditions prevailing at the time and the economic considerations involved. As most members will recall, there was, both during the debates here and later at various meetings in the country, very much harsh criticism of the decision.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Before tea, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that the Commonwealth committee had not seriously questioned the wisdom of certain farmers in objecting to inclusion in the scheme. For a while I personally doubted the desirability of the move, but after all it is those most concerned that are most entitled to voice their views, and it is difficult to see how a majority of from 90 per cent. to 95 per cent. could be wrong. Members will agree that the view expressed by 95 per cent. of the farmers in an area is a strong argument. The fact that the negotiations with the Commonwealth Government are not quite complete may prompt members to ask why the introduction of these Bills should precede

the end of the negotiations. I have already intimated that the Government feels safe in anticipating the support of the Commonwealth. Quite apart from that it was considered desirable to launch and finalise the matter while the House is still in session so that nothing might stand in the way of the Director of Works and his engineers jumping into their harness when the appropriate moment arrives.

Had we not taken this action valuable time would have been lost and much economic wastage would have resulted, particularly along the Great Southern, in the Goldfields areas and in the North-Eastern wheat belt, though not in the prosperous group of towns running eastward towards Merredin. In those towns, as must be obvious, there is a continuous growth in both population and prosperity. That may be ascribed in part to the business acumen of the people of that area, or to the good quality of the soil, though I think members will agree that that growth and prosperity stand to the credit of the Goldfields water supply pipeline, which fortunately passes that way. As is the case with wheat and wool, so have the goldmines in and around Kalgoorlie been great money-spinners for this State, due almost entirely to the initiative and endurance of the pioneers, although it must be borne in mind that Kalgoorlie might still have been nothing but a heap of dust, had it not been for the now world-famous pipeline.

The people of Kalgoorlie are grateful for what the pipeline has done for them. An instance quite to the contrary of what applies to the pipeline country is found in a string of towns that are so placed that they regard the heavy rationing of water, dead gardens and the feelings of disgusted housewives—and often for long periods a complete absence of water—as being quite of the normal order of things. Thus may we describe the towns of the Great Southern at certain times, and thus also countless farms in that area. So also could we have described the towns from Cunderdin to Kalgoorlie, had that pipeline not been laid.

Mr. Kelly: And since it was laid, on occasions.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It could hardly be otherwise. No matter how near to perfection a water scheme may be, there will always arise occasions when the

supply falls short of requirements. Despite the beautiful climate and soil of the Great Southern, and the excellent transport facilities provided, the population of that area has advanced hardly at all in the last 20 years. That is remarkable, as there seems always to be in that area an air of prosperity. However, it has not resulted in a population increase of more than perhaps five per cent. during the period I have mentioned. I believe members know this to be due to the fact that the people there have lacked an ample and reliable supply of good water.

Mr. Reynolds: They want an irrigation scheme.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: An irrigation scheme is not what is required there. I think the hon. member knows that an irrigation scheme is not to be considered under the present Bill. Perhaps at this juncture I should mention the functions and activities of the Commonwealth investigating committee. At the request of the Government of this State the Commonwealth appointed that committee and with little delay its members visited Western Australia, traversed the whole of the areas concerned, and reported back to the Commonwealth Government. Before reporting back that committee asked the then Government of this State to divide the proposed scheme into three priority sections. In response to that the Government suggested, as of the first priority, the reticulation of the North-Eastern wheatbelt which, as members now know, is to be done from a scheme operating from the Mundaring Reservoir, while the supply to the Great Southern towns will be from the Wellington Dam.

Following the report of that committee the Prime Minister communicated with the State Government, requesting its views on a modified scheme based largely on the sections listed by the State Government as being of first priority. The negotiations have now progressed to a stage where this Government has indicated its agreement with the Prime Minister's proposal, and at his request a case for the modified scheme was completed by the State Government. In due course that was forwarded to the Prime Minister for submission to his Government. There has been considerable correspondence since that request was submitted, but the final reply of the Commonwealth Government has not yet been received. If the modified

scheme is acceptable to the Commonwealth, and if the Commonwealth will assist the State Government to a satisfactory degree in financing the scheme—as I confidently expect it will—a commencement can be made, without delay, on the actual work. The attitude of the Commonwealth Government during the negotiations has been such as to imply that the modified scheme will certainly be accepted and put into effect. It must be realised that the provision of steel plate for the water mains will present a considerable problem, as will piping for the reticulation system, which is an immense job, but once the scheme is commenced there can be no doubt that it will be carried through to the end.

The Great Southern towns and other areas involved will then be able to look forward for all time to an ample supply of pure water. It was considered wise to put members in possession of the brochure that most of them have read. Therein is set out an outline of the scheme intended to be put into effect. The cost of the several sections and their order of priority are clearly indicated. It is stated that the intention is to raise the Mundaring Weir, increasing its capacity from the present 4,600,000,000 gallons to 15,000,000,000 gallons. The State Government will finance every penny of the expenditure involved. It is intended also to raise the Wellington Dam, increasing its capacity from 7,500,000,000 gallons to 38,000,000,000 gallons, and again that work will be done entirely out of State funds. The enlargement of the Wellington Dam is not now as urgent as it was a year ago owing to the defection of large farming areas from the scheme. But the rapid industrialisation anticipated in the South-West and in the major Great Southern towns will, I think, without very much delay, absorb all the Wellington water that would otherwise have gone to the farms. If that does occur, and I think it will, and if it thereafter continues, the Wellington dam can be still further enlarged. Paragraph (c) of the brochure states—

to increase by stages the capacity of the pumping stations and mains on the Goldfields Water Supply system to provide for expansion of the gold mining industry, and to enable water to be reticulated throughout the North-Eastern agricultural areas in the scheme totalling approximately 4,000,000 acres;

(d) to construct a steel main with pumping stations from Wellington Dam over the Darling

Range to the Great Southern towns extending from Beverley to Katanning;

(e) to construct high level storages, pumping stations, and reticulation systems throughout the area.

Additional advice is given in these words—

It is proposed to provide a water supply service at the boundary of every holding. The service would be metered and the holding rated on an acreage basis. The towns within the area would be rated on a rental valuation basis and would be encouraged to instal sewerage systems and other amenities dependent on a reliable water supply. Unless the need to provide employment becomes paramount, it is proposed to spread completion of the scheme over a period of six years with an expenditure of approximately from £300,000 to £850,000 per annum. By this means benefits arising from the initial year's expenditure should be accruing as the scheme nears completion.

This must not be interpreted to mean that not until the end of six years will water be available because in quite a number of parts, namely, those nearest to the source, it would become available probably in two to two and a half years from the present date, assuming that we start without much further delay. It is well known to members representing the Goldfields, and for that matter to members representing the constituencies of Northam, York, Avon and Mt. Marshall, that the Mundaring reservoir cannot now meet all the calls made upon it. That fact, I believe, is not generally recognised. Requests are constantly being received from the areas concerned for new services or for the extension of existing services. The member for York will recall that a large number of applications for extensions in his electorate have had to be denied. Except for industrial purposes, where high priority items are involved, or in cases of special domestic urgency, probably all these applications are necessarily declined.

It is not an easy thing to decline requests for water, but the position is that until the Mundaring Weir is raised—and the job is a high priority one—it is not possible to be more generous than the department is at present. This is not because the reservoir has not the water to spare; it is because provision has to be made against the occurrence of two drought years in succession, such as we have experienced in the past, and the sinking of the Mundaring water to famine level as a consequence. I have no doubt that Goldfields members, as well as those representing the rural areas, are anxious for

the time when the taps can be turned on to release water through the comprehensive scheme. Nor will city dwellers, who from my observation seem to grow more rural-minded with the years, grudge the others some of the benefits they themselves enjoy.

I have noticed that the interests of the Railway Department are not often stressed when big water schemes are being debated in this House, but I think they should be. After all, there are few bigger beneficiaries than the railways, especially when, as constantly happens, the railway dams run dry and all the water that the system requires in the southern part of the State has to come from Collie. Something of that nature must have occurred to the investigating committee which, when reporting in June last, mentioned the railways in the course of its report upon the backward position of the Great Southern towns. I think it desirable at this stage to make a quotation from the report of the committee, as follows:—

Great Southern towns: The committee, during its visit to the area found a universal demand for additional water in practically all towns included in the itinerary, and this need has been verified by the field investigators. It appears that the towns on the Great Southern railway line, between Beverley and Katanning, are particularly in need of supplemented water supplies, while Narrogin, Wagin and Katanning in particular have a strong case in favour of the development of local industries.

The latter three towns are in a particularly stable and prosperous pastoral and mixed farming area, and have good rail communications. In the past, there is no doubt that inadequate water supplies have been a bar to the development of local industries.

At present the towns along the Great Southern Railway are not balanced units either economically or socially, and a considerable number of the younger generation is constantly migrating to the coastal towns to seek suitable employment. At all towns visited by the committee this matter was stressed by the town representatives. It has been ascertained that there has only been a slight increase in population in the towns along the Great Southern Railway between Katanning and Beverley over the past 20 years.

It would appear as though the investigating committee had been supplied with precisely the same information as has been in my possession for many years.

Almost without exception, water supply is a critical issue in every town included in the scheme, the standard of domestic amenities being lower in many cases than in adjacent agricultural areas. However, in towns at

present served from the goldfields supply, the high cost of water restricts its use for municipal and domestic purposes.

The Western Australian Government Railways has also expressed the view that the provision of a water supply scheme to the towns on the Great Southern Railway would be of great benefit to the Railway Department. From figures supplied by the department, it appears that, over recent years, the cost of hauling water for railway use only has averaged £3,700 per annum in the Southern portion of the scheme, and £800 per annum in the Northern section. The recurring shortage of water at some depots puts the department to expense and loss of locomotive power which would be obviated if the comprehensive scheme were carried out, whilst the necessity for hauling water for railway purposes and public use—

this is the point I am particularly pleased to see mentioned "for railway purposes and public use"—

frequently interferes with the movement of farm necessities and harvest produce.

The provision of an assured water supply to the towns along the Great Southern Railway between Beverley and Katanning would also materially benefit the Railway Department and settlers in reducing the haulage of water to the east by obviating the necessity of railing water the whole distance from Collie. In addition to reducing expenditure in the haulage of water, it would enable the railways to allot more locomotive power for ordinary transport purposes.

I have read this with the object of intimating to members that not the least of the beneficiaries under the scheme will be the Railway Department. I might also mention that the Government, when presenting the proposal to the Commonwealth Government, stressed that the following benefits would be derived from the scheme:—

There would be direct revenue from rates and other charges; there would be increased productivity as a consequence of the securing of a reliable water supply; there would obviously be an improved standard of living for rural people; there would be increased town population and the commencement of local industries; there would be stability of supply to the goldfields and to the agricultural areas at present served from the Kalgoorlie pipe line.

Here is a point I desire to make plain. I mention this in the interests of those members who have received undertakings from the Public Works Department that certain water supply requests will in due course be investigated, and if found to be deserving, will receive the treatment they merit. It is the desire of the Government to be responsible, not only for the scheme now under re-

view, but also for certain other water supplies to districts altogether outside of the present scheme. I am recalling that undertakings were given during the passage of the Water Supply Bills through the House last year, namely, to districts beyond the North-Eastern boundaries, these being especially mentioned and being generally in the electorate of the member for Mt. Marshall. Other areas similarly situated would also have their needs met.

These and any other similar undertakings will be honoured by the present Government. The member for Mt. Marshall can recall having conversations with me and possibly with my predecessor on matters to which I have been referring. So he may have the satisfaction now of knowing that if they do not happen to be included in the present boundaries, that does not mean that they will not be attended to as soon as possible. There will be many who feel some concern as to the water supply position in this State when there occurs that expansion of Western Australia's population which is inevitable. Many consider that it will be the limited availability of water which will be the restrictive factor. I do not entirely agree. It will, of course, have a bearing, but I think that the slow availability of money might be a bigger factor than the actual water shortage.

People who hold those views would argue thus: If it is so difficult now with a mere half million of people to get the water that we really need, how can we possibly cope with the needs of say 3,000,000 people? I think there will be nothing particularly difficult about that. In my mind there is no fear but that, hydraulically, we can with relative ease rise to the occasion. We have only to reflect that more rainfall can be impounded, that many more streams than are dammed can be dammed, that we are but on the fringe of the uses of bituminised surfaces, that by covered dams we can prevent a great deal of evaporation and that science has learned much, and must of course inevitably learn a great deal more in the matter of what might be termed the "desalting" of our rivers by the sealing of salty patches, by the quicker precipitation of the salt content in river water and by such other means as science is making available to us from day to day. The Premier will be interested when I say that

even today our engineers are investigating the feasibility of using such a river as the b.g Murray River, well known to be a river of excessive salt content. It is held to be feasible that in the course of time, when pressure is brought upon us to supply more and more water, the Murray River may be made use of. I do not know how many millions of gallons it may take to drink the Murray River dry—we cannot, very well know that—but I should say that even if it were not all quite fresh, there might be drinking water in the river for some 3,000,000 or 4,000,000 people. That is perhaps as much as I need say on this Bill. I commend it as a measure that is certainly deserving of the support of every member of the House, irrespective of party. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

BILL—INDUSTRY (ADVANCES).

Returned from the Council with an amendment.

BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT (LAND ACT APPLICATION) ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

BILL—COUNTRY AREAS WATER SUPPLY.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. V. Doney—Williams-Narrogin) [8.6] in moving the second reading said: I have examined this Bill pretty thoroughly and have come to the conclusion that it does not require very lengthy treatment. As in October, 1946, when the then Minister for Works was submitting similar measures, so today there will be two Bills for members to give their consideration to, the one I have just introduced, which deals purely with the constructional aspect of the scheme, and the one now before the House, which deals with the machinery as affecting rating and so forth. The purpose of the present Bill is to repeal the Goldfields

Water Supply Act and to provide for the several matters necessary to construct, maintain and administer, the supply of water to the Goldfields areas and to the Great Southern towns and agricultural areas.

It will be seen, therefore, that in its entirety this new measure will inherit from the Goldfields Water Supply Act the control of the greatest of all the great public works of the State, that is to say, the Goldfields pipeline which in the early days—and for that matter it does the same today—brought men and money to this State to such a degree as to be responsible to a greater extent, I suppose, than any other factor for laying the foundations of Western Australia. Today the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme supplies water to between 30 and 40 towns and nearly a million acres of settled farming land. That statement involving the Goldfields and the farming areas will serve to remind members that the Goldfields Water Supply has taken water not only to the goldmining areas, but it has also been a powerful factor in building up the wheat areas of this State.

There is but one substantial difference between the position outlined last year by the member for Northam and the position now to be considered under the present Bill. It is that large tracts of rich land which lie to the eastward of the Great Southern are not to be catered for, the property owners in that part of the State, as I have already made plain, having decided that they will remain outside of the service of the scheme. The question is frequently put as to whether the attitude of the farmers in that area is likely to be permanent. Experience has tended to show that it is not. While I believe in observing the majority wish in cases where that wish is expressed and where no law is contravened, I realise that at a later date the sons of the fathers may adopt an entirely contrary viewpoint. We have had, even during my relatively brief stay in this country, countless instances of this change of front in the Eastern States, particularly in Victoria and South Australia. Territorial alterations do not have any effect upon the bases on which rating is determined.

This means there will be no change in the references to country water areas, water reserves, rating zones or water boards, or appeals, powers of sale and so forth. These will all remain as under the existing Acts, whether those Acts be repealed or not. During the passage of the similar Bill through the House last year and following on a very lengthy debate, the House accepted an amendment to permit owners of ratable land to contract out of the provisions pertaining to rating. The sense of that amendment, which is now embodied in this measure, is that where not less than 66 per cent. of the owners in any country water area, such portion comprising not less than 20,000 acres and not being a townsite, shall not be supplied with water and shall not be ratable, provided they have previously, and at their own expense, provided themselves with sufficient water for all purposes; "all purposes" meaning, of course, domestic, stock and general purposes. That provision, of course, was not in the Government Bill of last year, but members will, I am sure, agree that it is a most equitable provision, and it will I hope be accepted without question by the House.

I have been asked whether standpipes will be erected again, that is, under the present Bill, in the manner provided for in last year's measure. The answer is: Yes. I am making mention of that matter because I was asked to. If so requested by a majority of the occupiers in any portion of a country water area in which the construction of a reticulated system is not complete, the Minister may, at his discretion, erect standpipes from which water may be taken to the home of any occupier in that locality; and, if requested to do so, the Minister may also approve of a supply by means of the standpipe method to any group of houses.

Another provision in the Bill is that not more than 3d. an acre may be charged against an occupier for seven years following the commencement of rating in the particular area concerned, in those cases where the Minister is satisfied that the water supply is adequate for all the purposes of the occupier; and that, as in the case I quoted a moment ago, would include domestic charges, and the charge in cases of this type will be 3d. per acre, or a total of £2, whichever happens to be the

greater. The comparable clause in the Bill submitted last year had the term of five years. The period of seven years was the result of an amendment. At this juncture I might inform members that the present maximum rate is 1s. per acre, but I believe it has never been charged. The highest charge at present is 6d., and that is the rate extensively used. Assuming this Bill is enacted, the highest charge under it will be 5d. per acre. There will be no rebate. At present there is a rebate, but it does no more than bring the rate of 6d. down to 5d.

As I understand the provisions of the two Bills—that is, this and its counterpart of 1946—I believe I have drawn attention to all those parts in the present measure that differ in any major way from what was contained in its predecessor. I consider that nothing more is required of me. As I see the position, it would serve no good purpose for me to make again explanations that were made so amply only last year. In any case—and I think the House will agree with me here—this is essentially a Committee Bill. There is this point, the two Bills are so closely interwoven that it is difficult to draw distinctions as to boundaries which I think in the debate stage might quite easily be overstepped. I might point out that last year considerable latitude was allowed to members; in fact to the extent that they were permitted to deal with the two Bills as if they were one. I take the opportunity to remind you, Sir, that the Speaker of that day agreed that it was difficult to separate them. There is the Bill, so far as I consider it necessary to explain it. I commend it to the House, and move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPERANNUATION AND FAMILY BENEFITS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth) [8.18] in moving the second reading said: Members will recall that the first superannuation Bill applicable to the Public Service in this State was that of

1871. It was not a contributory measure; members of the Public Service were not called upon to make any contribution towards the fund, but, when they reached the retiring age, or became invalids, they were entitled to a substantial pension under the terms of that Act. That measure did not apply to Public Servants who joined the service after 1905—I think, April of that year. Those who joined after that date were not provided for by superannuation, or in the case of invalidity, until Parliament passed the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act of 1938, which is the measure now sought to be amended. That Act has been in operation for nearly nine years, and the cost of living has increased substantially during that period—a fact of which I need not remind members—and it has become necessary for Governments to re-examine the scale of pensions under their superannuation Acts. Our parent Act was based on the Commonwealth superannuation Act, and the Commonwealth Government this year brought down a measure, and passed it into law, under which the benefits have been increased by 25 per cent. as some offset to the increase in the cost of living and, by the same measure, the units of pension were increased from 16 to 26. I will deal with that aspect later.

As the Commonwealth had to face the situation of rising costs of living in relation to superannuation, pensions and invalidity, so it has become essential that this Government should face the same responsibility. The Bill has two main objects, both of which are in accordance with the Commonwealth amending legislation passed earlier this year. The amendments in the Bill, in relation to the amount of superannuation benefits, are based on the Commonwealth legislation. That is to say, they propose an increase of 25 per cent. in the rates, and that the Government shall guarantee a minimum return on the superannuation fund of $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. Those are the two main objectives of the Commonwealth Act of this year, and they are the two main objectives of this Bill. In dealing with the former part—that is, the cost of living adjustment—it needs no demonstration to show that the cost of living in the last nine years has risen to a greater degree than 25 per cent., which is the additional amount provided in this measure.

The Bill, following the Commonwealth legislation, proposes to increase each unit of pension by 25 per cent. from the existing amount of £26 per unit to £32 10s. The same increase will take place in the widow's unit of pension, which is now £13 and which will be increased by 25 per cent. No increase is proposed in the unit of pension that may be payable to a child. At the Premiers' Conference held this year, the Premiers put before the Prime Minister their responsibilities, as State Governments, in connection with pension payments which they had to make under their State schemes, and the increase in the cost of living which had affected the benefits from those schemes. The idea was rather that something in the way of direct contribution towards the cost of pension rates should be made by the Commonwealth, but the Prime Minister was not prepared to entertain a proposal on those lines, possibly his opinion being that he was not feeling under any obligation to assist the standard States which had large incomes and which might therefore be expected to take care, themselves, of any additional responsibility.

This Government feels, however, that there is a duty to the employees in the Public Service, for the reasons I have mentioned, and that it should accept the same responsibility as the Commonwealth has accepted to the officers of the Commonwealth service, with this exception, that whereas the Commonwealth Government agreed to raise the permissible number of units of pension from 16 to 26, this Bill proposes that the units of pension may be raised from 12, the existing number, to 20. When the parent Act was introduced, the officers of the Public Service and employees in public departments were enabled to take up so many units of pension, dependent upon the amount of salary they were drawing from time to time. As their salaries increased, so they became eligible to take out more units of pension, which would give a higher pension. But the maximum number of units which could be taken up under the parent Act was 12, which would give a maximum pension of £312 a year. No matter how high an officer might be in the State service, and even though he might be drawing an income of £1,200 or £1,300 a year, he could not contribute for a retire-

ment pension of more than £312 per annum. annum.

As the basic wage today is in the vicinity of £290 a year, it can be seen that the maximum pension under the existing law would be little more than the basic wage. No officer could draw more than that, even though he might have held a high and responsible office which had been met by a substantial salary. It is intended by the Bill that, in addition to the increase in the value of pensions, both existing and future ones, of 25 per cent., an officer will be entitled, when he reaches the qualifying salary, to take up units of pension large enough to give him an income up to a maximum of £650 a year. That is not so high as in the new Commonwealth legislation, which enables officers in the Commonwealth service, when they obtain the higher salaries, to qualify for a pension of £845 a year as against the maximum pension in this State of £650 a year. When the parent Act was passed, the contribution was based upon a return to the superannuation fund, which is now approximately £1,600,000, from investments of 4 per cent. per annum.

As during the war the policy of low interest rates was adopted, a return of 4 per cent could not be obtained, and in 1945 the Government then in power in this State brought down an amendment to the Act by which the amount of contribution by members of the Public Service was increased. That was made necessary in order to maintain the fund in a position of actuarial soundness in view of the less favourable experience in interest rates than had been estimated when the principal Act was passed. The weighted return of the superannuation fund at present is just a small trifle over $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It is proposed by the Bill, following on the Commonwealth provision of this year, that the State shall guarantee a return from the fund, of $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. That means that at present the guaranteeing of up to $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. to the superannuation fund, and the amount involved by the State guarantee today would be £4,000 a year, on the present figures.

The Bill provides that if under the quinquennial valuation which has to be made under the Act, it is found that there should

be a surplus, then the contribution by the State to guarantee $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent., will be suspended until the amount that would have been paid equals the amount of the surplus shown on the quinquennial valuation. Thus it does not necessarily mean that although this guarantee to provide $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. is given by the State, it will be called upon to contribute the full amount of the difference between the return to the superannuation fund and the guaranteed amount of the $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is actuarially necessary that $3\frac{3}{4}$ per. cent. should be earned by the fund.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is not actuarially essential that it should be $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent., but that percentage represents, I understand, a safe return. In the case of our superannuation fund, as with other similar funds, our experience with regard to invalidity is a most important factor in the results over a certain period. If our invalidity experience remains favourable, I understand we can meet all commitments by a return less than $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent.; but if our invalidity experience should not be so favourable, then the payment of $3\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. will be necessary.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It was for that reason that we amended the Act in 1945, particularly to meet the position of females.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is so. The hon. member who was Premier and Treasurer at the time, introduced the amending Bill to which I referred for increasing the contributions, to ensure that the fund would be maintained in a safe position. The cost of the proposals is not inconsiderable, but the extra 25 per cent. of pensions, present and future, will represent now, and for some time to come, a payment of £60,000 a year. The liability under the guarantee may be something like £4,000 a year. It is proposed that the cost of the extra pensions shall be borne by the State and not be subject to further calls upon the contributors to the fund. That will mean that the State will be accepting liability for three-fifths in place of the existing one-half.

At the present time on account of the initiation of the fund when many officers were too old to contribute on the basis for

age, and of the circumstances in which they were permitted to contribute as if they were 30 years of age, the contributions by the State to the existing pensions are more like 90 per cent. than the estimated basis of 50 per cent. That state of affairs must continue for a good many years until the time comes when the pensioners who did not contribute the amount they would have paid according to age and were employed without pension rights between 1905 and 1938 are eliminated and the burden that the State undertook on their behalf shall have been finally discharged.

In addition to the matters to which I have referred, the opportunity is being taken to deal with a number of amendments to the Superannuation Act which experience has shown to be desirable. A number of these have been suggested by the Joint Superannuation Committee on which is represented all the various bodies, unions and associations of the State employees who are interested in the superannuation fund. All the amendments embodied in the Bill were referred to that joint committee. Some of them were suggested by the committee and, as to the others, they have raised no objection. A number of the amendments have been taken from those recently passed by the Commonwealth Government in connection with its scheme.

There are certain innovations in the Bill which it is thought will assist public servants and at the same time will not impose any undue burden on the Treasury. In certain other superannuation schemes in Australia, provision is made for a provident or savings account and there is a similar provision included in the Bill. It is a means by which those in the Public Service may, quite apart from superannuation, contribute fortnightly payments into the account which is a sort of savings fund and on those payments those concerned will receive a rate of interest determined by the Superannuation Board, which will control it under the Act. This particular provision for a provident account is regarded as specially suitable for women employees who do not intend to remain in the service until they reach the retiring age and who would prefer to make fortnightly contributions, on which they will receive interest, and thereby build up a fund that they can withdraw

when they leave the service, generally for the purpose of getting married.

Under the Bill, if it becomes an Act, all those who contribute to the provident fund will in many cases where they wish, be able in time to use their contributions and savings in the provident fund in order to pay for their entry into the superannuation fund, and thereby qualify for pension rights or invalidity rights in the ordinary way. Another provision in the Bill, which is to be found in other pension schemes, is for the creation of reserve units of pension account. This will enable contributions to be made by officers in anticipation of their reaching the qualifying age. If, for example, an officer is 23 or 24 years of age and is contributing for the prescribed number of units applicable to his age and has some spare money, he may pay it fortnightly into the reserve units of pension account. He may contribute the amount necessary to enable him to take up one or more additional units and, when he reaches the qualifying age for those further units, the amount he has in the reserve account is credited as a transfer to enable him to take up the additional units for which he has qualified by age and salary. He will be thereby enabled to obtain the benefits of the contributions at an earlier age and therefore at a lower figure. The position would be the same with the fund as if he had reached the qualifying income three or four years before and had made those contributions for those additional units from that time onwards.

In other words, the officer who has money to spare, can pay into the fund in advance to become entitled to contribute for the additional units, and by doing so, he can obtain them at a lower figure because he commenced contributing at a lower age. There are a number of other amendments, some of a machinery character to which I shall make brief reference. If members will take the opportunity to consult the Bill, which to some extent involves a rather technical branch of our statute law, I shall, when it is dealt with in Committee, be glad to go into details regarding those particular clauses.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You have not the report of the superannuation committee on the Bill?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, the Bill has been dealt with by the committee in detail and I am indebted to the chairman of the Superannuation Board for advice on the subject-matter of the Bill.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Would you have any objection to my consulting him?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Certainly not; I shall be delighted if the hon. member will do so. The Bill provides in the same way as the Commonwealth legislation for a period of 12 months being allowed contributors who are eligible to increase their units beyond the existing maximum of 12. But if the contributor delays his election to take the additional units beyond 12 months, the general provisions of the Act apply including the necessity in some instances of furnishing a medical certificate as to the condition of his health. The Act provides for a contributor in certain specified conditions to change his elected retiring age to an earlier age. For example, a man who has elected to retire at 65 may change his mind and desire to retire at 60 or 61. The Act makes no provision for the converse. That is, a man may elect to retire at 60 or 61 but wants to retire at a later age—at 63, 64 or 65. The Bill provides that he may be allowed to elect to retire at the later age, care being taken to see that the contributions are made to protect the fund.

In certain cases it may happen, and has happened, that a pensioner without a wife, but with children, dies; and although his children become entitled to certain pension rights until they are 16, when they reach that age the amount of pension which is attributable to the contributions of the parent may not have expired. The unexpired portion of the pension that was attributable to the father's contributions may be applied for the benefit of the children—their education and advancement—even though they have passed 16 years of age. Sixteen is the maximum age for which pension payments are made to children of a deceased contributor. During the war, while officers were on military service, the State generously and very properly in a number of cases paid their contributions to the superannuation fund—that is the contributions they would have made if they had stayed at home and remained in the State service.

When a public servant resigns from the service, he becomes entitled to a certain refund

of contributions. Although it has been the practice in the case of soldier officers of the service who returned to the service and then resigned not to pay them by way of a refund the amount of the contributions the State had made during their absence on military service, there has been no express provision in the Act to that effect; and the Bill prescribes that if a man who had been on active service and had his contributions paid by the State should resign, he cannot get by way of a refund to himself the amount the State paid on his behalf. It is only fair and reasonable, that he should not profit by the protection the State gave to him from its own funds during the period he was on active service.

A number of other small amendments have been made which experience has shown to be desirable. Some of these amendments have been operating as a matter of practice, but there has been no specific direction contained about them in the existing law. These include the following provisions: 'The payment of contributions to the superannuation fund by officers who have been drawing invalid pensions, but have returned to work and have thereby re-entered the position of income earning. It is thought in that case that they should resume their contributions because they can at a later stage, on invalidity or retirement, call for payment by the State of pensions in the ordinary way. It is provided that a female invalid pensioner who has been restored to health and for that reason whose pension is cancelled and who then marries shall not then be able to come back on the fund and draw a pension after her marriage.

It is provided that a contributor or officer cannot qualify for an invalid pension until he has been in the service for three years. If before three years have expired he becomes an invalid and is no longer able to work, he receives a refund of his contributions. But it is thought that if after so short a service as less than three years he becomes an invalid, it is not reasonable that the rest of the Public Service, by their contributions, together with the State, should be called upon to meet a pension to him for invalidity for possibly a great many years. In the case of a female officer, when she marries she is deemed to have resigned from the service, or that is actually what takes place. But there has never been any clear indication as to the exact date on which she is deemed to have

resigned and it is now provided that the date of the marriage shall be deemed to be the date of resignation.

Further, a pension is not to be payable to a widow who has married a contributor or a pensioner after he retired or attained the maximum age for retirement. The Act provides for the wife and children of a contributor, but it is thought that if the contributor, not having a dependent wife, elects to marry after he has retired or reached the age of retirement it is rather too much to expect the fund to carry a liability for a pension for the new wife who has married only after the officer has reached the retiring age.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Especially if it was a very young wife.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. It is further provided that if an officer joins or works for the State service but is already a contributor to another superannuation fund towards which the Crown of another State or country is making contributions; or if he is a pensioner receiving a benefit from any such fund, he cannot or will not be allowed to become a contributor to our State fund. In other words, we cannot support from our fund, or should not, a man who is already covered by another pension arrangement to which another State or the Commonwealth is making contributions. It is provided that when a person is employed or re-employed by the Crown after he has entered into the receipt of a pension under the State scheme, the State's share of his pension is cancelled while he remains in the employment of the Crown. That is to say, so much of his pension as is attributable to the contributions of the State to the superannuation fund shall be not paid during such period as he is again employed by and receiving salary from the State.

In the case of those who became entitled to a pension under the State scheme and then became employed or re-employed by the State at a salary, it is provided by the existing law that they will be allowed to continue to draw their pension for the first 28 days of re-employment in each 12 months of re-employment. The amendment provides that if they remain in the service of the State on re-employment for more than 12 months, they are allowed to receive the pension for the first 28 days of re-employment, but they do not

receive their pension again during employment. At the present time under the Act they receive their pension for 28 days at the beginning of each year of re-employment. It is thought that if they are again employed by the State for more than a year, if they receive their pension for the first 28 days, it should be cancelled after that date during the period that they are employed by and are receiving a salary from the State. When the Act was consolidated and re-printed it embodied the original schedules of rates and contributions. That was a matter of great convenience because contributors and officers in the service could look at the Act and find in the schedules the contributions payable and the benefits they would be entitled to receive.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Are re-prints available?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not know whether they are.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Otherwise there are three volumes of statutes to search for this measure.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. What I was going to say was that when the revised contributions were decided by the Act of 1945 the new contributions were embodied in a proclamation by the Governor in accordance with the Act and were published in leaflet form. It is proposed by this Bill that the contributions as proclaimed under the Act of 1945 and now in leaflet form shall be re-printed as schedules to the Act in future. So when the Act with these amendments becomes law, it will contain the schedules of contributions and benefits in the same way as when the legislation was first passed. Those are the terms of the Bill. There are the two main items to which I referred and a number of administrative provisions which the superannuation board thinks should be included in this legislation in the light of experience.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The 1871 pensioners do not come into this.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is proposed that they shall be the subject of a complementary Bill.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They are getting a long way back now.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, and they are about on the decline. They have reached their peak and will be declining.

It is thought that in view of the cost of living there should be some recognition of the position of those pensioners and that will be the subject of a complementary Bill. Broadly the position is that it is a truism to say that the quality of our State Public Service is of the utmost importance to the progress of Western Australia; and it has been a matter of some concern to this Government and previous Governments that a number of our most able and experienced men have been attracted from the service of this State particularly to the service of the Commonwealth, because the conditions of employment are more favourable and in particular that there is a greater security for them in the case of old age or invalidity and greater protection for their families.

It is considered that if we are to retain and attract to our Public Service men who are material to the progress of the State, we need to give them conditions comparable to those offered by the Commonwealth and other States. So far those States have not introduced legislation on the lines of this Bill, but I understand they have such legislation under consideration. We have, as has often been mentioned in this House, many officers of great capacity and devotion to duty in our State, and I do not think we are fairly considering their claims if we limit the maximum pension to a sum that is practically the basic wage, and especially if we fail to make some provision to meet the changing circumstances of the last few years, that have led to a depreciation in the value of money and a substantial increase in the cost of living. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. F. J. S. Wise, debate adjourned.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th November.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [9.2]: This is a simple Bill, the purpose of which is to correct anomalies relating to road boards and the members of certain societies. One road board found that it had as members a majority who were also mem-

bers of the R.S.L. and, when discussing R.S.L. matters, if those members had all left there would not have been a quorum. The next anomaly has regard to an agricultural society. Another point is where a habitation has got into a disgraceful state of disrepair and the road board can apply to a stipendiary magistrate, who may order the renovation of the building. I have no objection to the Bill, and support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Local Government in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Second Schedule:

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I move an amendment—

That in proposed new Regulation 32A the words "and the provisions of regulation twenty-three subregulations (2), (3), (4) and (5) of these regulations, the appropriate alterations and adaptations being made, shall apply" be struck out.

On a closer examination of the Second Schedule I decided that this would be an undesirable method of procedure as it would involve orders for sale being conducted by local authorities.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I move an amendment—

That the words "within a reasonable time to be fixed by the order. If the order is not obeyed the Board may enter upon the building and land and may cause the order to be executed and may authorise all such acts and things to be done as may be necessary for that purpose and the Board may recover from the owner, in any court of competent jurisdiction, all costs and expenses incurred," be inserted in lieu of the words struck out.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not like the amendment, as it may affect people of small means who built wooden structures in an area concerned before it was proclaimed a brick area. Such persons might be made to suffer under the measure if a road board, hostile to the existence of such structures in its area, decided to take aggressive action. I will not be satisfied unless the Minister can give an assurance that such people will

have a right of appeal, or that some adequate protection is provided for individuals who are unable to comply with the standards laid down. I regard the amendment with a great deal of suspicion. People of means are seldom interfered with, and if they are, no great injury is imposed, but others less fortunate and more deserving are not receiving the consideration to which they are entitled.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I cannot agree with the member for Murchison. Local authorities have been given a variety of powers under the Second Schedule, many of which are a great deal wider and harsher than is the provision in the Bill. Very rarely, however, do we hear of a local authority exercising such power in any but a most sympathetic way. I refer the hon. member to Regulation 23 of the Second Schedule, which has been in operation for a long time. Under that regulation, the local authority was empowered to take before two justices any person with regard to the demolition of premises, though we have provided that in future such cases shall be heard by a magistrate. In the last seven or eight months I believe there has been no case of action having been taken under that provision, though there are unquestionably owners of premises against whom the power could have been exercised.

I am unable to give the hon. member any assurance that there will be no case in which a board will not take action under the provision of the Bill. If I believed that, it would not be worth while including the provision, but it is most unlikely that any local authority would deliberately inflict hardship. These matters in future will come before a magistrate and the local authority will have to prove its case. Nor will the other party be deprived of the opportunity to put forward his case. As one finds in the matter of eviction orders, magistrates are inclined to exercise their powers reasonably and give time, so in these matters the same consideration will be extended.

This provision has not been inserted expressly to meet the wishes of the Melville Road Board. I instanced that board because the suggestion had emanated from it a considerable time ago and I understood

that a provision of this sort had been promised by my predecessor. When the discussion arose recently as to the issue of a proclamation under Section 208 (3) of the Act to allow timber-framed dwellings to be erected in a brick area, the board suggested that its consideration would be more favourable if the promises made by the previous Minister were carried into effect. The circumstances are that, when given an assurance that the Bill would be introduced, the board did not agree to the proclamation. [Nor is it the only place where such a proclamation has been asked, for.

I am not pressing for the inclusion of the clause. If it is not passed, the difficulty of having timber-framed dwellings built in some of the brick areas will be much greater than it is at present. If this power is given to local authorities and resident magistrates, we need have no fear that it will be exercised in an unreasonable manner any more than the stringent powers already provided are exercised by local authorities. The Committee must decide to accept the clause or reject it, because there is no half-way house. If it be rejected, the prospect of favourable consideration being given to the erection of timber-framed dwellings in brick areas would be very remote.

MR. MARSHALL: This clause will not apply solely to new buildings.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I do not say that it will.

MR. MARSHALL: If it applied only to new premises, there would be less objection.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: But new buildings will become old in time.

MR. MARSHALL: My fear is that there are buildings owned by people not in a position to maintain them at a standard that could be set by the local authority and that a great hardship might be imposed upon them.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

MR. ACKLAND (Irwin-Moore) [9.26] in moving the second reading said: Although this is a very small Bill, it is of considerable importance, more particularly to co-operative companies throughout the State. It seeks to amend Section 147 of the Companies Act by deleting Subsection (5) which reads—

Any person being a shareholder or director of a company to which he, his wife or child, is indebted in a sum equal to the nominal value of his shares held by him in such company or the amount subscribed on such shares, whichever is lower, shall not act as a director either in person or by his agent, servant, or employee, or of or directly or indirectly take part in or be concerned in the management of a company or any of its business, and any person so acting shall be guilty of misdemeanour within the Criminal Code and be liable to imprisonment with hard labour for one year.

The subsection, if put into operation, would inflict hardship upon many companies. It is quite evident that the framers were anxious to prevent directors from abusing any authority they might have, but in practice it will have the effect of preventing many of those directors from acting at all. I am quite convinced that its implementation would destroy the numerous trading co-operatives throughout the State. It should be the aim of Parliament to ensure that they are kept in operation so that their activities might in some measure help to cut down the cost of production to producers who may be shareholders and also the cost of goods to the large number of people served by the companies. If we omit Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. with shareholders in excess of 7,000, a company which by its initiative this year alone has saved the wheatgrowers of the State 1¼ millions in the jute goods they would have had to purchase, great hardship would be inflicted on some 20,000 shareholders of co-operative trading companies throughout the State.

We could also exclude such companies as Westralian Farmers Co-operative Ltd., South-West Dairy Farmers, the Great Southern Butter Factory, the Producers' Markets Co-operative Ltd. and the Wheat Pool of Western Australia, which has a paid

up capital of £291,000, reserves of £344,204 and an excess of reserves over capital of £52,000. These co-operative companies are giving a great service to the State. Shareholders do not look for dividends from capital investments in the companies; they do business with the companies, which give bonuses on the trading done with their shareholders and the general public. This is borne out by "Survey No. 2 of the Co-operative Movement in Western Australia," which was recently published by Hon. T. H. Bath. Here it is stated that these companies paid dividends on a capital of £13,456 representing 2.1 per cent, and a further amount of £71,356 was paid to the shareholders by way of dividend.

I would like to mention those companies which would be even more affected by the Bill. I refer to country trading co-operative societies, which extend from Perenjori in the north to Denmark in the south. Irrespective of 33 agency co-operatives, we have 45 of such trading co-operative societies in the State. These have a capital of £231,233 and approximately 20,000 shareholders who have a capital investment in the companies of less than £12 per shareholder. One must take into consideration that persons can become shareholders in these societies by the payment of £1. There is the wonderful co-operative society at Collie, which is the brightest flower in the co-operative movement in Western Australia. That society has extended its operations even so far as to find housing for the people of Collie.

In the management of the 78 businesses which I have mentioned, there is an average of six directors for each company. It will be seen that there are approximately 460 shareholder-directors controlling companies such as these throughout the length and breadth of the State. Members will agree with me that they must be the cream of the shareholders in the various companies. They have been appointed because they have the goodwill of the shareholders, because of their integrity and because they are imbued with self-help and public service in their various districts. In those societies, I am sure that not one of the 460 shareholders could avoid infringing this section of the Act in their normal trading. It is well known that people in the country do not pay

cash over the counter. They trade on the basis of monthly accounts.

It would be impossible for the average shareholder, with a shareholding of between £11 and £12, to remain within that margin up to the end of the month, especially when one takes into consideration that his wife or his children, or those connected with him, might inadvertently raise his account over the amount. No person in such circumstances would be prepared to act on the directorate of such a company. There is no need for me to labour the Bill further. It must commend itself to members of the House, who are as well aware as I am that the cost of living and production is constantly rising, and these companies are rendering a real service throughout the length and breadth of the State by acting as a brake on private trading concerns in the matter of prices of commodities in country areas. I conclude by saying that over a period of years the Act may be infringed in isolated instances, but the law is there to protect the shareholders and the general public. I am convinced that there may be some isolated instances but the Act as it stands would inflict considerable hardship upon a great number of people concerned. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. Nulsen, debate adjourned.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Council's Amendments.

Schedule of ten amendments made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 3 (2), page 2.—Add a new paragraph after paragraph (d) to stand as paragraph (e) as follows:—(e) wheat which the board refuses to accept on the grounds of inferior quality.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The new paragraph is necessary in order to overcome the position under Clause 22, under which a grower would be unable to dispose of any wheat of inferior quality. It will then be possible for the board to organise an unofficial pool for this wheat and arrange for its sale direct to a produce

merchant for the grower, or if thought desirable allow the grower to dispose of the wheat himself. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 6, page 3.—Definition of "public notice."—Insert the word "daily" before the word "newspaper" in line 20.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This is to correct an inadvertent omission. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 13.—Delete Subclause (5) on page 8.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The deletion of this subclause is necessary as it clashes with Clause 12 (c). I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 4. Insert a heading above Clause 19, page 10, as follows:—

Division 2—General Powers of Board.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This Title was inadvertently omitted when the Bill was printed. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 5. Clause 21, page 12.—Add after the word "prevail" in line 5 the words "but this proviso shall be read subject to the provisions of paragraph (a) of Subsection (2) of section forty-one hereof."

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The board can grant licenses containing conditions differing from those imposed or conferred upon the licensee by such other Act. This proviso must, however, be made subject to the special provision relating to the Bulk Handling Act contained in paragraph (a) of Subsection (2) of Section 41. It is necessary, therefore, that these words should be added to the proviso. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed, the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 6. Clause 23 (3), page 13.—Delete the words "trusts, contracts" in line 36.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Each grower, and the persons or institutions to whom he may have mortgaged or charged his wheat, are to receive according to their respective rights and interests, a proper proportionate share of the net proceeds after allowing for dockages, deductions and railage. It is necessary to amend this sub-clause by striking out the words "trusts, contracts." As to trusts, only the trustee, as legal owner, and not the beneficiaries claiming under the trust instrument, should be entitled to participate in the distribution of the net wheat proceeds. All contracts relating to wheat will be nullified by Section 32, and therefore no person claiming under a contract should be entitled to participate in the distribution. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 7. Clause 23 (3), page 14.—Delete the word "from" where appearing secondly in line 2 and substitute the word "at."

No. 8. Clause 23 (3), page 14.—Delete the word "railed" in line 3 and substitute the word "received."

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move—

That the amendments be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendments agreed to.

No. 9. Clause 26, page 14.—Add to sub-clause (1) a proviso as follows:—Provided that the board may at its discretion issue more than one certificate to the same grower where his deliveries are spread.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This proviso is necessary for the following reason:—Under this subsection the grower is to receive a certificate as to the quality and quantity of wheat delivered by him. Although it is desired to limit the number of certificates to be delivered to one grower, more than one certificate will have to be issued in certain cases of spread delivery. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 10. Clause 30.—Insert the proviso at the end of Subclause (2) so as to make it apply only to paragraph (e).

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This proviso applies to the whole clause. It is essential that it apply only to paragraph (e). I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1947-48.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 20th November; Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Vote—Departmental, £183,370 (partly considered):

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [9.50]: I was very interested in the Premier's speech when introducing the Loan Estimates. I regret very much that for the most part during his remarks his own benches were nearly empty.

The Premier: The members were listening to the Royal wedding.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I do not care what they were listening to; their place was here when the Premier was introducing the most important Estimates this Chamber now has to consider. I refused to draw attention to the state of the Committee, but did interject and say that the position was distinctly unfair because the Loan Estimates and spendings now have a greater significance in the progress of the State than have the General Revenue Estimates. In the case of the Revenue Estimates, much of the activities and interest is circumscribed by the fact that a certain prescribed amount comes to us by way of uniform taxation, and the rest deals with the income of the Government from State instrumentalities, probate, land revenues and the like. The preparation of the Loan programme and Loan spendings by the Government not only influences the progress and development of the State but also has a serious impact on Government activities directly through the revenue funds.

As I will instance a little later, the annual expenditure from revenue to which this State is committed, because of past loan expenditure, represents a very sub-

stantial part of the State's annual revenue. In the early part of his speech the Premier said that the difficulty today is not one of money, which is available, but of labour and materials, which are short. He said there is an accumulation of urgent public works and an acute shortage of labour, causing a shortage of material. Throughout his speech he made excuses of that sort.

The Premier: They were genuine excuses.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: They were not considered genuine a few months ago when, much more than today, they were in evidence.

The Premier: We are catching up.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Premier is not catching up but is drifting along, deluded by the thought that in drifting he will some day meet a current that will take him towards progress. He referred to strikes and all kinds of shortages. If he would like some interesting reading, in the light of the excuses he made, I would refer him to the speech made by the present Minister for Education, when, as Leader of the Opposition, he replied last year to the introduction of the Loan Estimates. In making his pre-election speech on the Loan Estimates he expressed, very succinctly and deliberately, his thoughts on the excuses that he alleged were being made when it was said that although money was available labour and materials were short, and some works might therefore be deferred.

I listened to the Premier the other evening, in a much curtailed loan programme—in which there is nothing new at all—make repeated suggestions that his difficulties in carrying out public works were due to the shortage of labour and materials. I will deal with those points shortly, when analysing some of the activities of the Government. It must be appreciated that for a long time in Western Australia, and Australia generally, because of war-caused circumstances materials have been short, but in Western Australia there has never been an accumulation of supplies. There could not be, as very few of the supplies necessary for the undertaking of works from loan moneys are based on materials manufactured in Western Australia, and it is unlikely that the firms and interests engaged in handling materials imported from the other States

would build up, from their own moneys, accumulated reserves that would enable both Governmental and private enterprise to pursue a programme of building undertakings, and constructional works of all kinds, with an ample supply of materials.

Until we get some heavy industries established in Western Australia—the previous Government assisted to establish and to prepare for the future of many of them—it is unlikely that there will be any prospect of an accumulation of the materials so badly needed for constructional purposes in this State. There is a very interesting comparison between the years of plenty of money and the years when there was a shortage of money. In the depression years—for at least two of which the National Government had to carry the worry and responsibility—there was found to be a tremendous labour surplus, which persisted right through until the outbreak of war. I might add that I have never criticised the National Government of that period for the disabilities it suffered. At that time thousands of men were dependent upon Government employment, and in 1933 the position was such as to cause the setting up, by a Labour Government, of a special department to cope not merely with the unemployment problem but with the capacity of governmental works to give the unemployed a prospect of at least part-time employment.

So desperate was the position then, with the restricted amount of money available to the Government—and with the large force of men available—that it was very often faced with the responsibility of turning down important works that would require large quantities of material, but would give very few man-hours of employment. During the years from 1933 to almost the outbreak of war the Government was faced with the responsibility of turning down works that had little absorptive capacity where labour was concerned. It is all very well to criticise what was done during those years, without taking into account the difficulties met by the Government in relating the money available to the number of men for whose employment it was responsible. Many important works were either completely turned down or deferred because the Government was unable to provide sufficient employment on such works.

At times Labour Governments had over 17,000 men for whom to provide employment, as the result of circumstances in the depression years. Private enterprise could not absorb those men and the Government had to provide them with work. It was indeed an important day when industry could gradually absorb more men in private employment, despite the necessity for public works of great magnitude. That was an important period in the history of Western Australia, as men were available but the Government was placed in a dilemma because materials could not be purchased with the money then at its disposal, and men who were not normally the responsibility of the Government had to be placed in employment. There is one thing that is worthy of note in connection with their employment. It was a Labour Government that did away with the obnoxious circumstances of employing men constantly over long periods at very low rates of wages. That system was quickly put aside and the men were paid the basic wage for the periods they were at work and their stand-down time was made as easy as possible, while their re-employment was on improved rates.

The Premier: That was done when money became more plentiful.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It was the general policy of the Labour Government.

The Premier: But it was made possible, when money became more plentiful.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It was the deliberate policy of the Government, and it was carried out. Despite that difficulty, members will recollect some of the works started by the National Government during that troublous period. There was the diversion of the Harvey River. There was the re-conditioning of the Agricultural Bank holdings simply to provide employment. Those works were undertaken not because it was ever considered that they could be regarded as a sound investment for the money expended, but simply because they provided opportunities for the employment of large numbers of men. Many of these works arose out of the depression and would not have been undertaken had the employable capacity with regard to men been at a ratio other than it was.

Despite the difficulties of the time, it was shortly after the Labour Government took

office that such an important work as the Canning Dam was started. It was a very extensive work that absorbed a great proportion of the labour available in large numbers, comprising both skilled and unskilled men. On the other hand, important works that had to be turned down because of the materials position included water supply and sewerage extensions. It was at that period that plans were laid for the construction of the earth dam known as Stirling Dam. I understand from a brochure that was sent to me by the Harvey Road Board that this undertaking was officially opened in recent days. I also understand that no member of the Government that initiated the proposal and laid the plans for the work was given an invitation to that function, but received a brochure from the Harvey Road Board.

I think it is very important in our political life to appreciate that all Governments lay down plans for the future but at times, because of a change in Administration, do not see brought to finality or successful fruition many important works they initiate. This most important work is claimed by the Harvey Road Board to be a "monument to the engineering ability of the engineers of the Public Works Department and a memorial to the wisdom of the Government that sanctioned its construction." Those words appear in the booklet prepared by the Harvey Road Board, and I repeat that I think it might have been something for the consideration, even if it were only as a gesture, of those concerned with regard to the Government that initiated the work, and particularly to the ex-Minister for Works, who might have received an invitation from the Government to be present.

The Premier: But the Government did not—

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I think it very important that, whether reference was made at the opening of the Stirling Dam or not—

The Premier: But the Government did not arrange the function.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I do not know whether that is so, but the Premier in opening the dam on which hundreds of thousands of pounds of loan funds were spent by his predecessors in office and for which the previous Government was highly commended by the Harvey Road Board, which

Government had speeded up the constructional work particularly after the cessation of the war, must have appreciated the position. I am merely drawing attention to the fact when I say there is an ethical aspect of politics in this State, notice of which might be taken by the present Government.

The Premier: I said at Harvey that the works were started and pushed ahead by the then Minister for Works, the member for Northam.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: And I doubt if even that statement was correct, historically speaking, but I will leave it to the member for Northam to say just who was the originator of the project.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We will have another Select Committee on that!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We have reached the position, quite different from that apparent during the depression years, when there is plenty of money but no men and no materials. During the course of his speech the Premier said—

It is most desirable that we confine the programme to urgent projects because in carrying out any works the employment of men must be at the expense of other industries.

There is nothing new in that position. In fact, the situation today is immeasurably better than it was at any previous period during the past eight years. There is no denying that. There is nothing fresh in the discovery that although there is plenty of money available, and despite the criticism by the Minister for Education last year about the difficulties that obtained, the Government is finding that serious difficulties exist because of the manpower and materials position. When we traverse the history of Loan spending during the war and appreciate that every activity had some war association or war bias, it will be recognised by fair-minded people that the difficulties of the depression years and the period up to 1939 cannot be overstated and should be aligned to show the true position as compared with the situation existing today.

The facts are that during this year many glib lies have been told on the point as to what the progress has been since the war years. Again, we will remember the statement of the Deputy Premier in connection with 'the worn-out excuse of war-time limitations.' Now there is the position

facing the Government in which it is carrying on of its own volition and on its own initiative something that it claimed it could do, but which so far it has failed to measure up to altogether. We are now expected to believe that, with all our manpower returned to us, with no unemployment at all, with a special Minister supposed to be looking after materials and supplies—

The Premier: And is looking after them.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: —and with the shipping now available to us, progress cannot be made. Some very queer excuses have been made regarding the inability at this stage to make progress. Just as the present Government took up that sword of misrepresentation and traded on the ignorance of the public to gain support, insofar as its lack of achievement is concerned, it will to a large extent perish by that same sword. This State has a total public debt of £99,000,000.

The Premier: You are not blaming us for that, are you?

Hon. A. H. Panton: You have done your share towards it.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am not blaming the Premier for anything for which he cannot be fairly blamed. I shall have something to say later on the position into which he as Treasurer of the State is drifting, by the prospect of his being forced, unless he is very careful, to borrow £1,000,000 if the Grants Commission says that our claim under Section 6 of the Taxation Reimbursement Act or for payment of the deficit cannot be entertained. If the Treasurer gets into that position, he will find that there is no alternative to borrowing under very stringent conditions the requisite sum to meet his deficit.

To return to my point regarding the present debt of £99,000,000, the debt charge is £4.3m. and the loss on loan investments is £2.3m. annually. If we refer to Return No. 10 for 1946-47 in the financial statement published in "Hansard," there will be found a classification of our loan assets. The classification shows that only 2¾ millions of our £99,000,000 invested from loan funds is fully reproductive, 77¾ millions is partially reproductive and nearly 7 millions totally unproductive. It is to the partially productive investments that I

would earnestly draw the Premier's attention. In the £78,000,000, many sections of Government enterprises and Government departments are involved that need careful examination. For example, in that partially productive portion of our loan investments, we have the railways representing 27 millions, water supplies, sewerage and drainage 17¾ millions, Rural and Industries Bank 4½ millions and electricity undertaking approximately 2½ millions. Members will find an item of well over £1,000,000 invested from loan on our forestation policy. These investments of loan moneys are the crux of the situation as regards the public finances of the State.

When the Premier was introducing his Estimates, I asked by interjection whether he thought there was sufficient return from the loan investments in irrigation and drainage, and he replied that there was a gain in railway freights and taxation. It has long been my view that any attempt to assess what are popularly regarded as indirect benefits represents a very poor endeavour to analyse the returns from loan investment. There is no return of profit through the Railway Department from districts that have quadrupled or more their returns in production as a result of large spendings of Government money. In addition, there is no direct benefit from taxation, no matter what may be the income of the persons concerned and of their becoming opulent because of Government spending benefiting production in those districts.

If we take the centre of the Premier's own district, the Drakesbrook Road District, an analysis of the figures of increased production as a result of Government spendings shows that there has been only a slight increase in population, an increase of not more than 500 or 600 people, whereas the increase in wealth produced in that area and the increase in individual wealth has been tremendous. I am afraid that to give the figures would weary members and serve no purpose other than to prove the illustration that a district of the nature of Murray-Wellington as a whole is enjoying a return from Government spendings and is not paying a commensurate return for the undertakings carried out in that district.

The Premier: What do you suggest should be done?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I suggest that the charges should be raised. An increase in the direct charges, which should be made on industry and on people who are enjoying a disproportionate return at the expense of other taxpayers, is something the Government should seriously investigate. I suggest that an increase in direct charges is something that must be investigated. The Premier probably knows that had we been returned to power, the charges and rates in that district would have been increased. We had intended to appoint competent engineers to investigate particularly where drainage and irrigation projects of great magnitude have been installed, what increment in profit and production should be accepted by the community. Members opposite, when sitting on this side of the Chamber, for years had much to say about the Government using such instrumentalities as the Fremantle Harbour Trust, the abattoirs and the water supplies as taxing machines. I put this to the Premier now that he is on the Government side, "Exactly in what position does he find himself?" I am certain that he has had many uncomfortable moments in reviewing the fixed charges that at present obtain in connection with those instrumentalities that are heavily represented in our loan expenditure.

Since this session of Parliament has nearly finished, I am wondering whether the Premier is so worried, or whether he is worried at all, about the drift in his finances that he is contemplating the increasing of direct charges, which constitute one of the very few sources left to him, to endeavour to rectify his budgetary position. As to such concerns as the railways, the Fremantle Harbour, and metropolitan and rural water supplies, I am wondering whether the Premier intends to take Parliament into his confidence or whether, as soon as Parliament adjourns, he will strike new rates that will take effect many months before the House again meets. The Premier is faced with this position—and I think I am a judge of his budgetary position—that his estimated deficit on revenue account of £680,000 will be nearly doubled. Will the Premier deny that? With half the year gone his deficit is well over £800,000.

The Attorney General: I think that has been the experience the last year or two.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Premier, in introducing his Revenue Estimates, made the statement that he felt confident his anticipations of Revenue expenditure were very near the mark. He had made provision in his Revenue Estimates for increases in the basic wage, for a lump sum of £300,000 in the Treasury Miscellaneous item to cover the 40-hour week when it is instituted, and yet we find, for many reasons which I will disclose, a constant drift in Government finance which will exceed £1,000,000 before the 30th June next, with the prospect of the Grants Commission saying that it now has no authority in this connection. The point I am making should be very clear. The alternative open to the Premier is to make sure that the opportunity for adjusting the things that were cavilled at in the past as taxing machines is availed of. I am wondering just how far he has got.

Soon after Parliament rises, there will be alterations in those charges and Parliament will not have an opportunity to scrutinise them for another eight or nine months. It will be a very interesting development, as the resources available to the Premier are extremely limited indeed. With a budget quite distinct from the Loan Estimates—the largest ever introduced in this State—we shall be faced with the position, unless the Grants Commission can be cajoled into giving it and the Commonwealth into approving of it, of having to borrow £1,000,000, thus increasing our Loan indebtedness by £1,000,000, to meet the deficit.

What does that mean? It means that with the present arrangement under the Financial Agreement, the first year will cost the Premier £40,000 of his budget, the second year another £40,000 plus £45,000 for sinking fund, and so over a period of 16 years until the Loan, plus indebtedness for interest, is redeemed. I have no objection whatever, and I make this point perfectly clear, to a Government with initiative, with determination, increasing its Loan expenditure in spendings which will give a return to the community, spendings which will not necessarily be fully productive.

The Premier: They are very limited, as you know.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The people should be made to pay where they are productive; but where the opportunity exists for the

development of this State I will support every move that the Premier makes to spend Loan moneys as an investment for the future heritage of the State. The only attitude to adopt in regard to Loan spendings is to make sure that ultimately they will mean the carrying of a greater population in greater comfort and with greater prospects than exist now. There is no other attitude, in my view, that Western Australia can adopt. If it be works of such magnitude as the Ord River proposal, or any other of a like character, wherever it may be situated, the attitude of Australians, who include Western Australians, should be that wherever the resources of the nation are, they should be developed by the wealth of the nation, wherever that wealth exists.

The Premier: Would you expect a direct return from such a work as that?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It would take a long time. That gets me to the point I was about to develop, that where such resources are beyond the capacity of the State to develop, it should be a national matter to assist this State. This State's citizens should not, as citizens, carry the whole burden. It is a national responsibility. That is the attitude I have always stressed, as the Premier knows, not only in this Chamber but also in the halls of the Commonwealth whenever I had the opportunity. Australia cannot deny its responsibility to develop Western Australia if such development should be beyond the capacity of our existing resources, or even beyond our future prospects. There is nothing new in the Loan Estimates, as I am sure the member for Albany found to his great dismay. The only item to be considered for Albany is a dredge which has been on the Loan Estimates year after year and which at present cannot be made available.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He must be very disappointed.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes. I can quite understand his disappointment. The Loan Estimates, on careful examination, comparing them with schedules from year to year, I repeat show nothing new at all. I cannot bring myself seriously to criticise the Government from that angle. Although it had big ideas to begin with, in which it was to engage itself in order to cause a wave of prosperity unprecedented—those were the words used—the Government must

feel very uncomfortable now about its avowed limitation within its own sphere. I am disturbed, too, not because of that point but because the development of many desirable works has ceased by the decree of the Government in connection with Loan spendings. It does seem very pointed indeed that a school in my district, which I will mention at every opportunity until at last a start is apparent, until at least there is some suggestion of the bona fides of the Government to carry out not only a work that was approved and ordered, but not commenced—

The Premier: You will get a school at Carnarvon which is commensurate with the needs of the district.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I hope the Government will show it has not such smallness of mind as to make drastic alterations in districts the needs of which it does not understand. The Premier does not understand the district. He has not been north of Northampton in his life.

The Premier: I know the district.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It is therefore no use his suggesting that the needs of the district are known to him. I feel very incensed indeed on this point. It is something very petty.

The Premier: It is not.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It is something very small. It is something of which the Government should feel wholeheartedly ashamed.

The Premier: There is nothing personal about it and you know that.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The answer to that remark would be activity on the part of the Government in connection with the school.

The Honorary Minister: How many children attend the school?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Honorary Minister had better keep out of this.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: This is a private brawl.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Honorary Minister should know that this school was not to be developed for one district alone but for an area as large as the State of Queensland, and children were to come from distant districts into one which offered to them a better opportunity. I hope that notable

deletions from the loan programme are likely to be restored not only in part but in full. For many years, as members know, I have been very interested in matters affecting public finance. In this connection, looking in retrospect to the development associated with loan borrowings and spendings, there was at the time of the Financial Agreement a development which was a landmark, if not a milestone, in the history of Australian finance. Although the Loan Council was not the result of the Financial Agreement, it can be said to be a direct outcome of it. In 1936 the member for Boulder, when Premier, made some particularly pertinent remarks upon the changed circumstances in State finance because of the advent of the Loan Council. In commenting on the loan programme approved, on his return from the Eastern States, he said—

It is not my present intention to comment on the merits or demerits of the Financial Agreement. It has frequently been contended by Commonwealth authorities that its acceptance by the States implied their approval of its provisions. It would be just as logical to argue, where a man is given a choice of being killed by poison or by a bullet, after he has elected which method he prefers, that he has agreed to being put to death. The per capita payments were being definitely terminated. Financial compensations of some sort was indispensable to the States in the discharge of their responsibilities. As I have previously heard the matter effectively expressed, there can be no equal negotiation between the man who is starving, and the man who holds all the food supplies. The States were in the position, therefore, of being forced by necessity to accept what they could get.

At that time the Prime Minister of Australia was the gentleman who is now Lord Melbourne.

Mr. Marshall: Wouldn't it slay you?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It was Stanley Bruce, Lord Melbourne.

The Premier: Viscount Bruce.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am sorry. I would not cast any slur in that direction.

The Attorney General: Lord Melbourne was 100 years before.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I thought he elected to take that title.

The Minister for Railways: Viscount Bruce of Melbourne.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The State Premiers at the time were Mr. McCormack of Queensland, Mr. Bevan of New South Wales, Mr.

Hogar of Victoria, Mr. Lyons of Tasmania, and Mr. Butler of South Australia. Those Premiers, because of the seriousness of the financial position of Australia, formulated what came to be known as the Financial Agreement, under which the States relinquished their right to receive per capita payments and the Commonwealth was to arrange in lieu certain other so-called benefits for the States in connection with their finance. At that time financial circumstances within the Commonwealth were such that the Loan Council was developed as an opportunity for the States to submit to such council all their projected loan works and receive at the hands of the assembled Treasurers and the Prime Minister approval for certain undertakings.

The Commonwealth was to have two votes and a casting vote, so that at any stage, provided the Commonwealth could get two States to side with it, a motion could be carried objecting to any programme which any State submitted. That is the unfortunate position that developed and that prevails today, but something worse than that has developed. Because of the difficulties of carrying out works, no matter how great the magnitude or how great the necessity, during wartime there developed the need for referring to the Co-ordinator General of Works every loan programme envisaged for any State. Although neither Sir Harry Brown nor Mr. Hoy have interfered, so far as I know, with any suggested loan programme of a State, there has always been at the back of Commonwealth Governments the opportunity of reference to the Commonwealth Bank Board—which at times has been present—to say that requests for loan raisings are beyond the capacity of the bank.

Mr. Marshall: Rubbish, as to "beyond its capacity!"

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That unfortunately is the position and that unfortunately has from time to time been the attitude of the directors of the Commonwealth Bank. Today we find ourselves in the position of States being subjected not only to the scrutiny of their developmental undertakings, which are possible of being serviced by themselves, but of a scrutiny being made of their intentions and of the Loan Council having the opportunity to say whether this or that work can be approved. I am wondering what the Premier's experience was at his Loan Council meeting in that connection. I am sure he

was seriously disappointed that it rested with other people to say that if the combined States' programme appeared to be too high, those programmes should be curtailed.

In tracing the history of the activities of the Loan Council we find that it, like our other drift in connection with State finance, must lead us along the road to unification at a very fast rate unless loan spendings in the State are carefully examined after preparation and a State can rest assured that in no way is it being obliged to be dependent for anything the other States provide as a national responsibility. I repeat that Eastern Australia owes to Western Australia tremendous sums because of their early development and because of the impact of our protectionist policy. I would not criticise that policy, but it does give to Eastern Australia a financial responsibility to the western State in its later stage of development. If we are to have the opportunity in connection with loan raisings to return to what was normality before the Financial Agreement, we can only reach that stage if the State can see an opportunity to finance its own loan requirements from its own resources.

While there is an excess in their dependence upon some Commonwealth pool, then for so long will the Loan Council be forced to exercise some supervision over the requirements of the States. I hope, although there is no power or authority under the Financial Agreement for the Loan Council to examine or reject, that we can quickly reach the stage where a State Government can in no way be humiliated either by the attitude of other States and the Commonwealth or in regard to the warranted expenditure from the loan funds to carry out the development of the State. We in Western Australia, no matter how we look into the future, must, I think, anticipate very large spendings from loan moneys because Nature has not so richly endowed us as she has other parts of Australia. We have in the approximately $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of this State which represents the South-West Land Division the greatest opportunity for expansion and advancement of anywhere in Australia.

There is no question that the equable climate, assured rainfall and the experience in what is described officially as the South-West Land Division of Western Australia give us something which is not to be compared with the best prospects offering for development in any other part of the Com-

monwealth. That being so, and because of our sparse population and our far-flung areas, and because the burden may be too heavy for the individual, I submit there is a responsibility on the Government to continue to force the other States and the Commonwealth to the point of acceptance of their responsibility to develop, in a national way, the latent resources of Western Australia, if their development is beyond our capacity. So we must always have a clear conception of where our loan money is to be expended. I hope, in the interests of the member for Albany, for example, that the Government will continue with the project for the development of that harbour, and that it will be successful, firstly, in obtaining the dredge so vitally needed to commence the necessary reclamation work.

The Premier: And there is the development of the hinterland as well.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I hope so, because there is no prospect in Australia which excels the prospect of that natural port so far as carrying capacity of people and production are concerned, and I do not speak without my book in that connection. There is great necessity for the Premier to have a stock-taking of loan investments in this State that could give him an increased return. I will, with no threat, make the promise to him that if no inquiry is made during the recess of Parliament in the ensuing months into the capacity of loan undertakings to pay more to the Government revenue, I will move—if it is my privilege still to be in this seat—for a committee of inquiry to undertake intensive investigations into the possibility in Western Australia of a greater legitimate return, commensurate with what is given to the public in districts which are heavily serviced from loan spendings.

So I give to the Premier that thought, and assure him that if it is not acted upon I will ask the House to agree next session to the appointment of a committee of inquiry to investigate thoroughly all the prospects in that connection. I repeat that I have no narrow view in regard to loan spendings. In spite of my criticism of the remarks of the Premier in introducing these Loan Estimates I earnestly trust that the difficulties which he did not see many months ago, but which he now appreciates, will fall away. I hope, in the interests of his loan programme and of Western Australia that the problems of

labour and materials will be eased. I support the Vote.

Progress reported.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1947-48.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 28th November, Mr. Hill in the Chair.

Vote—Agriculture, £197,070 (partly considered):

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [9.48]: There are one or two matters to which I wish to refer in the Estimates of the Minister for Agriculture. I am wondering whether the Minister has noticed the opportunities that are being afforded in parts of British Africa for the development of essential vegetable oils for which the Empire is languishing. There are certain works which have been issued in this connection—I have a paper I would be pleased to loan to the hon. gentleman—which give details of the plan of the Imperial Government for the development of the peanut industry, for example, in Nigeria. Peanuts are considered by many people as being of little consequence—something which provides a confection for children and something from which oil is sometimes expressed. But the annual world trade in peanuts exceeds 2,000,000 tons. The British Government, because of the dreadful position it is in, as far as essential oils are concerned, is spending £1,500,000 this year in the development of the peanut industry in Africa.

The Minister for Works: Is that not in Kenya Colony?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes, in part.

The Minister for Agriculture: Peanut oil played an important part during the war.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That is so. This is an entirely new programme. As the one who introduced into this State peanuts for commercial cultivation, and having seen their development at places such as Port George and Forrest River and other parts of the North-West, as a commercial undertaking, I would suggest to the Premier—not merely as something to meet the emergency with which Great Britain is faced, but as a contribution to the problem of populating our tropical rainfall areas—an early stocktaking of the potential existing in the North, in order to give this State a quick step-up in produc-

tion. The member for Kimberley will remember large quantities of peanuts coming by lugger to Broome for shipment from northern areas.

The Minister for Works: To what areas do you refer?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am speaking of the Kimberleys, particularly at Port George and Ferrest River and on the Fitzroy. The climatic and geographical conditions do not approximate those of the Atherton Tableland in North Queensland, where in 1921 there were 5,000 acres of peanuts. That was a quick development of an area that had never previously grown the product. In view of the perilous position in which Great Britain finds herself, in the matter of essential oils, I ask the Premier to take up this matter with his appropriate officers and investigate thoroughly the opportunities that may be waiting in this State.

The Premier: We have kept in close touch with the Agent General on these proposals of the British Government. I had a communication from him today.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am glad to hear that. I have here the proposals put up by the Home Office and the plan developed in regard to the African undertaking. I would be pleased to be of service in this matter, as I know the areas and locations, and where the prospects exist.

The Premier: We will be glad to accept your advice.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I ask the Premier to take the opportunity of investigating what seems to be a possibility of helping to meet Great Britain's need, while developing a new undertaking in this State.

The Minister for Agriculture. I will give the hon. member that assurance.

MR. WILD (Swan) [10.55]: I desire to bring to the notice of the Committee the difficult situation into which poultry farmers have been forced through circumstances outside their control. The industry has grown out of all knowledge in the last few years. Ten or 12 years ago when we spoke of poultry we thought of a few fowls kept in the backyard, sufficient for one's own needs. In recent years the industry has grown enormously, and now constitutes one of this State's largest primary industries, apart from wheat and wool. I have been able to

obtain statistics only as far back as 1941. In that year Western Australia produced 4,545,000 dozen eggs. By 1943 production had risen to 4,873,000 dozen eggs, and by 1946-47 to 7,102,000 dozen. It will be seen that in the past six years the egg industry has increased by over 50 per cent. Poultry, which includes chickens under three months, cockerels, hens and pullets, has also increased in the same period from 928,000 to 1,176,000. It is now estimated that approximately 10,000 people are engaged in the industry, and there are over 3,000 producers sending eggs to the board, besides many permit holders who sell eggs privately.

The poultry farmer goes through a troublous period before his farm becomes a paying proposition. If he does not possess an incubator he buys day-old chicks from one of the suburban hatcheries, and he cannot be certain that they will not arrive bringing with them one of the most dreaded diseases in the industry, pullorum. It is a disease that the Department of Agriculture has been trying to stamp out, but it is difficult to control. A poultry farmer may bring back from an adjacent farm some fowl dirt on his boots, depositing it in his own fowl yard. In that way he introduces the disease to his own farm. At present poultry farmers can apply to the department to have their birds tested, and I understand that the disease has been reduced to something under five per cent. in all flocks tested.

It still needs only one infected bird and one carrier to cause the disease to go right through a hatchery. In the first four or five days after buying chicks it is common to lose from 50 per cent. to 75 per cent. of them. In addition the poultry farmer has to put up with another disease in his birds, called coccidiosis. There are round worm, rickets and many minor diseases that are not quite so prevalent, and from which the losses are anything up to 12½ per cent. Even when the chickens have passed the early stage and have reached three or four weeks of age they have still to be culled out, and there are few poultry farmers today who raise more than 50 per cent. of their chickens to the stage where they become egg producers.

Poultry farmers in addition have great difficulty in procuring the right feed. Bran, pollard and meat meal are the staple feeds. Unfortunately a farmer

today is on a quota for all these items. Against that he is able to buy prepared mashies, but this is causing a lot of discontent in the poultry industry. Quite recently I applied for a quota of bran and pollard for my birds and I am able to get, as are all other poultry producers, only 50 per cent. of my requirements. Yet one can get unlimited quantities of mixed mashies at a greatly enhanced price. Not long ago the Poultry Farmers' Association made representations to the Department of Agriculture with a view to prosecuting some of the millers selling these prepared mashies that were not up to the required standard. The prosecutions were not proceeded with, and, having perused the file, I have no doubt that the action of the department in refusing to carry on with these prosecutions was quite correct. At the same time, it did not in any way help the poultry farmer who has to continue to buy prepared mashies at higher prices than bran, pollard and meal.

Since the cessation of hostilities, the allocation of bran and pollard has been taken over by the Millowners' Association, and, in company with other poultry farmers, I say quite emphatically that the apportioning of bran and pollard is not as satisfactory as it was prior to the lifting of the regulation. Quite a number of poultry farmers are blaming the milk producers, saying that they are feeding their cows on bran, whereas they preferred to use chaff when it was cheaper. The fact remains that there seems to be a very unequal distribution of bran and pollard and, as a result, the poultry farmer is unable, through not getting the correct food, to obtain the maximum results from his flock.

Egg prices have not risen in keeping with the added price of bran, pollard, mashies, and all the many things that have to be purchased by the industry. One particular anomaly from which the industry suffers is the price fixed by the Prices Commission for eggs during the scarce period of May, June and July. Last year the highest price given during those three months was 2s. 3d. per dozen less charges, while during the glut period it was as low as 1s. 9d. per dozen. In May, June and July, very few producers get a return equal to more than 10 per cent. of the total number of hens in the flock, and therefore they are unable to take advantage of the high price. I suggest that the Minister should make representations to

the Commonwealth Government for transmission to the Prices Commissioner to secure a higher price for eggs during those three difficult months. I feel it is only teaching good, honest citizens to go on to the black market, as one is able to get 3s. a dozen anywhere and at any time; yet the primary producer is forced during that period to accept 2s. 3d. per dozen.

Under the Egg Board, formed in February, 1946, producers have to pay certain charges for the marketing of eggs, and whilst I realise that orderly marketing is necessary, I consider that the amount deducted by the board is out of all proportion to the return to the producer. Members are probably unaware that every dozen eggs sent to the board costs the farmer 3 1/8 pence. Those charges are made up of 1 3/8 pence for handling, three farthings for selling, 1d. for pool and when he receives his cheque once a fortnight 2d. is deducted for the stamp used for sending the cheque. I consider that these matters should be taken up by the Minister. The Prices Commission should be approached with a view to having a better price paid to the producer during the three months when eggs are in short supply. I also suggest that the Minister should take up with the Millowners' Association the possibility of obtaining a more equitable distribution of bran and pollard in order that the poultry farmer may produce more eggs in keeping with the low price prevailing.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.9 p.m.