

**THE PRESIDENT:** I very much appreciate the kind words that have been uttered by the Chief Secretary regarding myself and on behalf of the officers of the House and "Hansard" I wish to return thanks. All that I can say is that we have done our best and that in what we have done we have been assisted by members themselves. I believe that members are very proud of the reputation of this House. They are jealous of the way the business should be conducted and they have been of very great assistance to the officers of the House and to myself. I think I ought also to add my thanks for the very great help that has been rendered to me by the Chairman of Committees, Mr. Cornell, and also by the three deputy Chairmen of Committees.

As a team I feel that we have worked well and that our sole purpose has been to do what is best in the furtherance of the interests of Western Australia and of the Commonwealth. I hope that before the end of this year the outlook will be much brighter. Certainly the position has greatly improved during the last 12 months; and it is the fervent hope of us all that it will be still more improved in the near future, and that once more the world will be blessed with peace.

**HON. J. CORNELL** (South): On behalf of my deputies and myself, I concur in all that the Chief Secretary and yourself, Mr. President, have said in regard to the officers. I also wish to thank the Chief Secretary on their behalf and my behalf for the courtesy extended to us.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY:** I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 8.12 a.m. (Saturday).*

## Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 15th December, 1944.

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The **SPEAKER** took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

### QUESTION—GAOL.

*As to Site near Mental Hospital.*

Hon. N. KEENAN asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is he aware that the Town Planning Commissioner reported recently to the Workers' Homes Board that an area of land known as the Mt. Claremont Estate, situated in the West Ward of the Nedlands Road Board was suitable for the erection of workers' homes as it was adjacent to the site selected for the erection of a gaol?

(2) Will he table such report on the Table of the House?

(3) Is he aware that the site alleged by the Town Planning Commissioner to have been selected as the site of a new gaol is about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the Perth Town Hall?

(4) If the Town Planning Commissioner's report is not correct as to the site of the new gaol will he give the House an assur-

ance that no land suitable for workers' homes or other residential use will be selected or acquired for the erection of a gaol?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied:

(1) No site has yet been selected for a new gaol, but the Town Planning Commissioner has recommended the site referred to as being suitable for such.

(2) The report has not yet received the consideration of the Government.

(3) The area referred to is about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Perth Town Hall.

(4) Any site selected will have regard for all appropriate circumstances.

### **BILL—REDEMPTION OF ANNUITIES ACT AMENDMENT.**

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 7th December.

**THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE [3.3]:**

I support the Bill. Whilst it is not considered that this amendment will attain all of the objects its mover expects, it is quite a desirable provision as far as it goes. The principal Act is designed to give annuitants and estates charged with an annuity the right to get rid of the charge by payment of a lump sum. For instance, if a testator provides in his will that an annual sum of £50 shall be paid out of his estate to a particular beneficiary, such a bequest becomes a charge on the estate and can prove to be very embarrassing. No matter how small an annuity may be, the other beneficiaries cannot deal with the estate without taking the annuity into consideration and going to a lot of trouble concerning it. The Act gives a party the right to go to the court and ask that an annuitant's interest in the estate be redeemed by payment of a lump sum.

The court calculates the sum of money that it considers would be necessary to bring in an annual interest payment equivalent to the amount prescribed by the testator. The court then orders that the estate should pay the assessed lump sum to the trustees to be administered on behalf of the annuitant in accordance with the terms of the will. The trustees invest the lump sum and pay the interest to the annuitant. The Act is deficient in that it does not specifically provide that any order of the court may be altered, reviewed or amended from time to time. If the solicitors for the parties ask in the first

instance for liberty to apply the court will review, alter or amend its original order. Sometimes this request is not made, and then the interested parties cannot get before the court again. The Bill will ensure that there will be no doubt in future that the court will have power to review the original order, even if the right of liberty to apply is not asked for.

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 *passed*.

### **BILL—MOSMAN PARK RATES VALIDATION.**

#### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS [3.8]** in moving the second reading said: This Bill was introduced in the Legislative Council and approved by a majority of the members there. The aim of the measure is to validate the rates struck by the Mosman Park Road Board for the years ended the 30th June, 1942, 1943 and 1944. The Bill is required to rectify certain errors of procedure that occurred in the carrying out of valuations. If these errors of procedure are not rectified, it would still be possible for the rates imposed on the basis of the valuation to be challenged in the court, with the result that the financial affairs of the board might be thrown into chaos. About the middle of this year, certain actions of the board were challenged in the Supreme Court, the result of the case being that the challenger succeeded in respect of the year 1940-41.

This Bill makes no attempt to deal with that situation and certainly makes no attempt to interfere in any way with the decision of the Supreme Court in that matter. It deals, as I have already pointed out, with the years 1941 to 1944, inclusive. The challenge against the board decided in the Supreme Court was against the method of valuations followed for the year 1940. The valuations for that year were carried out only in respect of a part of the total road board district and they were considerably increased over the previous valuations. The challenge in the court was successful be-

cause the board had not carried out a complete valuation of the whole road board district. Had that been done, the board's position could not have been successfully challenged. For the three years following 1940, the board used the same valuations as for the year 1940, but the system of valuations was completed. The rates, however, were reduced to ensure that the board would not estimate to collect more rates than were required to meet the estimated and planned expenditure.

Because the valuations were not completely carried out in the year of challenge, it is thought that it might still be possible legally for any ratepayer at this late stage successfully to challenge the valuations and thus create difficulty and chaos in the board's affairs. For the last completed year the board did not impose a general rate for the south ward. It was not imposed for that year because the revenue to the credit of the ward was more than sufficient to meet expenditure requirements. Even had the minimum rate applicable been imposed, the total amount of money collected in any one year would only have been £62; therefore, the board did not impose a rate for the south ward in that year. As it did not do so, a legal difficulty has arisen and a technical mistake has occurred in the administration of the board. The great majority of ratepayers have not taken advantage of these mistakes in procedure and of the technical defects in administration. Of a total of 1,350 ratepayers concerned, all except 150 have paid the rates in full in each of the years mentioned. The 150 ratepayers, who have some knowledge of the legal defects, have taken advantage of the position and refused to pay any rates at all to the board for any of the years in question. It is understood they have been legally advised of the loophole that exists and have taken advantage of it.

Mr. Watts: Has the plaintiff in the court case paid his rates?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, all except a very small sum in respect of the failure to strike a rate in the south ward. The amount which so far he has failed to pay is not large. Practically all of the ratepayers who have refused to pay are people well able to do so. They are the ratepayers in the district best able to pay; but, having obtained this knowledge of the loophole, they are taking advantage of it and are re-

fusing to pay. The road board, of course, is not likely to proceed against them, as it would probably fail in any legal action for recovery of the rates. As a result, the rates so outstanding will be lost to the board for all time. In point of equity and fair play to the board itself and to the ratepayers as a whole, this small number of ratepayers, who are taking advantage of mistakes in administration and of technical errors, should not receive any consideration at all from Parliament.

The aim of the Bill, therefore, is to validate the mistake in administration and the technical breaches which have occurred in the making of valuations and the imposition of rates. I desire to emphasise the statement I made earlier that this Bill will in no way interfere with the decision of the Supreme Court made in or about June of this year in respect of the action brought with regard to valuations for the year 1940. No Government is ever very happy about having to approach Parliament in matters of this kind; but the officers of the Local Government Department and the members of the Government, after having given the matter long and serious consideration, have decided that, in justice to all the ratepayers and in fairness to the board, a Bill should be introduced for the purpose of validating the actions of the board. This is not the first Bill of its kind to be introduced. Over several years we have had 10 or 12 validating Bills in respect of activities of local authorities. One of the most important ever introduced had to do with the affairs of the Perth Road Board and the amount of money involved was over £7,000.

Those who have studied the Road Districts Act will know that its administration is not an easy matter, more particularly in wartime, when staff difficulties exist. It is in times like these that it is comparatively easy for any local governing authority, unwittingly and unknowingly, to make mistakes in procedure which, in a strict legal sense, render their actions technically illegal, and to that extent offer to any ratepayer so inclined the opportunity to refuse to pay his rates because of the legal loophole, he knowing that the local authority will probably not proceed for the recovery of the rates on account of the legal difficulty. He would thereby escape what really is a just obligation on the part of a ratepayer to his local governing authority.

The just obligation of every taxpayer to his local governing authority is to contribute a reasonable and fair share of the finances required by that authority to carry on the reasonable requirements of the board. There has been no attempt on the part of this board to do anything underhand, or anything dishonest. There has been no attempt at trickery, and there has been no suggestion from any direction whatever of any fraud or dishonesty on the part of any member of the board or on the part of any of its employees.

Mr. Styants: Why did they not strike a rate for the south ward?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The reason was entirely owing to the fact that the finances of the south ward were considerably in credit and, because they were considerably in credit, the board deemed that it was not justified in striking a rate covering that ward, especially as the amount that would have been received by the imposition of the minimum rate of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. would have amounted only to £62.

Mr. Styants: They do not create wards in road board districts?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They certainly did at that time, but since then wards have been abolished and the district now operates as a whole instead of under the ward system that was operating up to a short time ago. I have made available to members all the information that is relevant in the matter. The only other point I wish to make is that unfortunately delay occurred in the bringing down of this legislation to Parliament. That delay was caused almost entirely by the fact that the Assistant Under Secretary of the Works Department, Mr. Hodgson, who is the officer mainly charged with the supervision of the affairs of local governing authorities, became very ill some three months ago, had to go into hospital for a severe operation, and only returned to work on Monday of this week. As soon as possible after his return to duty, the Bill was brought to completion and introduced in the Legislative Council. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Doney, debate adjourned until a later stage of the sitting.

## BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Legal Practitioners Act Amendment.
  - 2, Trade Descriptions and False Advertisements Act Amendment.
- With amendments.

## BILL—UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of seven amendments made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 4, page 2—Delete the word "six" in line 10 and substitute the word "eight."

The PREMIER: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

This question received a great amount of attention in this Chamber, and considerable time was devoted to the report of the Royal Commissioner on this subject. The judge has recommended that the Convocation representatives be confined to three in number. Notwithstanding the strictures which the Royal Commissioner had passed on the representation of Convocation the Government doubled the number to six, and now we are asked to go further and add another 40 per cent. to the Royal Commissioner's recommendation. Another objection I have to the Council's amendment is that under the Bill the strength of the Senate has been increased from 18 to 21. I do not think unwieldy bodies constitute the best method of carrying out the governmental business of the University. The amendment would have the effect of increasing the number from 21 to 23. For these reasons and owing to the length of time devoted to this subject in this Chamber recently, I feel sure the Committee will not agree to the amendment.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the Bill had been restricted to the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner in all details the Premier would have had a strong argument, but that was not so. The measure is only in conformity with the recommendations in certain directions, and very material parts of the Commissioner's report were ignored.

The Premier: Not to this extent. We have doubled the number recommended.

Hon. N. KEENAN: In this important direction alone the report has been departed from.

The Premier: Only to a slight extent.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Although every effort was made to restore the figure, the proposal was turned down. Let us have an end to the excuse that the Bill is in accord with the Royal Commissioner's report. Convocation is the representative of the University, its child. It is building up in strength and growing ever stronger with the passing of every day. No-one could imagine that any body of men or women would be more anxious to serve the University than would members of Convocation. I support the amendment.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 4, page 2:—Add a proviso to paragraph (g) as follows:—"Provided that one of these persons shall be a person who served in His Majesty's Forces during the 1914-1918 war or in the present war."

The PREMIER: The proposed new Section 10 sets out that the Senate shall consist of certain representatives and that four of these will be persons to be elected and co-opted as members of the Senate by the other members thereof as mentioned in the paragraphs of the section. The Council's amendment sets out that one of the four co-opted members must be a person who has served in His Majesty's Forces during the 1914-18 war or the present war. I have no objection to that in principle. While I do not consider that the University is an institution that concerns the Returned Soldiers' League as a League, there may be returned soldiers with experience and special knowledge who could with advantage be on the Senate.

Mr. Berry: But the Council's amendment does not apply to members of the R.S.L. only.

The PREMIER: No. It applies to returned soldiers. I know that on the Senate as at present constituted there are at least three returned soldiers. I can hardly imagine that in future there will be no member of the Senate who has not served in either the present war or the earlier war. If there were no returned soldier on the Senate, I think then would be the time to consider giving that section of the community representation, but only as a returned soldier, and

not as a representative of the R.S.L. I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out the words "one of these persons shall be a person who has served in His Majesty's Forces during the 1914-1918 war or in the present war" and inserting the words "unless at least one member of the Senate appointed or elected under the foregoing paragraphs of this subsection is a person who served in His Majesty's Forces during the 1914-1918 war or in the present war, one of the persons to be elected or co-opted under this paragraph shall be a person who has served" in lieu.

That means that if by any mischance—and I think it would certainly be a mischance—no returned soldier was a member of the Senate, it will be mandatory that one of the four co-opted members shall be a returned soldier. I think the viewpoint of returned soldiers would be useful on the Senate and at least one of its members should be a person with experience as a soldier. At the present time the Director of Education, the Director of Public Works and Mr. Fernie, who are members of the Senate, are returned soldiers, and I think there are others as well. The object of having co-opted members on the Senate is to secure men who may have special knowledge or experience whose views would be of advantage to the governing body of the University. It might be that a returned soldier with particular experience and knowledge could not be obtained and to that extent the choice of the Senate might be limited. However, I am prepared to make it law that should there be no returned soldier on the Senate one of the co-opted members shall be one.

Mr. SEWARD: I hope the Premier will not press his amendment. I think we should accept a provision similar to that agreed to in connection with the rural bank Bill. The principal reason I have for urging direct representation of the R.S.L. on the Senate is that after the last war quite a number of the members of the original A.I.F. attended universities in England in furtherance of their studies and took their degrees. In this war quite a number of young men who joined up were either in attendance at the University or were about to do so. It is the wish of the R.S.L., which will be a much larger body after this war than it is at present, to have direct representation on the Senate and I think such

representation would be useful to that body. Returned soldiers will have decided views regarding educational matters. It is quite conceivable that under the Premier's proposed amendment there might be a returned soldier member of the Senate who, having been a member of the A.I.F. of the previous war, might now be well over 60 years of age. His experience might be valuable, but his views might not coincide with those of the present-day soldier. I think the R.S.L. should have the right to nominate a representative to be co-opted under paragraph (g).

Hon. N. KEENAN: The member for Pingelly is under a misapprehension. The amendment will not have the effect of giving the right of nomination to the R.S.L. It will simply mean that the choice of the Senate in co-opting the four members will be restricted to the extent that it will have to co-opt one person who has served in His Majesty's Forces in one or other of the two wars. It is not a matter of nomination by the R.S.L. and, indeed, the man so co-opted might not be a member of the R.S.L. and could not possibly secure membership although he might have been in uniform. I have in mind an architect who is a major in the Forces. He is a worthy man and carrying out important duties but he has undertaken that work in the city and the intention never has been that he should serve elsewhere. He would be covered by the amendment. The further amendment by the Premier might lead to a rather peculiar position arising, one which could not arise under the amendment proposed by the Council. Thus if we accept the Premier's proposal we might encounter difficulties which could be avoided if we accept the Council's suggestion, which I prefer.

Mr. BERRY: I am amazed. The member for Pingelly mentioned the R.S.L., but neither the Council's amendment nor that proposed by the Premier stipulates that the person to be appointed shall be a member of the R.S.L. but only that he shall be a returned soldier. I think the member for Pingelly has got the bull by the horns. I agree with the member for Nedlands that we can no longer adopt a hard and fast attitude towards returned soldiers and people who serve in the Forces. Morally I consider that any soldier who joined the A.I.F., whether he leaves Australia or does not, is a returned

soldier. He in fact was quite prepared to go and serve anywhere in the world for Australia, but Australia decided that he must not go abroad and that his duty was fixed permanently in Australia for the entire duration of the war. I trust that this amendment covers that point, and that the appointment will be made on a very generous and fair basis. Organisations are springing up all over Australia today representing people who serve in the Forces and who did not go oversea. Such men, unfortunately, are not eligible for the privileges of the R.S.L. If this amendment is intended for the benefit of the Returned Soldiers' League only, it should say so.

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

No. 3. Clause 4, page 3:—Delete the word "six" in line 17, and substitute the word "eight."

The PREMIER: All these amendments deal with one principle, the increase of the number of members representing Convocation from six to eight. The other principle is the term for which they are to be elected. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 4. Clause 4, page 3:—Delete the word "six" in line 18, and substitute the word "eight."

The PREMIER: The previous amendment dealt with the number of members. This amendment deals with the length of time which a man shall serve who has been elected a member representing Convocation. The number of members approved by the Council being eight, it was thought that the term to be served should be eight years, so that the eight members would retire at the rate of one per year. Consequently the term has been extended to eight years, our idea being to get the number down to six. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 5. Clause 4, page 3:—Delete the word "six" in line 21, and substitute the word "eight."

The PREMIER: This amendment is on the same lines as amendment No. 3. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 6. Clause 4, page 3:—Delete the word "six" in line 27, and substitute the word "eight."

The PREMIER: This amendment refers to the length of time each of the six or else eight members shall serve—either six years or eight years, depending on the number adopted. As we want to get back to the original number of six members, I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 7. Clause 4, page 4:—Delete the word "six" in line 4, and substitute the word "eight."

The PREMIER: This is on exactly the same principle, but refers to the length of time members of Convocation will serve, whether six years or eight years. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of Hon. N. Keenan, the Minister for Education and the Premier drew up reasons for not agreeing to certain of the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1944-45.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

*Vote—Lands and Surveys, £65,100:*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS [4.0]:** The Estimates of the Department of Lands show very little variation from former years, but there has been, particularly during the war period, considerable variation in the duties of officers and in the administration of the department generally. As reported to the Committee on previous occasions, considerable activity has been made necessary through war circumstances and that applies particularly to the survey staff. The requirements of the military authorities have demanded much assistance, and surveys have been made in collaboration with the military authorities on a scale and with methods of a type never previously undertaken in Western Australia. All the work that has been done during wartime has

been made the foundation of future important work for this State and it is hoped that, with the basis that has been made possible by using special instruments and selected staffs, we shall be in a position after the war to have Western Australian surveys made under much better conditions than have hitherto prevailed. Coast line and port surveys have formed a very important part of the additional work undertaken. The surveyors and draftsmen—because much of the work has been done by the draftsmen—have been of considerable assistance to the military and naval authorities, and have made permanent contributions to the knowledge of mapping and surveys of this State.

One important task that has been the responsibility of the department in anticipation of settlement has been the classification and examination of all lands which, either in sub-divisions or in Crown lands not subdivided, might ultimately be suitable for settlement by ex-service men. Many months ago, prior to the introduction of legislation by the Leader of the Opposition, the department withdrew from selection all its lands which might be suitable for the settlement of ex-service men, more particularly group blocks rather than isolated or individual areas. In addition, the department has collaborated with other departments in making essential soil surveys and lending staff and plant to that end. I do not wish to discuss the activities of the two departments on the one Vote; but, while speaking on the subject of soil surveys and their relationship to successful settlement, I would mention that we have had several expert officers of the Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the C.S.I.R., for many months investigating specified areas of Western Australia where soil surveys are necessary. I feel very strongly that many of the mistakes of the past could have been avoided had we had the knowledge of our soils we have today. In certain areas, where there is a lack of adequate rainfall, it is as well for us to take every precaution to ensure success when establishing settlements.

The normal activities of the Lands Department that have proceeded include such matters as the re-pricing of land in the outer areas; and, with the exception of the Salmon Gums area, most of the undertakings commenced four years ago concerning

the re-pricing of suitable areas are nearing completion. In addition there are the activities connected with the pastoral industry debt adjustment scheme, and all the matters associated with preparation for the reappraisement of pastoral areas which is due under statute. One work which might ultimately be of major importance to the State is the investigation by the Lands Department, in association with the Agricultural Department, being carried out in the Kimberley area, more particularly in relation to the prospective development by irrigation of the Ord River district. Not only have reconnaissance surveys been made, but extensive areas have been investigated and officers of the Lands Department, in collaboration with officers of the Agricultural Department, have thoroughly scrutinised soil erosion difficulties. In that area, where there is an extensive range of land types, soil erosion would cause considerable difficulty, and it is the intention of both departments to make quite sure that there is no threat to the success of the ultimate settlement project on account of siltation in a dam of the size visualised. A very valuable and interesting report has been submitted by licensed surveyor Metcalf covering the soil erosion investigation of the Kimberley Division, and I would like members interested in this very important matter to peruse that document before I return it to the department. They will see from it the prospect of the loss of use of tremendous areas in our pastoral regions as a result of soil erosion, unless control methods are adopted.

**Mr. McLarty:** What is the worst area from the point of view of soil erosion?

**The MINISTER FOR LANDS:** It is within the pastoral regions. Soil erosion has suddenly, in all States, become a matter for popular comment, a matter in which all sorts of people have temporarily and newly become interested. I suppose that in this State the general belief would be that nothing has been done and that no investigation has been made. The reason I raised the subject on these Estimates was to give me an opportunity to inform members of what had been done. It is 4½ years since I appointed a committee known as the Soil Conservation Committee. On that committee there are prominent officers of

several departments. It includes the Under Secretary for Agriculture, the Deputy Conservator of Forests, the Plant Nutrition Officer, Dr. Teakle; the Superintendent of Horticulture, the Officer in charge of Irrigation, the Sheep Adviser to the Agricultural Department, the Conservator of Forests, Mr. Kessell, and the Surveyor General. For four years that committee has been inquiring into the incidence and effects of soil erosion in this State.

It was my view, at the time of the appointment of the committee, that soil erosion in this State had reached a stage when preventive measures rather than control measures were in the forefront of the matters the committee should inquire into; because I realised, from observations in places as far apart as the Fitzroy River and parts of our eastern wheatbelt, that the incidence of soil erosion was increasing in some places. As chairman of that committee, the Surveyor-General sent out questionnaires in 1939 to nearly 700 farmers in different parts of the State where conditions favoured soil erosion and replies were received from 373. In his report the chairman said—

Farmers generally were aware of the problem of soil erosion and indicated that they would be ready to collaborate in any scheme established to assist in the control of the menace.

It was stated further in the report that although the incidence was fairly widespread, farmers were well aware of it and in most cases control measures advocated by the Agricultural Department officers were frequently adopted. In the report of the Royal Commissioner on the pastoral industry in 1940 the attention of the Government and all concerned was drawn to the incidence of soil erosion in those areas. Questionnaires were sent to 281 stations—the area covered would be about 100,000,000 acres—and replies were received from 162 stations. They showed that although the incidence of soil erosion was increasing in some places, in others—in very sound districts—there was hardly any evidence of erosion at all. I regard the prospect of soil erosion in other parts of Western Australia as a matter of such consequence that, two years ago, I asked the committee to consider—in view of the evidence we had on an Australia-wide basis—the desirability of introducing into Western Australia leg-

isolation designed for its control.

In some States, and in other countries, there is very rigid control of soil erosion, imposing upon owners of land liabilities and responsibilities in connection with methods of control that occasion a lot of cost and endeavour. I am quite confident, in looking at Australian agriculture, and not merely at the agriculture of one particular State, that a stage has been reached when our careless methods of soil usage have made soil erosion a very serious threat to our economy. The abuse of our soil through the methods adopted is putting out of cultivation areas that formerly were very fertile and is giving an opportunity for the growth of gully and sheet erosion. I draw attention to this fact: Although a land title gives to the owner something very tangible, showing his possessory title, there is in that title also a very great responsibility.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver called attention to the state of the Committee.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: After 11 years in this House, this is the first experience of the sort I have had. Perhaps I have been fortunate in the past in not having had attention called to the paucity of the gathering prepared to listen to me.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: We all like to listen to you. Your speeches are always good.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was endeavouring to point out just how serious is the threat of soil erosion, looking at it from an Australia-wide point of view, to the whole of Australia's economy, and was instancing what is being done in this State preparatory to endeavours being made and steps being taken to combat it. I had reached the stage of mentioning the right within the title to land of any owner to do, so far as he thinks fit, what he wishes to do with his own. But there are many phases of Australia's agricultural development that warrant considerable thought being given to the question of taking away from the owner, unless he recognises his responsibility to the nation, many of the privileges conferred upon him by his title. Any attempt in this or any other country to control legislatively the effects of soil erosion and the rights of the individual will, to a large extent, be nullified unless the individual in turn realises his responsibility.

No matter how far we go back in history in an examination of the land laws, even if we go back to the days of the Bible, we find that big responsibilities attached to the person who had the use of the land. In at least four books of the Bible, in Deuteronomy and Leviticus particularly, references are made to the use of the land, the tenure applied to the land, and the results of production from the land. It is clearly shown that the land in those days was regarded, not as belonging to any person, but as being there for the use of the people. According to Leviticus, even the rotation of crops had to be practised under the terms of the leases to individuals, either from tribes or from a larger community. If members are interested in the subject, they will find a very entertaining basis for this study in all the chapters of Leviticus and several of the Book of Deuteronomy.

Mr. Mann: The old Jewish law.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, and the old Jewish law stands unchallengeable today if we are to preserve the fertility of the land and have the best use of the soil for all time and in the best interests of civilisation. There is no doubt that very much of the type of agriculture adopted in Australia is a threat to Australian economy, and unless we realise that the soil and the use of the soil are fundamental to the welfare, and in fact to the existence, of civilisation, we cannot begin to realise the responsibilities of owners of land to the soil itself.

I have in contemplation the introduction next session of a Bill for the control of soil erosion. My examination of the problem in this State and also on an Australia-wide basis leads me to believe that much of what will be necessary in such a measure will not find favour with careless and delinquent landowners in this State. I am sure that many people who have used the land for their generation have not realised their responsibility to the nation. They, under certain terms and types of lease, have endeavoured to get as much from the land as they could during the term of the lease; they have lived in comfort for a large portion of their lives because they have abused their heritage.

Mr. Leslie: That would mean that the system of leasing is wrong.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. What is needed is control within the lease and the title. Where the land is abused, con-

trol must be exercised. I am anxious to mention what is in my mind regarding a Bill that will have far-reaching effects if it becomes law. To members interested in the subject, I recommend a study of the legislation already passed by other States of Australia. I have it all, and I also have had the opportunity of hearing the comments, through evidence, of people who have studied the subject in those States. Many books have been written on the subject by acknowledged authors of repute, and members will find that the more they examine the subject, the more they will be impressed with what is going to happen if we carelessly disregard our responsibility to the soil in this State.

I should like to mention the extent of the examination made by the Lands Department preparatory to and in anticipation of an expansion of land settlement, consequent upon the soldier settlement projects. Tens of thousands of acres have been surveyed, and many of them are in areas which experience has shown are outside the safe region for agriculture. During the last two years, we have concentrated upon regions that are within the safe rainfall limit. Where they are outside the acknowledged safe rainfall limit for strictly agricultural development, we have examined them and their potential from a grazing point of view. Not only have we collected a tremendous amount of information, but we have also reached the stage where, with the authority that will be set up shortly in this State to handle soldier settlement, there will be the nucleus of farms partly developed and a tremendous amount of information of areas in assured rainfall districts where clearing costs and development processes are well known. We hope that in these areas, handled in a scientific and practical way, settlement will not be as costly but can be assuredly more satisfactory than in any former attempt at settlement of any proportions in this State.

One of the most important things is the scrutiny of market prospects, which I intend to touch upon briefly when the Estimates of Agriculture are being considered. Fundamentally, it must be acknowledged that, in spite of any claim by interested people or by self-styled patriots anxious for settlement, we must consider whether a short term or a long-range view is necessary and just what are the prospects within the areas accessible to markets for the commodities to be produced. It would be very foolish and

would avail us nothing if we insisted on developing agriculture of any type in excess of prospective markets. Very many products in this State and in other States can, to some extent, have their future planned, but there are other types of production for which this State is suited that need considerable investigation if we are to hope for sound land settlement on a stable basis.

I do not wish to address the Committee on the details of departmental expenditure or on the Estimates for the current year's expenditure, or to deal with the avenues in which that money will be spent. The information is readily accessible to members in the report of the department and in the Estimates. Rather I desired to confine myself to topical matters that are so important to the welfare of the State, with the surveying and mapping of schemes for the future, and to devote some little attention to what, in my opinion, may become a very urgent problem in this State.

**MR. SEWARD (Pingelly):** The Minister has given an interesting review of the activities of his department and it is satisfactory to hear that close attention is being devoted to the question of soil erosion. So far as my knowledge of the southern parts of the State is concerned, that particular trouble has not occurred, but the Minister has pointed out that this is an evil liable to creep upon us in the night. Therefore it is satisfying to know that the department will not wait for it to occur, but is prepared to take steps to counteract its spread. There is one matter to which I desire to refer. The Minister did not deal with it, unless it came under the heading of the re-pricing of land. As members are aware, at present no land in the State can be sold, nor can it be leased, without the consent of the Commonwealth Sub-Treasury first being obtained. The matter is becoming very serious in this State and consequently I want to bring it under the notice of the Premier and the Government.

A case has been submitted to me in which a farmer, owing to ill-health, was compelled to lease his land. The lease terminated and, as he could not work his property, he leased it again to another person at a certain rental. He also made arrangements to dispose of his sheep and other assets. After all the arrangements had been made for the sale—practically within a day or two of the sale—the Commonwealth Sub-Treasury stepped in and

decreased the amount of the rental to a sum which would not meet the interest on the bank overdraft. Another case has been brought to my notice, and I am afraid there are other such cases. The estate of a deceased person was involved. I may say that in this instance the mortgagee had entered into possession of the property six years ago, but had not exercised his power of sale until just recently. The property, which was put under option to a buyer at a certain figure, was regarded by people living in the district as having been valued at about 15s. per acre below what it might reasonably be expected to fetch. However, it was inspected by the prospective purchaser, who agreed to buy it.

Since then the Commonwealth Treasury has stepped in and revalued the property. I have not yet been able to ascertain the amount of that valuation; but I do know that the Commonwealth valuer expressed the opinion that he would find it difficult to bring his valuation up to the figure of the mortgagee's valuation, which is the figure at which the prospective buyer is prepared to purchase. One valuer is prepared to stake his reputation that the land is worth a certain figure; and then the Commonwealth steps in and makes a valuation, I am afraid with a view to restricting the investment of money in land. In that way the value of land in this State is going to be seriously affected.

The Minister for Lands: The principle is good within reason.

Mr. SEWARD: I think so, too. I do not wish to create the impression that I stand for land inflation. We certainly have to guard against that. This particular Commonwealth valuer has made the statement that no properties can be found in Western Australia worth more than £4 10s. per acre.

The Premier: That is his opinion.

The Minister for Lands: He is an ignorant person.

Mr. SEWARD: Whether he is well-informed or ignorant, his valuation will be accepted by the Commonwealth, and a sale will have to be made at the figure which he stipulates. I know some farmers in the Great Southern district who would certainly dispute the statement that no property in this State was worth more than £4 10s. per acre. I have half a dozen men in mind who, if anybody offered them £4 10s. per acre for their land, would not

give the offer any consideration. The matter is one which the State Government should watch closely, because it is very frequently necessary in the case of the estates of deceased persons to dispose of the assets.

The Minister for Lands: How do the Commonwealth valuations compare with the valuations in September, 1939?

Mr. SEWARD: I cannot say. I know that the property I have in mind was valued by another experienced valuer living within four miles of it. The valuer appointed by the Commonwealth Sub-Treasury travelled 80 miles to value the property. The other man who lives close to the property is well known and has had a large experience of land. He is now 60 years of age, but is competent.

The Premier: Was he valuing for probate purposes?

Mr. SEWARD: No. The property was capable of producing a 10-bag to the acre crop, and of course it must be borne in mind that it is situated in the Great Southern district, which is not a wheatgrowing area. It has not been fully worked during recent years and has gone back a little. I take the opportunity of this Vote to mention the matter. I do not know exactly what we can do, because the Commonwealth is a law unto itself under the National Security Regulations. We should, however, take some steps to protect the value of our land and prevent injury to our landowners who are placed in the unfortunate position of having to dispose of property at the present time for reasons over which they have no control.

MR. WATTS (Katanning): I wish to mention one or two matters only. The first is to express my regret that I was unable to be present to hear the Minister deal with one or two urgent matters—soil erosion and others. I have reason to believe from what he has told me privately that he is giving the question of soil erosion serious consideration, and that he has in mind—I hope I did not misunderstand him; if I did he can correct me—the introduction of legislation which to an extent will compel attention to be paid to this question in areas where it is becoming a problem and where, if preventive measures are not taken, it will become a problem; At present I suppose we can say that

the question in Western Australia is not of the greatest magnitude. That, however, was the point of view in other countries of the world in earlier times, in fact, in the last couple of decades. Those countries rued the day they failed to take action in time to deal with this matter. One has no desire to impose on the community, or any section of it, restrictions or expenditure which it can ill afford to bear. The legislation will have to be so worded as to avoid unnecessary expense; but woeful loss can ensue if preventive measures are not taken. The matter would then assume big proportions because of the much heavier expenditure which would be involved.

Except for a measure of soil erosion which has been occasioned by water, not many areas in the part of the State from which I come are at present causing great concern. In one or two portions, however, already fences on properties have been buried by erosion caused by wind and the breaking up of pastures by livestock on land that has not been cultivated. Those areas at present are small, but unless the owners take proper precautions, and are educated in better methods of dealing with their land, the problem will develop. Not only will they suffer loss, but there will be a loss to the State. The State should therefore take an active interest in the matter. The only way in which it can do so is, I suggest, to bring down some wise precautionary legislation which, while not imposing a burden on the people concerned, will at least point the way to reformative measures. Where such reformative measures are not taken voluntarily, compulsion must be applied. I shall be happy to hear from the Minister on the point at some future session—I hope the next one—as to the exact plans he has in mind in regard to this matter.

The Minister for Lands: I already have a Bill drafted.

Mr. WATTS: I had reason to believe so, but did not wish to mention it. I also wish to support the remarks of my colleague from Pingelly with regard to land valuations. It is not often that local authorities feel impelled to protest against the values being placed on properties in their district that are being sold privately and with which actually they are not concerned. I have in recent weeks received two communications from local authorities in the Great Southern

district both protesting against valuations that have been placed on properties by virtue of the National Security Regulations for the purpose of obtaining the consent of the Commonwealth Sub-Treasury. I know the members of one local authority very well indeed. They are men who would set their faces resolutely against any inflationary proposals; but the valuations which they submitted to me were unreasonably low.

Mr. Smith: Who made them?

Mr. WATTS: Persons appointed under the National Security Regulations. They were made for the purpose of obtaining permits from the Commonwealth Sub-Treasury to dispose of the properties.

Mr. Smith: Were they outside independent valuers?

Mr. WATTS: Yes. In the case I have in mind, they lived in the vicinity of the properties concerned. One of them I know is a man who has always decried the productive capacity of land in those areas. It has been his practice in times past in two or three instances to buy up the properties of persons who have not been able to carry them on owing to financial difficulties, and to sell them subsequently to his own advantage. He is applying the same principles to his valuations as he is to his purchases. That might be all right if in the future these particular regulations were not going to be lifted, in which case these people who have been buying properties at 15 per cent. below their reasonable value would certainly not be able to sell them again at a 15 per cent. increase. I know of one case, that is of a deceased person's estate, where the individuals who had worked on the property for years lost an equity of 15 per cent. in the value of the property which they should have been allowed to get and which now passes without warrant or justification to a stranger.

I have in mind one property the unquestioned value of which was £3 per acre. That is not an excessive figure; I know the property well. It comprises 4,000 acres and has two excellent homes upon it, suitable for anyone to live in, is all cleared, and capable of carrying 2,000 sheep. A purchaser would, I believe, readily have given £3 an acre for it, but a valuation was made of £2 10s. per acre. I do not know whether the sale proceeded. The last I heard of the matter was that a conflict arose between the

parties, and whether the sale went on I am not aware. It was nonsense to allege the property was worth only £2 10s. per acre when we bear in mind its carrying capacity, the amenities associated with it, and the amount of clearing done. In times past it would have fetched double the figure I have mentioned. In 1927 the property was valued at £24,000, equal to £6 per acre. That valuation was made by the local banker. I have only set it down at £3 per acre, half the figure arrived at in 1927. I do not yet know what has eventuated. Other cases of a similar character have been brought under notice. The local authority I mentioned protested against this business, and finally an officer of the board was sent to discuss the matter with the Sub-Treasury. I still do not know the result of that discussion.

In the efforts of the Commonwealth Government to prevent inflation and the expenditure of money unnecessarily in the belief that it could be turned to profitable use, it has gone altogether too far. I hope the Minister will be good enough to take the matter up with a view to seeing that there is an amount of protection in conformity with the decrease in land value which has taken place afforded Western Australian vendors. That would not inflame any hardship upon purchasers but enable them to pay a reasonable price. In certain instances, particularly in regard to purchases of homes, there have been devious ways found of getting around the regulations. The effect of the regulations, and enforced in the way they are, is to drive people to commit breaches of the law. All sorts of practices are indulged in, I am given to understand, and the regulations by that means are overcome.

The only other matter I wish to refer to is the collection of land rents, not as to the amount, for I am content with the amount that has been collected during the year just past, seeing that it is considerably greater than was expected. I still believe that the collection of all land rents as rents and their payment into Consolidated Revenue is a mistaken practice. I have said before in this House that the practice should never have been started, especially in areas which were being thrown open for settlement, through which great expense was involved in the construction of developmental railways and roads and the provision of other

facilities which have been paid for out of borrowed money to the great detriment to the State's financial position, as we find it at present. We call them land rents, but they are actually instalments on the sale of the State's lands. They are not rents. If one pays rent one does not acquire any interest or right in the land for which the rent is being charged. Under the conditional purchase system of Crown lands, in connection with which all these land rents are collected, one acquires the freehold over a period of 20 years by 40 half-yearly instalments. That represents a realisation of the State's capital.

These rents should, as in the case of all wise investments, have been treated as capital and used to develop the areas in which the sales have taken place. It is not too late to give consideration to that matter now. There is no doubt that new areas of Crown lands will be thrown open under conditional purchase conditions; whether the same terms will apply as operate now does not matter. I am pretty certain, however, that the same principles will be applied. There will also be an amount collectable from contracts made but not completed. In no instance should these rentals find their way into Consolidated Revenue, but instead could be used to relieve the Commissioner of Railways of the losses incurred in connection with spur lines such as have been built purposely for land settlement, and but for the construction of which there would have been little or no land settlement. I suggest that the Minister should give consideration to the future of Crown land under the conditional purchase system. It may be difficult for a year or two to find the money that has been cut off, but I believe the position would right itself in the course of time. It does not improve the position to have to create more development on loan money, and to continue using our capital realisation as income.

**MR. McLARTY** (Murray-Wellington): I would draw the attention of the Minister to an article that appeared in "The West Australian" on the 9th December last. This stated that there was anxiety throughout the South-West concerning the grave danger that was likely to arise from bushfires this season. The Minister has probably seen the article, which pointed out that never has so much grass been seen alongside the roads as is noticeable this season,

and never was there such a grave danger of grass fires. Telegrams have been sent to the Federal Minister, Mr. Scully, asking that petrol should be made available in order to minimise the use of gas-producers. The manager of South-West Dairy Farmers Co-operative Company has suggested that the use of gas-producers in the South-West Division during the summer should be entirely prohibited. I hope the Minister will be able to give us an assurance that he realises the danger from the use of gas-producers. We might easily have a major disaster in the South-West this year from grass fires. There is not the same help available this year, because of troop movements, as there was last summer. I know the Minister understands the gravity of the situation.

We may have disastrous fires, and I hope he will do all he can to see that petrol is made available so that gas-producers are entirely eliminated during the summer months. I had no requests from farmers or local authorities but I would like the Minister to consider an extension of the burning-off season in the South-West. I have tried to do some burning at home during the week-ends, but the peculiar season we are experiencing makes it difficult to obtain a successful burn. Tomorrow ends the burning season in the South-West. Let us consider a day such as this one! Farmers who are burning off today would not be likely to meet with much success. Perhaps the Minister will give some consideration to extending the burning period for perhaps another week. I was interested to hear that serious consideration was being given to the question of soil erosion. We all know that this affects pastoral areas to a much greater extent than it does agricultural areas. We also know that much of the soil erosion throughout the Commonwealth has been caused by overstocking. No matter what legislation is passed there is no immediate chance of preventing overstocking, because today not only are we faced with the position of people wishing to overstock, but we know that the vermin menace is even greater than are the evils of overstocking. The Minister is more qualified to speak on this subject than I am, but I know that in the north of Western Australia kangaroos are increasing by hundreds of thousands. Kangaroos of that number will, in feeding,

do just as much harm in the way of soil erosion as will hundreds of thousands of sheep.

Mr. Cross: There will be a good opening for kangaroo skins after the war.

Mr. McLARTY: I am told that kangaroos will do more to cause soil erosion than will sheep, inasmuch as they dig for roots and thus do more damage than is the case with sheep.

The Minister for Lands: As many as ten tons of kangaroo skins have left a northern port in one ship.

Mr. McLARTY: I do not know what the demand for kangaroo skins will be after the war. I hope that royalties will be abolished and that people will be encouraged to get rid of the pest. In the southern portions of the State we have the rabbit menace. I hardly know which is the greater. Without question the carrying capacity of many farms is being greatly reduced. Rabbits can do just as much damage in the way of soil erosion as is done with overstocking. I know the Minister has a full knowledge of these facts and will bring them up for consideration when we meet some time next year. I trust that both labour and material will be available in the near future for use in connection with land settlement for soldiers. From the standpoint of clearing, bulldozers are doing a wonderful job and revolutionising present-day methods. If a number could be obtained, as I believe they could be, a great deal could be done in preparing land for future settlement.

Mr. Leslie: How big are they?

Mr. McLARTY: The bulldozers vary in size. If the hon. member has not seen one at work, I would advise him to take an early opportunity to do so. Many clear at the rate of ten acres a day and do a thoroughly good job at greatly reduced cost.

The Minister for Lands: I will tell you something about that on the next Vote.

Mr. McLARTY: I shall certainly await the Minister's announcement with interest. References have been made to marketing. I consider the report submitted by the Rural Reconstruction Commission a most valuable document. It should be made more readily available to the general public, and should certainly be on sale. Everyone interested in land settlement matters should be able to obtain a copy, for its contents are most valuable and the inform-

ation embodied in it is most helpful. The report deals with the future marketing of primary products and members will agree that to attempt to forecast what the future will be in that respect is extremely difficult. Markets will have a tremendous effect on the future of primary production and land settlement.

Two of our most important primary products appear to me to be in danger from the standpoint of substitutes. One is wool and the other butter. In the Old Country people have been forced to eat margarine and, from what I have heard, they have no decided objection to it. Margarine has been so improved that it is hard to tell the difference between it and butter; the necessary vitamins have been added to it so as to make its value from a consumption point of view equal to that of butter. It appears to me that the future of these two primary products will depend upon public demand—of course, all primary products depend upon that—and on international agreements. Just what has been done in the latter respect I do not know, but perhaps the Minister will be able to tell the Committee something about that subject.

**MR. BERRY** (Irwin-Moore): I desire to associate myself with the expression of satisfaction in response to the Minister's statement that the matter of soil erosion will be investigated and handled in a practical manner. I know members do not like being told what happens in other countries but I cannot refrain from saying that I have seen the results of soil erosion in other countries where the position became an acute danger to agriculture generally. In one country it was quite impossible to grow trees on eroded land because there was no topsoil at all. When I first came to Western Australia and went on my own property, I was not there long before I realised that, even in a heavy rainfall district, the problem of soil erosion had already raised its ugly head in this State. That was 13 years ago. Later I was interested to note that with the introduction of subterranean clover in those parts of the State where the seasons were wet enough for it to grow and recur annually, the extent of erosion became less.

The Minister was good enough to accompany me during a week-end trip through my electorate and while there he was told that

we had discovered that because of the introduction of subterranean clover and other pastures, extreme difficulty was being experienced in getting the dams to fill up with normal or even with abnormal rains. That goes to show that it will be possible in the wetter sections of the State to introduce some suitable pastures which will result, not only in minimising but in preventing the erosion which sweeps the fertility of the areas into gullies and from there takes it beyond the sphere of our economic use. Another point that struck me here was the desire of the man on the land to apply the axe to every possible tree. That was an outstanding surprise to me because it was quite obvious that the people who were doing that were, in a way, determined that an acre of land should be used as an acre for production for the present and the immediate future only. Today agriculturists generally in Western Australia, and probably the world over, are alive to the fact that trees, particularly when used as windbreaks, are a great protection to the country. In my electorate I have had requests from people who have denuded their holdings of trees, to approach the Postal Department with a request that no further trees should be removed from the roads throughout the district.

The Minister for Lands: What was done on the Moora road was absolutely criminal.

**MR. BERRY:** That is so. The department did stop that work, but when I put the request before them I was told that my action was rather saucy in asking them to refrain from removing more trees when that request was made on behalf of a community that had removed trees entirely from their own properties. As a matter of fact, we admit these mistakes, but we now ask that the mistakes of the past shall not be carried on as mistakes for the future. If we could induce people in the country districts to indulge in more arbour days and so plant more and more trees—I am not referring to schools and institutions but rather to agriculturists themselves—we would accomplish much good and it would certainly pay the State to supply the trees free or else at a very small price. I am indeed glad to have had the opportunity of being in the Chamber this afternoon to hear the Minister's statement that an investigation regarding soil erosion is taking place. It is a most important matter.

In another country I have seen hundreds of thousands of pounds spent on contour drainage on hills and slopes and each time when a drain was constructed the earth was tamped down hard on the top side by means of a wooden hammer shaped like a cricket bat. In that country it was considered that its economy had appreciated 5 per cent. as the result of the arresting of soil erosion. I believe a similar result would be experienced here if we could only get the people to realise that they must regard the land as something to be developed not for a lifetime only, but as something for the nation's future. Then there is the question of land valuation. I cannot say much more than has been already expressed by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Pingelly, but I join with them in urging the Government to look into the matter, because all is not well. I can quote the case of a man at Moora who was offered £6 an acre for his land, but he could not sell it because some departmental official said that the price of the land had been fixed at £4 10s. an acre. No-one can fix the maximum valuation of land, particularly if the individual has not seen it. I know that in this instance the person who fixed the price at £4 10s. did not see the holding at all. The price was peremptorily fixed at £4 10s. and the farmer could not sell at a figure above that amount.

If we are to bring our properties into a state of productivity so that they will be able to carry a sheep to the acre, then, to my own knowledge, it will cost not one penny less than £5 2s. 6d. an acre. I am convinced of that. In my own case if I were told I had to sell my property for £4 10s. an acre I would incur a grave loss. The people in rural areas are deeply concerned about this matter, although I am quite appreciative of the Minister's fear of valuations being allowed to reach too high a figure. In my opinion, the valuation of land must be on the basis of its productivity in accordance with the cost of the article sold from it. It would be difficult to decide what the value should be. Perhaps it could be done on the law of averages, but averages are not very satisfactory. I would be horrified to think that my property after reaching its present stage of efficiency, could be bought at £4 10s. per acre simply because some silly fat-headed Government officer said that that was the price and that it could not be sold for more.

Another point that worries me concerns the question of land taxation. It is felt that depreciation has far outstripped the allowance fixed by the department. That is due entirely to the fact that labour is practically, if not absolutely, unprocurable. If one were to go on a property one would find fences down, gates gone and suckers springing up all over the place. Quite probably such conditions would not have developed but for economic circumstances affecting wartime labour. Therefore it must be taken as an actual fact that the farmers today are paying income tax on an income which under the present circumstances is not a true income by very virtue of this particular excessive depreciation. For the most part farmers are in a position where after years of bad prices they find in times of better conditions that they are actually being asked to pay taxation which is leaving them with insufficient money to repair the ravages of super depreciation. I know that taxation has unfortunately ceased to be a privilege of this State. I trust the Minister has understood enough of what I have been telling him to make adequate representations in the proper quarter to see whether something cannot be done for this State, so that at the close of the war effective measures may be taken.

As regards subterranean clover for soil erosion, probably other clovers would prove valuable in areas not blessed with heavy rainfall. I feel quite certain from what I have observed in my own electorate that the Government should do all in its power to encourage pasture crops and try to induce everybody in farming districts to put down some permanent pasture that will help in the struggle with soil erosion. There will be attendant difficulties with clover. Perhaps one has already made its appearance in the trouble with lambing. I feel sure, however, that those troubles will be overcome thanks to the intellectual breadth of the officials of our Agricultural Department, which has done such excellent work for Western Australia.

**MR. WILLMOTT (Sussex):** Unfortunately I was prevented from listening to the Minister's speech, being called to the telephone; but I did hear him say that the Department of Lands has been making a very close classification of all lands for future soldier settlement. The hon. gentle-

man stated that not only was the department about to deal with classification of land, but also of lands within an area adjacent to markets. I hope the Minister will not think that the southern end of my electorate is too far away from the metropolitan markets. We have ideal land for future settlement. I know the Minister has travelled through a portion of that area, which I know has been replanted recently, and I hope his report on that area will be satisfactory. I refer to the area from the east of Karridale along the road towards Nannup. We have a vast area of agricultural land there. It is fairly free from good forest country. I have always been very keenly in favour of the activities of the Forests Department. I believe this land will prove very suitable for agricultural purposes. As it does not carry a great deal of first-class jarrah, I think that with the aid of a few spot mills that area can be denuded of timber and the land then used for agriculture.

While I was talking about land settlement, I had intended to refer to bulldozers; but I notice that they are mentioned in the Agricultural Vote, and so I presume I shall have to defer what I wish to say about them until that Vote is under consideration. I heard the member for Murray-Wellington mention gas-producers and I wish to state that the South-West Co-operative Dairy Co. in which I am interested had written to the Transport Board, and also to the Fuel Board, recently in regard to gas-producers. I do not know what replies have yet been received. However, we feel that it is going to be very dangerous if cream carters are forced to use gas-producers during the coming summer. We have applied to the authorities to be permitted to use all petrol during the summer; that is, for the cartage of cream throughout the South-West area. Another matter mentioned by the member for Murray-Wellington is that we have been endeavouring to cut fire-breaks to safeguard our holdings. However, we have not been able to burn our breaks as yet, and tomorrow we may not be able to do it.

I support the member for Murray-Wellington in an endeavour to induce the Minister to get the time for the burning off extended. I am perfectly sure the Forests Department will be quite agreeable to such a proposal. That remark applies also to the

local fire brigade, because there is a great deal of dry grass in that area. There is a risk that fires will be worse this year than they were last summer; indeed, several houses were then burnt on agricultural holdings. Quite a lot has been written and spoken about soil erosion. I myself do not know of cases of soil erosion, but I mention the subject because we had great difficulty with it at Baranup, where the sowing of marram proved very effective. Marram grass has totally prevented any further drifting in of sand from the coast. It grows quickly, and does a perfectly good job. Only two years ago the same sort of difficulty occurred at Naturaliste Lighthouse, and there was a fear that the lighthouse would be buried; but the marram grass has made the position quite safe. There is no more fear of driven sand, thanks to marram. The danger has been removed. That, of course, does not say that marram grass would be good for soil erosion. I do not know that it would be of any fodder value.

The present taxation on our properties was referred to by the member for Irwin-Moore. I quite agree with what he said; it applies especially in a number of our coastal areas. Black wire on the coast lasts no time at all. I have proof of that, because the Army authorities took about 100 acres of my land for practising bombing and aerial raids, and fenced it with black wire two years ago; and today my cattle are walking through it anywhere they please. The black wire has rusted away and is of no use at all. In a lot of my old fences I had to put in black wire. I shall be a happy man indeed when we are able to obtain galvanised wire again, because our fences are getting into such an awful state that I do not know what we can do, as our stock is wandering all over the place. I trust the Minister will try to get galvanised iron wire at the earliest opportunity.

**MR. MANN (Beverley):** I was interested in the Minister's speech. This country of ours was pioneered by men from the British Isles, men who had lived in a very cool climate with a heavy rainfall. Our forefathers opened up the State, and adopted the English style of farming. The climatic conditions in England differ from ours in Western Australia. The country there has a heavy rainfall and no soil ero-

sion. In this State a dry season has a disastrous effect upon the pastoral areas. Some say the erosion is due to travelling stock. We all realise what the United States of America have suffered in what is known as their Dust Bowl. The destiny of Australia will depend more than ever on what is going to happen to her primary production. Australia has a cycle of seasons which play their part in industry. If we had a heavy rainfall each year we would not suffer so much from soil erosion. I hope that legislation will be brought down to deal with the matter so that it will be compulsory for a certain line of action to be taken.

The farmer wants to reap all he can from the soil. He is only human and we will never completely overcome human traits. Whether a man be a Jew or a Gentile, he wants to get all he can from the soil, from his business or from his union. That being the case we realise that legislation will be required, but I can assure the Minister it will not be an easy matter to legislate on such a stupendous matter as this. Once a man takes to the land, he becomes an individualist. So much is that so, that the farmers have practically no union. Farmers do not form themselves into political unions like those who engage in mining or other industrial occupations, because their outlook is different. If we break the farmer's individuality we break much of his substance. The Minister will have no easy task in endeavouring to give effect to such legislation, but I believe it must come; either that, or the denudation of our areas will occur and that will have a tremendous effect on our production.

I would ask the Minister, who played a prominent part on the Rural Construction Commission, whether it would not be wise, before legislation is introduced, to have some competent man—not some nincompoop from a Government department, but a man with a broad outlook on life, who has had experience in some other part of the world—to help in framing that legislation. This is something about which we can learn from other parts of the world. One sad feature of our parochial life is that we are not prepared to embrace the views of older countries that have suffered from this kind of thing in past years to a much greater extent, on account of their longer period of occupation. I do not envy the

Minister the task he has before him; but he has an opportunity, before introducing this legislation in six months' time, to obtain evidence on this subject. I turn now to the question of soldier settlement—or I will do so when the Premier and the Minister for Mines have finished their discussion.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MANN: I do not wish to cast any reflection on Ministers; but it is disconcerting, when one seeks to state his case sincerely and not hypocritically, to find that prominent Ministers one desires to address are conversing with one another.

The Minister for Lands: I am listening.

Mr. MANN: I think he would be a superman who could hear what was being said by a speaker while there was a cross-current of discussion.

The Minister for Lands: I can tell you all that you said.

The Minister for Mines: Why do you not stop in the Chamber and listen to the Minister? You are in the Chamber less than anybody else.

Mr. MANN: I do not mind if two members converse, but I am trying to address the Minister and am seeking to offer such help as I can without any desire to indulge in destructive criticism. If I can assist the Minister in a matter of policy, I consider that I have served my purpose here. Let us assume that the Commonwealth and State Governments intend to adopt a plan of soldier settlement. The Minister has referred to land that is available. I point out that there are many properties adjoining railways—large farms—which have been held by farmers for many years and which they are quite prepared to sell. The day of the farming of big broad acres is going. Two factors have affected the farmer. One is excessive taxation and the other is the scarcity of labour, which will continue to be a problem in the post-war period. There are many properties adjoining the railways that are available for settlement.

The Minister for Mines: There was a lot of land available after the last war, too.

Mr. MANN: I am coming to that. I know a number of farmers in my area who have large properties they are ready to sell. My mind goes back to what happened after the last war. I am a soldier settler myself and I visualise the conditions in 1918 when we came back from the war. Many men came

back without any vocation and we then saw examples of a wonderful spirit of patriotism on the part of some individuals! Every soldier was a person to be fleeced by land-holders, financial crowds and ordinary go-getters. My blood boils when I consider the fate of those who donned the uniform in 1914 to fight for Australia—and not entirely in a spirit of adventure.

The Minister for Mines: You would do it again.

Mr. MANN: I suppose I would. I offered to go to the war for my country's good. As soon as land settlement was started after the last war every go-getter sought to fleece the demoralised man who had served in the war for three years and was a very different man when he came back compared with what he was when he went away. From the point of view of patriotism, that period produced some of the greatest hypocrites I have seen in my life. The Minister for Mines, who is an old soldier, knows as well as I do that there were many people who wanted to sell their land for the highest possible price. During that period, the price of machinery had increased by leaps and bounds, and these returned men were sold broken down harvesters and binders for twice their value. Bank inspectors who were supposed to advise the farmers took every opportunity to get from them every penny they could. There was a long period of soldier settlement and thousands of men could not survive and left their holdings.

When the Minister brings down his Bill I hope he will provide that, if at the end of five years a man is no longer fit to be a settler, he must leave the land instead of being allowed to go on for years without any prospect of success. Men who had burned their boats grew old on the land without any hope. I have seen many a broken man. I have seen good men take on farming propositions only to be driven off by the enormous capitalisation and variations of the seasons. In 1914 there were a great number of farmers who were not financial but in the post-war period they were given finance to put them on their feet; but the soldier was not established at that time, and with his meagre knowledge of farming he was in a serious position. In the post-war period some returned men who are not farmers' sons will apply for farms. For many men farming life has a peculiar attraction, and

they seek to go on the land not because of the financial possibilities but because of love of the land. Many a man became heart-broken because he fell into serious debt after the last war.

If we are going to bring men back from the war and put them on land in districts where there is a ceaseless burden of debt and worry, we shall face serious trouble, because our returned men will not "take it." The men returning from this war will be different men to handle from those who returned from the last war, and who were reared in a different environment. The present soldier lived through the depression period and went from the depression to the war; and, if we think he can be handled as some people think he can, we shall make a mistake. I shall watch with interest the introduction of a soldier settlement Bill. Some people say: "Why settle them on the land if they have no money?" But a man with money may not be suitable for the land and vice versa. I consider that this State will lend itself to further settlement. I have seen properties of 2,000 acres that will carry two farms instead of one. The policy is different today from what it used to be. No longer is sheep-raising the entire occupation and there is a tendency towards closer settlement. A lot of up-to-date machinery has been brought into Australia under lease-lend conditions. Our production is far below what it could be and we are beginning to realise that super-phosphate is essential; that it is, indeed, the greatest factor. I know many far outback areas on which men were settled during the last war and on which I hope no men will be settled again.

The Minister will agree that men who have gone oversea and have been through the turmoil of camp life and suffered under fire are men whose lives have been sapped, while we have been left here with every comfort. It is proposed to bring these men back and put them on the land, but they will not tolerate conditions that were experienced by returned men after the last war. I do not want to see settlement on the same conditions as applied in 1918. I desire that these men who are to be established on the land will reap the reward to which they are entitled. Every man who returns from the war is deserving of a reward and I hope he receives it. I was pleased to hear the Minister's reference to the proposal to introduce two Bills next year, one to deal with

soil erosion, which must have an important bearing on the future of the State, and the other to deal with the settlement of returned soldiers.

**MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall):** The fact that so many speakers have dealt with the question of soil erosion should convey to the Minister that his proposed Bill on the subject will be awaited with considerable interest. The Minister spoke very informatively though rather briefly on the subject. I am grateful for the small amount of information he gave, and I wish that he had spoken at greater length. His announcement that the Government intends to take definite action regarding soil erosion will be welcome, but whether the action proposed will be welcome, of course, remains to be seen. I can recall that it was in the year 1932 when the question of soil erosion engaged the attention of the Wyalkatchem Road Board, the agricultural society and other local organisations. At that time a proposition was submitted to the Government to the effect that all roads should be widened to two chains or more and that there should be a belt of timber along each side of the roads, and that farmers should be compelled to allow a width of natural timber to grow along their boundary fences. Unfortunately, we heard no more about the proposal, although we pressed the question for a couple of years. We found that opposition existed, because we were suggesting something which, as the Minister mentioned might happen in the case of his Bill, interfered with the rights of the individual.

It will, of course, be necessary for the Government to show due regard for the rights of the people, because I believe that a lot can be done along educational lines. I am firmly of the opinion that government is more successful and easier when it is government by co-operation rather than government by coercion. Consequently, I shall await with considerable interest the Minister's proposals to deal with soil erosion. This problem may exist in this State on only a small scale as compared with other parts of Australia, but it is certainly increasing in the district I represent, and there it is occurring through what I consider is unscientific and uneconomic farming practice.

The same cause is assisting to increase the plague of vermin, particularly grasshoppers, which are spreading through those districts,

and this menace, as well as the problem of soil erosion must, I believe, largely be met by the adoption of correct scientific methods of agriculture. On the subject of grasshoppers, I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Minister for the prompt and considerate way in which he handled representations made to him from my district. It is interesting to know what the grasshopper plague really means in one district alone and the losses incurred by farmers in that district. I have some figures collated by the secretary of the Mukinbudin Road Board. The board sent a circular to 84 farmers in the district and the secretary's report states—

Of the 84 farmers circularised, I received replies from 48 only, which is not as satisfactory as one would like. However, on going through the list, I think that, for the purpose of the investigation, it would be reasonably safe to assume that losses would average about the same over the balance of the farmers. The estimated losses of the farmers who did reply are:—

	£	s.	d.
Wheat—39,731 bushels at 4s.			
per bushel .. .. .	7,946	4	0
Oats—22,784 bushels at 3s. 8d.			
per bushel .. .. .	4,176	19	8
Barley—1,403 bushels at 2s. 6d. per bushel .. .. .	175	7	0
	12,298	11	8
To make proportionate allowance for balance of farmers, add .. .. .	9,223	18	4
Total loss for grain .. .. .	21,522	9	0

This total alone indicates to members how necessary it is that drastic action be taken to remove this definite menace of grasshoppers, which is spreading as a result, I believe, of incorrect farming policy. The secretary went on to say—

Of grass lands damaged for pasture, the same 48 farmers showed 61,265 acres damaged in varying degrees. On working out the percentage of damage done for each one, the total damage is the equivalent of 24,805 acres completely destroyed; that is 40 per cent. If a proportionate loss for the remaining farmers is added it would mean the complete destruction of 43,411 acres of stock feed.

Members will realise that this is a problem which must be seriously tackled. No doubt in the coming year the Minister will consider introducing measures to assist in this direction, even if it is to be on a compulsory basis, in order to organise farming operations in a way that will minimise or eliminate this menace. The figures I have

quoted show the seriousness of the position. Now I should like to read a paragraph from a newspaper circulating in my area. It might raise a laugh, but the facts are as stated. The paragraph reads—

Mukinbudin is the place for grasshoppers. We are told that they eat even men's shirts there. Last week a chap had been working, and perspired so freely that his shirt got wet, so he hung it up to dry, and when he came back for it, the 'hoppers had got to it and eaten holes in it. It's a good job he wasn't wearing it at the time or they might have eaten him.

I do not submit that as an indication of what the grasshoppers might do if they eventually find insufficient feed, but it can be accepted as an indication, apart from the serious figures I have quoted, of the prevalence of enormous swarms of grasshoppers in the district.

The Minister for Lands: I heard of white ants eating out the inside of a man's wooden leg.

Mr. LESLIE: Then he must have stood still longer than I do. The Minister made a remark about which I should like him to ease my mind. Referring to soldier land settlement, he spoke of "self-styled patriots" who are pressing for soldier settlement. The only patriots I know of who are pressing the question are members of the land committee of the R.S.L., of which I am one.

The Minister for Lands: I was referring to some people who have land to sell and who have submitted that it would be in the best interests of the soldiers if the Government acquired it.

Mr. LESLIE: I am pleased to have that explanation, because I thought it rather extraordinary if the Minister had the R.S.L. in mind. There is no lack of evidence of the patriotism of the R.S.L. executive members, and for myself I say that during the 20 years I have been a member of the League I have battled for the ex-serviceman just the same as I am battling today.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Farmers' Debts Adjustment, £1,330—agreed to.

Vote—Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board, Soldiers' Land Settlement, £5:

Mr. SEWARD: I wish to mention one small matter that was brought under my notice in one of the country districts recently. It has to do with the policy being

pursued by the Agricultural Bank of advising its clients to go in for the breeding of summer lambs. It is tragic to travel through the country districts in a season like the present and see flocks of ewes crowded round the waterholes or the place where water is carted to, and the unfortunate little lambs just able to walk. This is the second year that it has occurred. I think the bank authorities should take more notice of the general opinion of breeders on this question. It is all very well for a man to have a particular notion about summer lambing and things of that sort, but many of our most competent sheep-breeders do not favour it. Some of our prize-takers at the Royal Show, who have specially prepared properties with green feed in summer, would no more think of going in for summer lamb-raising than they would of flying. Yet, in the wheat areas where there is hardly a vestige of feed, let alone green feed, and where water has to be carted, we find farmers adopting this advice.

The unfortunate lambs may be seen following their mothers, and as the mothers have no milk for them, their condition is pitiable. I hope the Minister will agree with my point of view and see that proper advice is given. The farmers going in for summer lambing are mostly men who do not know much about sheep-breeding or sheep husbandry. Many farmers who decide to change over to sheep imagine that all they have to do is to buy a flock, put them in a paddock, and then shear them and collect the wool proceeds. There are troubles right from the start with sheep, which require constant and capable attention. I have been dealing with this matter for two years in succession, but nevertheless I think I should mention it again. I hope the Minister will take the matter up with a view to a conference being arranged with some of the sheep breeders, and the bank authorities.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Agriculture, £126,415.

#### THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

[6.0]: There is so much of an allied nature between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Lands that I am diffident about discussing matters relative to both on each separate Vote. I shall now endeavour to deal with aspects of land occupation and use that I omitted when dealing with the

former Estimates. A question was raised by members of the South-Western constituencies as to land clearing with power machinery. I think the member for Murray-Wellington raised the subject. The Committee is not aware of the experiments that we have been making in recent years, so I can give it information of interest. Success or failure of new settlements in heavily timbered country is governed in a large measure by clearing costs and the ability to use the land not over-capitalised because of excessive clearing costs. In some districts, especially in the South-West, it is conceivable that land clearing may cost in excess of £60 an acre. Indeed, that sum has been reached in clearing some of the more heavily-timbered areas in the South-West district; and, after clearing, the land had a value of not more than £10 or £15 per acre. So we have a problem in endeavouring to render land productive in a heavy rainfall area at a cost commensurate with its productive value.

Three departments of this State—the Department of Public Works, the Department of Lands and the Department of Agriculture—a couple of years ago interested themselves conjointly in an endeavour to prove what could be done in our lightly-timbered regions in the way of land clearing and the construction of irrigation works. The attention of the departments was drawn to results that had been achieved by the Diesel crawler caterpillar tractor fitted with a bulldozer attachment. We endeavoured to try it out on the virgin land of this State after we had the opportunity last year to obtain one of these machines. They are very costly when fitted up with the proper attachment. It has what is known as a 12ft. angle dozer. We tried it first on land in the vicinity of Pinjarra clearing approximately 15 acres of stunted jarrah, scrub and blackboy. It is land typical of considerable areas in the South-West and was cleared at a total cost of 17s. 6d. per acre. Ten acres were cleared in an eight-hour day. We have arranged, as members will notice on the Estimates for this department, for the immediate purchase of another of these machines.

Mr. Mann: What do they cost?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The one we have in view at the moment will cost a little over £3,000. We have selected 24 sites in areas extending from Albany to the metropolitan district, including both the South-West and the Great Southern districts.

These are typical areas, and 25 acres are to be cleared on each site. The Leader of the Opposition well knows that part of his electorate is in the vicinity of Mt. Barker where redgum and banksia grow in very large areas. The land, which is thickly timbered, is very productive and valuable when cleared. Because of the nature of the timber—not its thickness, but its density in quantity—clearing costs are very high. We felt that it was well worth considerable experimentation and effort. In that region we tried out what bulldozers can do. They will push over trees of 9-inch or 10-inch girth one after another and then take them to heaps and stack them. We are not quite sure what the cost will be in the Mt. Barker district, but between that district and Albany there is scope for these machines to be tested out, so that we can prove in a practical way what I hope will be revolutionary methods in land clearing in many parts of the State. So far, in the experiments we have conducted, we have made full charge for maintenance, including award rate for workers, and the costs have been remarkably low. That is very encouraging indeed.

The Government intends thoroughly to explore, with the two machines we shall have all the types of country that are suitable for clearing. In the electorates of the member for Nelson and the member for Sussex there might not be the opportunities that occur in areas where there are more trees per acre which can be more readily dealt with by the machines. There is an area on the side of the road on the way to Fairbridge Farm 45 miles from Perth, which has been cleared at a cost of under 15s. per acre to put it in the condition in which it can now be seen with the jarrah and blackboys stacked ready for burning. There are many areas of better class land on the Peel Estate that would readily lend themselves to clearing under these conditions. In the short time that the department has been discussing this matter through its officers, with farmers in various districts, we have had applications and invitations for trials to be carried out on farmers' properties covering about 4,500 acres. I thought the Committee would be interested to know what we are doing in this connection. When we have passed the experimental stage, we might be able to undertake the clearing of large areas where clearing costs are high under ordinary methods of manual labour. Large areas in

the vicinity of the Warriups near Albany, for example, with a certain rainfall, might appropriately be cleared with these machines.

Mr. Watts: If the method is proved, are you prepared to let contracts?

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** We have not yet reached that stage. Newer appliances have been used during the war, even in clearing the road from Alice Springs to Darwin and other places in Australia. We are endeavouring to secure some of the heavier types of machines imported from America, so that we can test them out at Government expense. We are anxious that the difficulties shall be overcome at public cost, rather than at individual cost. From the results we have already achieved, I am sure something almost revolutionary in land clearing in Western Australia will be the result. I desire for a few moments to touch upon the production in this State during the war years, which have been exceedingly difficult because of manpower and superphosphate shortages. The last word that I have had from the Commonwealth Director of Agriculture, Mr. Bulcock, is to the effect that we are to get progressively greater releases during 1945 of superphosphate, as well as greater releases of men from the Army to engage in rural industry.

In that connection, I would like to refer to my own efforts, as well as official efforts, to obtain prisoner-of-war labour for this State. I took a prominent part in securing a number of prisoners-of-war for the State, and I have not let up at any stage in my attempts to see that the State got even more than its share of this labour. I am pleased to say that the almost distressful conditions in some sections of the rural industry have been alleviated. The superphosphate position does not show very much promise of a large increase in quantity becoming available to us. I explained to members earlier in the session that, in contact with Ministers of Agriculture of other States at a Commonwealth conference, I was able to get superphosphate stepped up to 190,000 tons for this year; but that with the restrictions imposed on non-priority crops and because wheat was our normal predominant single crop, we were not as fortunately placed as some of the other States, particularly those States which do not require to use much superphosphate to grow wheat. One of the troubles has been to defend Western Aus-

tralia's interests and, because of the nature of our climate and of our soils, to secure the quantities that are adequate to keep our internal economy on an even keel.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** Before tea I was dealing with the difficulties due to the shortage of superphosphate and mentioned that arrangements had been made for the current year for an increase of up to a total of 195,000 tons for this State, the objective in wheat acreage being 2,300,000 acres. There are a number of difficulties associated with the problem, the principal of these being in connection with shipping which affects the prospect of any increase. There has been much comment throughout Australia about the non-attempt to re-take Nauru. This question was raised by me at the last conference held in Canberra, when I asked the Prime Minister if any answer could be given about the prospect of re-taking that island because of its importance to Australia and its agriculture. The answer was, in effect, that the whole matter was involved in military strategy and it might be that it would be unsuitable as a matter of military strategy to re-take the island at present. That is an aspect that has a direct relationship to Australian agriculture, references to which must be constantly and repeatedly stressed.

Mr. Watts: The Army will still require food.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** Naturally, the Army requires to get food supplies, and it will be impossible to feed an army based on Australia unless a much larger quantity of superphosphate enters Australia. While it is not my purpose or desire to comment on what may be the decision of military officers, it is extremely important that every source of phosphoric acid supply that can be made available to us, we, as a Government, must attempt to exploit to the utmost. In that connection the Government has attempted to exploit the Abrolhos Island deposits in order to secure from that minor source of supply something to supplement Western Australia's requirements of that commodity. Unfortunately, the quality available from the Pelsart Group is such that while it has shown a tendency to suit our pasture crops, it is not wholly satisfactory for wheat.

With all kinds of phosphoric acid deposits in Western Australia ranging from the relatively poor Dandaragan deposits to others of a better quality, unfortunately, the refractory nature of the stone, as well as the quality of its contents, will have to be determined to demonstrate whether the exploitation of the deposits will be an economic proposition. The fact remains that, perhaps never before in the history of Western Australia because of the nature of our country and the quantity of superphosphate necessary for development, has the lack of available phosphate supplies been such a danger to our internal economy.

I can assure the Committee that every effort will be made by the Government to ensure maximum supplies being available. I do not wish to comment in a general way, nor even in specific terms, on crop results of various essential products. I realise that unless we continue to develop such industries as that of the more established flax industry, we are not going to diversify our agriculture, which is the first essential consideration of Western Australia that the standpoint of the stability of such crops would demand. The flax industry is progressing satisfactorily. The yield for the 1943-44 season was 6,640 tons. In fact, almost all our commodities in primary production even since the outbreak of war and particularly last year, have shown an upward tendency. In the course of his speech, the member for Murray-Wellington mentioned the necessity of limiting the production of margarine in consideration of its competitive relationship to butter. I can assure him that although butter is being subsidised in Australia to the extent of a total of 7d. per pound for every pound used by the Australian housewife, we must remember that, shorn of the bonus and subsidy, the real price of the Australian product should be expected to produce that commodity.

Unless we bear that fact in mind, we cannot get a proper relationship between costs of production and the value of competitive substances against it which will prove a very real menace if we are unable to reduce by efficiency in production the production costs of butter to a level that will enable it to be a competitor in the oversea markets. If one or two whaling fleets operating south of this continent can supply sufficient whale-oil each year, that

will enable margarine to be sold at a cost not exceeding 5d. a pound. There is a responsibility on the dairy industry not only to put its house in order on the manufacturing side but definitely to exercise every possible economy in production so that it can be said to be fairly competitive against substitutes. The present position is a very real threat to the industry. Although war circumstances have prohibited the introduction into Australia of palm oil and coconut substitutes, immediately hostilities cease they will again be competitive substitutes that will constitute a threat to our butter production. That will be the position unless the dairymen realise the responsibility that attaches to them.

Mr. Mann: Or until costs come down.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: As with wheat, so with butter. We get costs fluctuating from 2s. to 5s. per bushel in wheat production, and the same conditions apply to butter production in every State of the Commonwealth. There is an aspect of the dairy industry that has attracted the attention of many scientists in different parts of the world, particularly because of the decimation of the herds of the Channel Islands and Denmark. This investigation has taken the line of artificial insemination with the object of building up herds quickly, much more quickly than has previously been possible. In this State we are making inquiries regarding the prospect of more rapidly building up our dairy herds; and, although artificial insemination is not generally advocated or used here, I venture the opinion that throughout Australia this method of building up herds more rapidly will be resorted to.

Mr. Doney: Is it resorted to in a substantial way in any other State?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, not in Australia, but in other parts of the world, with marked success.

Mr. Doney: Did you say "with marked success"?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. I have made arrangements for the proper experimentation to be undertaken in this State. I mention also, in response to an inquiry by the member for Murray-Wellington, that the Government is active in connection with the provision of dairy heifers anticipating the demand that will certainly take place on the part of servicemen desiring

to become dairy farmers. The Government is planning to purchase a large number—I shall not mention the figure, but it runs into thousands—of dairy heifers all under 12 months old. Depots have been developed and others are being arranged for. The Government is undertaking a continuous policy which will apply over the next few years so as to be prepared when the real demand for stocking properties is upon us, in order that we shall have the necessary stock available.

Mr. Mann: What do you mean by dairy heifers?

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** They will be procured from approved herds, those that are known to be satisfactory, although not necessarily pedigreed.

Mr. Doney: From good producers.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** Yes.

Mr. Seward: From within the State?

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** Yes. Unfortunately there has been much gossip regarding the number of dairy stock that has been slaughtered. An examination of the statistics shows that the dairy cow position in Western Australia is to-day more solid than ever previously and that the dairy cattle population generally has increased, even since the war began. I mention that because I do not wish, for several reasons, to occasion any elevation in prices. The Government is going on with the scheme it has begun in anticipation of the requirement of thousands of head of dairy stock within the next four or five years. Much could be said about what has been done to improve the stock feed position. I shall not elaborate that point because there have been so many references to the matter in comments in the Press, in statements that have been made and in other directions that there is no necessity for me to particularise. During the debate on the Loan Estimates mention was made by one or two speakers, following on my comments regarding the necessity of assured markets, of the need for regulating the expansion of production which should be arranged.

I am wondering just to what extent the alteration in Great Britain's agriculture will affect the producing countries of the world that formerly had Great Britain as their chief market. It is interesting to note just what has been the expansion in Great

Britain's agriculture. Since the war began over 6,000,000 acres of old grass land has been brought under the plough. That is to say, she now has three acres under the plough for every two acres that were previously cultivated. Her production has increased so that from being 40 per cent. self-supporting in foodstuffs Britain has made herself 66 2-3rds per cent. self-supporting. That is a very fine achievement indeed, not surpassed in the history of agriculture elsewhere at any period.

The production of crops of various kinds in 1942 increased by 80,000,000 tons in England alone. She has made a wonderful contribution with regard to sugar. During the war period she has made herself self-supporting with respect to that commodity. That again is a most remarkable achievement. I am quoting these figures from an official document. Such has been the increase in the production of commodities that England formerly imported, not because of any international agreement but as a result of her own efforts. That is a subject that gives food for thought for people who continue to clamour for the extension of the production of commodities, for which there will be no substantial market after the war ceases.

Mr. Doney: What has England put those crops on?

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** Mostly on grass land. I think it is a most remarkable achievement in the history of British agriculture. It shows clearly that Australia has not so much to fear the potential development of industries in Denmark and elsewhere that were formerly competitors against her products, as she has to fear the production in Great Britain itself of commodities that she formerly procured from Australia. The member for Roebourne, I think, has touched the spot that is giving great concern to foreign countries, and which doubtless the British Minister of Food is sponsoring. If we take the resolutions of the Hot Springs conference, which was the most important conference of its kind ever held, and which set out to determine for 100 nations their post-war production policy, we find that the basis for the agricultural policy, so far as England is concerned, was—

The Government, representative as it is of all major political parties, recognises the importance of maintaining after the war a

healthy and well balanced agriculture as an essential and permanent fixture of our national policy.

That was the first principle of Britain's Minister of Agriculture in Britain following the Hot Springs conference. I consider it very timely for Australians to give consideration to this, that if England is to maintain her war-expanded agriculture and with perhaps a proportion of depleted countries after the war because of the desire of very many thousands to get away from the scene of desolation, we may find in Australia that, with the exception of staple commodities like wool and wheat, many other subsidiary crops will have to seek other markets. That other markets will be open is, of course, obvious; but it will be found that in spite of a high trend, which will be a natural consequence of events following the war for a period to the countries wanting food, we shall be very wise if we look for the long term just to ascertain what security of price the markets of the world have to offer us. All of us know that the contracts made with the United Kingdom for long-term sales of some of our commodities are already signed.

We know that contracts have been let for wool and meats—the largest for pickling purposes—and also sugar and other commodities. Australia has already signed contracts extending for one year after the war for dairy products as well. So that while there will be a general balance of payable prices for 12 months after the war, I submit it will be very timely for us to put our house in order in regard to costs of production. Otherwise we might have very serious slumps in various commodities following a difficult period. Great Britain ploughed up 6,000,000 acres of grass land, and the treatment was never stronger. As to Britain's food, despite the great increase—this will interest the member for Williams-Narrogin—of herds in Britain, only 1,300,000 tons of foodstuffs were imported in 1943, as against 8,500,000 tons before the war. I stress those points on this Vote, rather than traverse what the department has been doing in the 12 months, to raise points of interest which I am sure will give members food for thought.

We in this State, in the Department of Agriculture, are keenly anxious to follow up any signs of this development that have a bearing on increased production in an economical way; but we must realise that in every

official statement made by the British Minister of Food there is occasion for thought. We shall find, after the war, an England, depleted of her investments and oversea credits and anxious to retain, because of her inability to buy in foreign countries, many aspects of British preference recognised and formulated at Ottawa. And yet side by side, but contrary to that sentiment, we have in the Atlantic Charter all sorts of agreements that have been reached since the war began, some of them real, some of them fanciful, but necessarily having a marked effect on every country relying for its economy on its exports from production. I just sound that note as something that must give us great thought in planning the agricultural future of this country.

**MR. SEWARD** (Pingelly): I want first of all to commend the Minister very much for the note of warning with which he closed his speech. I think he said that Mr. Hudson, the Minister of Agriculture in Britain, was responsible for the great increase in agriculture in Britain. But his predecessor—I think his name is Dr. Dalton—originated the increased production programme. He marked the course for this great improvement in English agriculture during the war years. It is a most wonderful test of the marked progress which he has been able to make in our agriculture almost, one might say, in the rain of the enemy's bombs. It is a wonderful testimony to a wonderful nation. I noted the Minister's warning concerning the finding of external markets for our products. I think they are to be found and that we can supply many of their wants. We have had India's representatives here for a few days, as well as representatives of other countries, looking for produce; and we can supply those needs if only we take the trouble to do it. Of course I do not know whether we are making the effort, but certainly we did not do so in cases where we knew there were customers. I remember quite well during the last war, when I happened to be at Home, seeing the Australian fruits, peaches, plums, apples and so forth; but the English people would not buy them because they were in tins. The Americans sent them in glass containers and of course they had the market. Undoubtedly the quality of our fruit was all right but, unless we put it up so as to attract consumers, we cannot dispose of it. We must take cognisance of that in the future and put up

our goods in marketable quality that would appeal to those buyers.

As regards the super question, I was pleased to hear the Minister's remarks about Nauru, because I am aware, from going through our country, that the depletion of our pastures is brought about very largely by the lack of superphosphate. Crops have been grown in smaller quantities each year, but the residue of the soil is being gradually depleted, and the lack of super is now showing itself very severely. As regards Nauru, are any steps being taken to replace the destroyed gantries? That is a work, I think, that should really be going on until we get the islands back. Then our aim should be to get as much phosphate as possible in as short a time as possible; otherwise it will take long periods by the old methods to load the ships. I hope the authorities will take into consideration the question of making gantries, so that ships may be loaded in the shortest time possible. Within the last few days, an article appeared in a local paper which some people have read incorrectly—in my opinion innocently, and not at all wilfully. I am now getting requests almost daily from local governing bodies in the country to press the Government to release the rabbit virus referred to. The article distinctly stated that various experiments had been made with the virus, but as far as it was possible to make them, they had not proved successful.

The Minister for Agriculture: I discussed that virus 12 months ago.

Mr. SEWARD: The article said that it now lay with the Government of the State to release the virus, but added that it was not good policy to use it. I would be the very first to press for releases if I thought it was going to assist in coping with the rabbit pest; but I am not going to do so because I do not think the virus will be of any assistance to those people. It is only encouraging them in the belief that this is something that will assist them when, according to those who are in a position to speak on the matter, that has not been proved. It is most unfortunate that this article should have been published. I have had two or three requests concerning the release of this virus, but I am going to tell my correspondents that it has not been proved sufficiently successful to induce us to apply for its release.

The statement that steps are being taken to secure a number of well-bred heifers for the increase of our dairy herds was welcome news. I was not aware that was being done, and I was one of those who were getting a little alarmed. In the course of the Select Committee's inquiry into the meat supply, we visited the meatworks and a man pointed to an array of heifer calves that had been slaughtered. I noticed an unborn calf lying on the floor and taken from an animal that had been slaughtered. That was said to be an everyday occurrence. It was rather alarming, but I can believe that those animals were not of a very great value from a dairying point of view. The statement that the purchase of well-bred heifers is being undertaken is reassuring and I am pleased to have it. I compliment the Minister on the information he has been able to give the Committee concerning the progress of his department, and I accord to the officers of his department my keen appreciation of their assistance at all times. Whenever I have asked for help I have always received it from the heads of the department and from all officers.

MR. WILLMOTT (Sussex): I appreciated the Minister's remarks on the Agricultural Estimates, especially those dealing with the purchase of heifer calves. That is a matter that has been in my mind for some time. Some of the officials of the Minister's department told me some weeks ago that this was being done. It is most essential for us to get as many heifer calves as possible, because we are all aware of the trouble we had to build up our dairy herds after the last war, when group settlement was begun. Many hundreds came from the Eastern States because we could not supply them here in Western Australia, and I have always contended that that is how many of our diseases were introduced. I was pleased to hear the Minister say that there are depots where the stock is being carried and, when the time is opportune and land selection begins again, we shall have dairy herds from which to select immediately. I appreciate what the Minister said about superphosphate, especially in the South-West. The use of superphosphate in the South-West is absolutely essential, because our pasture country is going back for lack of super. Fortunately,

our agricultural experts have demonstrated that copper is beneficial to our South-West country, or the greater part of it, and that has eased the position slightly.

I hope the Minister will continue to keep in contact with the Federal authorities with a view to seeing that work is started at Nauru as early as possible. Of course, a lot must happen before that comes to pass. As the Minister said, when and how the work can be done depends upon military strategy. Some of our best phosphatic rock came from Nauru. The rock we have been getting from Egypt and elsewhere is not nearly up to the same standard and our pastures have suffered in consequence. I want to refer now to bulldozers. The Ministers explained what excellent work they have been doing. He said that in experimental work carried out round Pinjarra, land had been cleared for 17s. 6d. an acre. I admit our country in the South-West is much heavier, but a lot of it could be cleared at quite a reasonable cost with bulldozers. The sooner we get bulldozers in my electorate and the lower South-West the better it will be. The Minister knows that quite a number of settlers have taken up a second block, and some have taken up three blocks, just to get the small portion of the land which was cleared. The balance is left lying idle, and I feel certain—and the majority of the settlers in my area would agree—that if further land could be cleared—which is impossible on account of the labour shortage—such work would be very beneficial.

I consider that if bulldozers were employed, we could settle a lot more people on the land. I know that many settlers would give up the second blocks they hold if they could have their land cleared. In that way two settlers could occupy two blocks instead of only one settler. If we could get bulldozers down there, it would be of great benefit to the dairying industry and to the State as a whole. The settlers would be only too pleased to pay the cost of clearing. I know that if a bulldozer came to my district I would be only too willing to book it up immediately. I have been fortunate enough to get hold of a chap with a small tractor and he has done quite good work, taking out the smaller timber—not the huge red gums and karris, but the smaller trees—so that we have been able to put pastures down. If we had a

bulldozer, that could be done far more thoroughly than is possible with small caterpillar tractors. I was glad to hear the Minister say there was one of these bulldozers on order, and that he hoped to get a larger one from America as soon as the opportunity offered.

I would like the Minister to tell me approximately when he thinks we shall be likely to have one in the South-West. I know there is one in the Albany district. If we could get more bulldozers and more super, I feel sure production would increase. As the Minister stated, we must get down to bedrock with our dairying industry and put it on a sound basis; because, after the war, we may be getting lower prices. He pointed out that there would be cheaper articles competing against our butter, that margarine would be produced again and that we must do everything we can to overcome that difficulty. If we could get our land cleared and could secure super, it would assist in producing butterfat at cheaper rates than is possible at present. I take this opportunity to thank the Minister for giving us such a very fair outline of what the butterfat producers in particular will have to beware of in the future.

**MR. BERRY** (Irwin-Moore): Emanating from the member for Pingelly tonight, I heard what I thought to be a sound, concrete proposal. He suggested that we in Australia should forthwith commence to make the implements and mechanical parts necessary to repair the ravages of the Japanese at Nauru Island, even before we are in a position to retake it. That suggestion is sound. It would save us time and bring us an economic reward, and I trust the suggestion will go forward from our virile Minister when he next interviews Mr. Bulcock. I was not pleased with the reply the Minister told us he had received from the Prime Minister concerning Nauru. Frankly, I did not believe it; but it would be just as well not to comment on that. We must accept it as being a correct statement. The reason I do not like it is that I know Nauru and Ocean Islands. If we accept it as correct, it merely enhances the suggestion of the member for Pingelly. Ever since I have been a member of this House I have endeavoured to point the way, to the best of my ability, to an opening which is geographically ours in the Far East in con-

nection with our markets. I have been amazed to realise that, for some reason unknown to me, there seems to be the least possible interest taken in these Far Eastern countries with a view to obtaining the maximum results from the marketing standpoint. If we are not careful, English production and American ingenuity will take those markets from us in the post-war period.

I am at a loss to understand why it is necessary for a commissioner from India and a commissioner from Ceylon to come to us and beg of us to trade with them. I have seen no mention in the newspapers nor have I heard by word of mouth of a representative of this country having been sent away on a similar mission. The people of England, in their agriculture, have shown us an example. When adversity came to them, they were in a position to face it and overcome it. On the statement of the Minister we are in a similar position with regard to market possibilities after the war. Yet just north of us, only five or six days travel by mailboat, are 480,000,000 people in India and 480,000,000 in China requiring the very things we can supply. It is of no use telling me that the buying capacity does not exist in those countries. Those countries are infinitely wealthier per square inch than Australia is per square mile. It behoves us to ensure that the markets for Australian produce in the future are the markets to be found in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Why should we, who are 11,000 miles from Britain, constantly turn our eyes to her and ask her to help us when we could probably find, with little difficulty, markets in the countries I have mentioned. To me the situation is deplorable.

Mention has been made of pigs. I believe we could sell more pigs up there in a day than we could in England in a month. I think we could sell all our wool, wheat, eggs, butter and other things we produce in Australia if we only faced up to the possibilities. Yet, through coal strikes, shipping strikes and industrial stupidity generally, Australia is doing no good whatsoever. The policy of intense protection for Australia, which prevents our importing this or that, will, together with the strikes mentioned, lead us to national destruction. Our opportunity is in the islands at the North. The door is wide open, and I for one propose to

walk through it, whatever other people in Australia intend to do. The people of the Far East want the very things we can supply. I have in mind at the moment the Chapman engine, which is being manufactured in this little town of ours. I believe that 100,000 of them could be sold in the Far East in the course of a few months after the war.

This is the only contribution I intend to make to the debate on these Estimates. I am heartily sick of standing up here like a loon, talking as I am doing and finding nothing done. A man can talk and nothing at all happens. But something must happen if we wish the people who are here to remain here, altogether apart from the professed desire so often expressed that more people should come to Australia. Australia is one of the finest countries in the world with some of the silliest people in the world in it.

Mr. W. Hegney: Speak for yourself.

Mr. BERRY: I am here. That is my candid opinion and I believe it is the opinion of a great number of people in Australia. In future let us hear of developing markets in the Far East in order to bring prosperity to this section of the continent, which has everything to supply that is needed up there.

MR. MANN (Beverley): The Minister has explained the position of the agricultural industry and I agree that we have great problems to face. England is the largest buyer of our commodities, but whether that will continue is open to question. If the cost of producing our butter could be brought down to the price of producing margarine, the outlook would certainly be better. If we could supply milk, butter and other lines in dehydrated form, it might help. I doubt whether Australia is working along the right lines. Canada has increased its pig industry tremendously and last year it exported eight millions carcasses to the Old Country. The Government of Canada has subsidised the industry, the present basis of prices being 1s. per lb., but in Western Australia we are not doing that. I believe that Canada and Denmark, prior to the war, were breeding the large white Yorkshire.

I am convinced that there is great room for improvement in the quality of the pigs we are producing. Canada's idea was to improve the industry in order to get the trade with England. In Western Australia

lia, however, it is much easier to breed pigs than it is in Canada; in fact I know of no country more suitable for the industry. In the South-West during the greater part of the year, green pasture is available, and that is just as important to the sow as it is to the cow. With correct breeding, pasture of that sort will produce the ideal pig. I have judged at a number of country shows and the experience there has been that a very heavy type of pig has been exhibited. We have not set out to get the right strain. If only we got the right strain, there would be a tremendous future for the industry. If one takes a line of pigs anywhere, one will find that some are long and thin shouldered and with good hindquarters, while others show traces of the old-fashioned Berkshire. If we could, by providing expert advice or by means of propaganda, bring about an improvement in the strain of the pigs being bred, it would be all to the good of the industry.

As the Minister stated, the future of dairying is not bright. As regards wool, I believe that this important product is going to have a very tough trot because, during the period of the war, some countries have had to carry on without wool supplies. This has given artificial fabrics an opening and science has helped the substitute article greatly. We have increased our flocks enormously, and the yield of wool per sheep, thanks to the aid of science, has also increased. Twenty-five years ago we had the plain bodied merino ram, whereas today we have scientific stud masters producing sheep with a tremendous covering, and we have found that the benefits of improved feeding have been transmitted to the progeny. Instead of the fine merino wool, we have gone in for the comeback and Corriedale, a 64 wool or lower than that. Yet at one time we were hopeful that fine wool would play a big part in the destiny of the country. If we consider the latest figures dealing with rayon, we must appreciate that the position for wool is becoming very difficult indeed.

There is one point I want to raise with the Minister and that is the question of the salaries paid to veterinary scientists. It takes five years for a young man to qualify as a veterinary surgeon and the cost of his training would be about £1,500. After five years of training, however, a veterinary surgeon is appointed to a position at the

magnificent salary of £385 or £400 a year. A medical student does one year more and on completing his course can command £600 a year. The country is crying out for veterinary surgeons, and when I say veterinary surgeons I do not merely mean the man who is treating ordinary small diseases in stock. I mean the man who is doing valuable laboratory research work. The most competent man in the Commonwealth Health Laboratory, Dr. Bull, is a qualified veterinary surgeon.

I wish to pay tribute to two men in this State, Dr. Bennetts and Dr. Underwood. Dr. Bennetts is a qualified veterinary surgeon and has been responsible for valuable research work here. The same applies to Dr. Underwood, an outstanding man on the nutrition side. Compare their value to the community with the value of some other officials that could be mentioned and consider the relative salaries paid to each! Their value is superior to that of a lumper or a miner. The Minister will agree with me that we are indeed fortunate in having some outstanding men for research work here. I pay a tribute to them. Would it not be possible to arrange a Federal Conference with a view to considering increased payments to veterinary surgeons?

Mr. Smith: Why do not they start a B.M.A.?

Mr. MANN: Their numbers are too small. It costs at least £1,500 to enable a man to qualify. If he did one extra year's work, he could qualify as a doctor. These men must be used for research work; we are living in an age of research. I am convinced the Minister will agree with me that they are entitled to higher remuneration. The number of students for the subject is not large. Some people have an idea that when we speak in this way we are considering only the farmers. That is not so; the matter must be considered from the broader aspect of the welfare of the State. I sincerely hope consideration will be given to the subject. I listened with great interest to the Minister's remarks on the question of heifers. I think he has enunciated a good policy. With regard to new settlements, there will be no great progress made so long as we keep on demanding extreme prices. The only other matter on which I wish to say a word or two is the flax industry. When the war is over, that industry here will be finished.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Definitely!

Mr. MANN: We shall have no hope then whatever of competing with Ireland or Greece. We cannot do so and continue to pay the present high wages.

The Premier: Flax can be grown as a rotation crop.

Mr. MANN: What would the consumption of flax in Australia be? Could we hope to manufacture flax and export it? I remember that the member for South Fremantle, when speaking to the Address-in-reply, said it would be a good thing if we could set up wool manufacture in Australia, but we have no more hope of doing that and exporting it oversea than we have of flying. We could not possibly compete with Belgium and Germany, nor with other parts of the world, because of our high wages.

Mr. Smith: What do you suggest? Bringing wages down?

Mr. MANN: No. There must be some balance. Let me put another question, although I may be ruled out of order by the Chairman. Is it not a fact that the higher the wages, the higher the cost of living? One is chasing the other all the time. What of the Atlantic Charter? Governments may make agreements on those lines, but is that charter worth a snap of the fingers to Australia? It is the person at the ballot box who decides; we are only masters while we are in Parliament. I do not wish to detain the Committee much longer, but I have a copy of the Economic News and Bulletin issued each month by the Queensland Bureau of Industry. In it appears an article dealing with post-war reconstruction. It points out that the Commonwealth is not providing for anything in connection with post-war agricultural production, although it is dropping disturbing hints. The Minister's speech has been enlightening on many essential matters. I hope it will bring home to the people that for quite a while we have been living in a perfect fool's paradise.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco): I was very interested in the Minister's remarks, especially about England. Having lived there for so long, I know what the English people can do when they are determined to win out on anything. We also are people from England and surely we, too, can do something. I have just returned from Geraldton, where I have been for the

last few days. I am sure the Minister will agree with me when I say that at Geraldton we have one of the most wonderful ports in the State for dealing with agricultural products. The port will accommodate vessels drawing up to 30 ft. Am I right?

The Premier: Twenty-nine feet.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: The vessel I saw there was drawing about 30 ft. When a vessel draws over 30 ft., it is no longer a commercial vessel; it is a luxury liner. Therefore, we must realise that vessels drawing up to 30 ft. are those which should enter our minor ports. I thought while I was in Geraldton that it was a port on its own; in fact, we should have there a State within a State, and Geraldton should be its chief city and port. Every facility is available there for loading up to eight vessels with wheat, each vessel drawing, as the Premier said, up to 29 ft. When we regain our islands north of Australia, ships will be able to load at Geraldton and proceed direct not only to those islands, but also to India and China, and that would have the effect of relieving the congestion at Fremantle. I do not know whether what I am about to say is true—the Premier might be able to enlighten me—but I was told that work could be done at Geraldton in eight days which takes 10 days to do at Fremantle. I was also told that wool could be scoured at Geraldton, as the water is available there, and that it could be shipped from Geraldton as well as from Fremantle.

I think we have an amazing opportunity to make more use of our northern ports and of expanding and extending our activities in the north. That is all I have to say on that subject, except to add that I consider Geraldton a wonderful town. Perhaps next time I may go further north, and then I may be able to agree with the Minister for the North-West that what I have said of Geraldton applies also to towns beyond it. I might add that the Geraldton harbour has a rock bottom and consequently is not troubled with silting sand. I wish to say a word or two about what England has done with regard to sugar. What the Minister said had been done was also done during the 1914-18 war, but England realised that perhaps it could get sugar cheaper elsewhere and did so. The Minister did not mention the subject of milk and I cannot allow these Estimates

to pass without saying something on that question. I have said before that England is providing milk for her people at a rate cheaper than we are. I would like to know why. She sells sugar more cheaply. Why? We produce sugar; we produce meat; yet we charge more for those articles than is charged in England. Why is that? Perhaps the Minister may be able to supply the answer. It has been suggested that it is because our people receive more in wages and therefore can pay more. That is simply further evidence of the vicious economic circle. Once we pay more wages we have to pay more for products. What is important is not the amount that one gets in wages but what one can purchase in goods. Once we can obtain goods cheaply wages will accommodate themselves to the situation.

**Mr. Holman:** The Arbitration Court bases wages on the prices of commodities.

**Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER:** That is true, but that involves the vicious circle to which I have alluded. What I want to know is why such goods can be purchased more cheaply in England than is possible here. We have to sell our commodities on the world's market. I was interested in the Minister's remarks regarding the achievements in Great Britain. Although born in Australia, I am proud to be a Britisher and when I heard the Minister's remarks I felt I must say something to express my pride in those achievements. England has done much to show the world what can be accomplished during wartime in producing goods required by her own people.

**Item—Noxious Weeds, £475:**

**Mr. McLARTY:** This item shows an increase from £98 to £475. Is there any particular noxious weed that has necessitated the increase?

**The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** Yes. One or two weeds were brought under the notice of the department, one in the Merredin district and another in the South-West. The department is endeavouring to stop the seeding of the weeds and their spread.

**Item—Grade Herd Testing, £570:**

**Mr. McLARTY:** There is a substantial increase in this Vote. Does that mean that the Government intends continuing with grade herd testing in the future?

**The Minister for Agriculture:** Yes.

**Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER:** Reverting to the question of noxious weeds, I wish to draw the attention of the Minister to the use of prickly pears in Osborne Park as hedges. It is a noxious weed that has caused much trouble in Queensland, and I do not think it is in the interests of the State to allow the prickly pear to grow here.

**Vote put and passed.**

**Vote—College of Agriculture, £11,285:**

**MR. HOLMAN** (Forrest): Dealing with post-war education, I think considerable assistance could be rendered by the Agricultural Department, especially in country centres. I suggest to the Minister that some of the officers versed in agricultural science should be allowed to visit country schools. When the timber is cut out we hope that the younger generation will take up the land and open up the country. The children could be afforded some education on such subjects as pruning and dairying as well as many other agricultural topics. If they are to carry on after their parents, the rising generation should have this education and then they would be better able to carry on with farming operations. It is not always possible for country children to attend the agricultural schools, and the State should do its utmost to supply this particular want. During the Address-in-reply debate I mentioned that it would be of advantage if officers of the Agricultural Department visited the timber centres and from inquiries ascertained whether any of the men desired to engage in orchard or dairy work in the South-West. I believe many good settlers could be secured from that source. Some of the most successful dairymen and orchardists have come from the timber industry, and certainly many of those whose thoughts are along those lines could receive advice and encouragement from the visits of agricultural experts. The Forests Department would probably be able to provide land.

**The Premier:** But it does not.

**Mr. HOLMAN:** From time to time it releases areas.

**The Premier:** But only small patches.

**Mr. HOLMAN:** But men are able to make quite a good living on small patches. One has only to visit the irrigation districts of Victoria to see what production can be obtained from small acreages. I have previ-

ously mentioned in this House the experience in Palestine where, from a very small area, sufficient returns are received to maintain 140 girls at a big college. In the South-West of this State the young people do not wish to live on timber mills all their lives, but they desire to become independent and be of assistance to the State as agriculturists. They should be encouraged to take up land. I would be lacking in my duty if I were not to compliment the Minister for Agriculture upon the manner in which he introduced his departmental Estimates. Members generally realise that there is no man more capable of undertaking that task, and the people of Western Australia realise that, too. I was interested in his references to the clearing done by bulldozers, which are doing a wonderful job. There are tremendous possibilities from that standpoint.

We must remember that the present is the mechanical age in agriculture, and what can be done in that respect can be seen in the operations of mechanical potato diggers. They have filled the gap caused by the lack of manpower and it is easy to visualise the disappearance of the human element in potato digging. When the war has run its course, Western Australia should see that it procures some of the machinery that will be available from military sources. I do not want this State to be left behind when it comes to the purchase of surplus machinery that is now used by the military forces, but will be sold at a later stage. No doubt the Government is well aware of the position and I trust it will lose no opportunity to see that this State gets its full share of that machinery.

**MR. WILLMOTT** (Sussex): I have pleasure in supporting the remarks of the member for Forrest regarding agriculture. I am given to understand that a number of children have applied for entry to the Denmark and Narrogin schools but so far a number have not been able to gain admission. I think this is an opportune time to impress upon the Minister the need for further agricultural colleges and to urge that one be established in the South-West.

Vote put and passed.

This concluded the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year.

Resolutions reported, and the report adopted.

*In Committee of Ways and Means.*

The PREMIER: I move—

That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1945, a sum not exceeding £3,957,680 be granted from the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

### STATE TRADING CONCERNS ESTIMATES, 1944-45.

Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the State Trading Concerns for the year ending the 30th June, 1945 now considered, Hon. J. B. Sleeman in the Chair.

*Divisions—State Engineering Works, £310,700; State Quarries, £100; West Australian Meat Exports, £140,816; State Brick Works, £62,425; State Hotels, £69,948; State Shipping Service, £309,553; State Sawmills, £654,391; Wyndham Freezing Works, £25,393—agreed to.*

This concluded the Estimates of the Trading Concerns for the year.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

### LOAN ESTIMATES, 1944-45.

*In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 23rd November. Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

*Vote—Departmental, £28,200:*

**MR. WATTS** (Katanning) [9.6]: These Loan Estimates appear to me to require some examination. The first point is that owing to shortage of manpower and material the State Government has been precluded from carrying out its normal programme of loan works. By this means the total indebtedness of the State has been reduced per head, and that reduction of course has been assisted by the slight increase in the State population. From that aspect of affairs the Premier seems to derive a great measure of comfort, while it does not comfort me, because I think that in the net result the alleged improvement in the State's financial position is almost entirely illusory. Deficiencies have occurred in the intervening period as regards our transport facilities, our schools and hospitals and necessary water supplies and other things—had all these been looked after or

provided, as the case might require, then there would have been perhaps some solid ground for comfort. But one does not need to draw on one's imagination to conclude that these things are not as they should be and not as they would be had the money been expended upon them. One has only to refer to the published evidence and statements of Government officials, many of which were quoted last evening in the debate on the railway system. Had those matters received attention the State's debt would unquestionably be much higher than it is to-day, and indeed very much higher than it was in the pre-war period.

• Some of the works that have to be done are going to be of a non-reproductive character, unless promises which have been made become mere scraps of paper. We know that the intention of the Commonwealth is not to take up the whole of the losses that may accrue; it will at most seek to divide them with the State. The system that is now being used in that respect will set up a loss in view of the great capital cost, in view of the rents that will be charged. What is going to be the position if all the promises that have been made to the people repeatedly during the war period cannot be fulfilled? I refer to the water supplies and other costly propositions which are going to provide instances when it is quite clear that the population to be served will not produce the revenue that will meet the cost of pumping and maintenance, for instance. I am not suggesting for one moment that we should not undertake those works. Let there be no mistake about it, there has been too much said about them to permit of anyone going back on promises that have been made. We have to face up to the position that there are going to be non-reproductive works in the immediate future. If after their construction they are going to be a severe burden on the State's finances, it does not afford any great amount of gratification about the present position, improved though it may appear to be from the point of view of figures as against the pre-war period.

The Premier: It will provide a lot of employment.

Mr. WATTS: Yes, it will be productive in that direction. The works must be carried out. They will achieve desirable results in some directions, but financially they must in-

volve the State in considerably greater monetary obligations. Let us look at the question of our so-called public utilities, and consider the money which must be spent on them if they are to carry out the true intention and meaning of the word "utility." If they are not given very considerable attention—and that attention will involve the expenditure of large amounts of money in order to provide greater revenue—they will cease to be utilities almost entirely because they will have lost their aspect of usefulness so far as the public is concerned. I find there has got to be considerable expenditure on buildings, great improvements in buildings for education. There must be! I am convinced that the public will not rest content unless that expenditure takes place: nor do I think they should in view of all that has transpired in regard to these matters of recent years. It will not be practicable, as I see it, to undertake this expenditure out of the State's revenue. It will have to be done from further loan moneys, and once again the liability will fall upon the citizens of the State, and the population will by no means increase in proportion to the rate at which the liability increases in order to catch up the very serious arrears that are in existence in our public utilities, our educational facilities, our public hospitals and in other matters.

We know that the Education Department is considering the erection of area schools, expenditure in which direction is inevitable. The re-building of certain schools cannot be much longer postponed. The extension of other schools is very necessary, and will have to be carried out as soon as labour and materials are available. From moneys thus provided there is no monetary return in hard cash. There is a return in terms of social security and intellectual independence, but not in money. Western Australia, its Government and its people, have got to face up to a financial position which is going to be much more involved in the post pre-war period. The fact that these things have not been done during the war, that there has been a standstill in the last three years of this type of work, does not warrant the point of view that finances have improved during the war period. That improvement is not of a nature which has maintained and increased the assets of the State whilst also reducing its indebtedness. It has been in a

position where the assets have run to seed and improvements have not been effected, thus resulting in some slight improvement per head in the loan indebtedness.

The Premier: Some of our mortgage has been wiped off.

Mr. WATTS: Most of our buildings badly need renovating, and it will cost more than we paid off the mortgage to restore the buildings to represent a security for the remainder.

The Premier: I agree, but the fact remains!

Mr. WATTS: The Premier has said that the Grants Commission has adopted a new method of assessing the disabilities of the State, and that this new method may leave the State without sufficient resources with which to carry on. On top of this the Premier also claims that the financial position of the State is very sound compared with what it was eight or ten years ago. For the reasons which I have mentioned and for others, I am prepared to query that statement. It is true that since the Premier took office the State's revenue has increased by approximately £3,000,000 per annum, but it is also true that the expenditure of the State has increased by a greater amount. There has been actually no improvement from the point of view of revenue and expenditure in the intervening period.

The Premier: We have done a lot of work out of revenue that we used to do out of loan.

Mr. WATTS: There is much work not done either out of revenue or loan, I submit, and that argument, tenable though it might be in normal circumstances, loses its force today for the reasons I have given. In the last eight years through no fault of the Treasurer we have lost, I believe—I hope temporarily—our rights over income taxation, although a definite assurance was given that these rights would be returned to us after the cessation of hostilities. We now find that the Federal Attorney General recently expressed the opinion that the present position would become permanent. When one takes into consideration the deterioration of the State's assets, the enormous sum of money required to remedy the existing state of affairs, and to construct public works of an essential character in the post-war period, anyone who takes a far-sighted and realistic view of the State's finances must

come to the conclusion that the position has become more serious.

There is need for an immediate and clear understanding as to the financial relationship of the Commonwealth with the State, and for a searching inquiry into ways and means of bringing about efficiency in State instrumentalities and in respect of a reduction of overhead costs. There is need for a clear understanding with the Commonwealth Government as to the provision of finance through the Loan Council for essential and promised post-war works. In view of all the circumstances there is no room for optimism, but there is need for the closest application on the part of our public men to a solution of this and associated problems. We know that Western Australia is capable of great development, but it will never develop satisfactorily as long as too great a share in the financial management and control of that development devolves upon the authorities at Canberra irrespective of their political colour. For many years it has been quite clear that their interests do not lie in developing Western Australia. In more recent years it has been clear, to me at any rate, that they can neither appreciate nor find a solution for the problems which face Western Australia.

There has been too much inclination on the part of the State Government to submit to the persuasions of Canberra, and in the name of wholehearted co-operation in the war effort to permit the needs of this State to be overlooked. There is no such indication in New South Wales. The reports of the Railway Commissioner in that State show that expensive additions have been made to the rollingstock, and that new machinery has been readily available. On the other hand, in Western Australia, the testimony of the Deputy Secretary of Railways shows a tremendous falling off in available rollingstock, and the necessary machinery has been almost impossible to obtain. A few nights ago the Premier agreed that there had been a different type of treatment in regard to that question as between this State and the other States. I do not doubt that he protested.

The Premier: We have had a lot more machinery.

Mr. WATTS: Only recently, but this has been going on for some time. It has been part of our trouble during the last few years. Of course it is commendable to stand behind

any Government in the war effort. It may be even more commendable from the Government point of view to stand behind the war effort of the present Commonwealth Government.

The Premier: Of any Government.

Mr. WATTS: It may be particularly commendable in this instance in the Premier's view. I feel that we must remember that the Government of this State is first and foremost responsible to the people of the State, and should never agree to allow its needs and requirements to be on a low priority, if Governments of other States with no greater claims to their proper share in the total resources available are allowed to take a greater share of the common pool. That seems to be the position when we consider the reports from the other States of the Commonwealth as compared with the position of our own State. It is not inconceivable that in the post-war period the finding of public finance on an Australia-wide basis may by no means be as easy as we may feel sometimes it will be, if we can gauge our opinions by the happenings in the war period. People today are unable to spend their money. All kinds of restrictions are imposed upon them.

Hundreds of young men and women are possessed of sufficient money to enable them to build homes for themselves, and many others have funds for all sorts of purchases which they cannot make, so they have invested a large proportion of their resources in Commonwealth loans. Those people will be anxious to lay out their money in the post-war period, and it is extremely unlikely they will be willing to invest any large proportion of their resources in Commonwealth loans. They will want to develop their own lives in their own way, and they will be entitled to do so. The development of enormous business concerns is similarly restricted. Their financial resources have to a great degree gone to swell the Commonwealth war finance. They have not been able to develop as they wished. If there is to be any major freedom after the war, particularly for young people, as is most desirable, they will want to turn their money to their own devices and their own type of development. Much of the money which has been stored up during the war period will be required for priority erections, improvements and repairs, particularly to farming properties in the last-mentioned instance, because these things

have not been touched during the war owing to restrictions in manpower, materials, etc.

The Premier: The expenditure of that money will help the position considerably.

Mr. WATTS: It will not enable the Government to get substantial peace finance. If we turn to the proposals which have been put up for post-war works by the respective Australian Governments, and those that are contemplated by the Commonwealth Government itself, it will be found that they will involve hundreds of millions of pounds. These hundreds of millions of pounds, in view of the other expenditure which must take place and which has been extracted from the public during the war by restrictions of all kinds will then be invested, and it will not be easy to obtain the necessary finance for all the works required to be done. To all the expenditure on works to which I have referred we have to add these other propositions in regard to finance which in past times have been financed through loan moneys, and which I have no guarantee will not be financed by loan moneys now. Take the case of the demobilisation of the Armed Forces! That will involve millions of loan money in some form of gratuities, such as were paid after the last war, or can that be done out of revenue?

Then there is the question of the erection of service homes. They must be built in large numbers at the cessation of hostilities. We have three or four times as many people in the Armed Services now as there were during the last war, and that will probably involve the expenditure of five or six times as much money on the war service homes scheme. If these people come through their active service alive they will have had six or seven years in the Forces, and it will be necessary for them to be given these homes very promptly, or the greater part of their young lives will be gone and they will be middle-aged before settling down in homes of their own. There should be no possibility of a number of years elapsing before these matters receive attention. They will have to be done promptly. I am not certain that plans for all these things are laid down.

I feel that if the war were to end 12 months from today and the need for demobilisation and reinstatement of the people in our Forces came about quickly, there would be almost chaos because there would not have been laid down plans and arrangements for carrying them into effect in the

way they should be. There has been more talk than action, more reports than definite arrangements for doing these things. Whether those talks and reports can be converted into action in quick time is more than I can say, but I think there is a grave risk of chaotic happenings in regard to these problems unless definite and regular measures are taken a short time from now. I do not want to be too pessimistic in regard to it; but it is time the public, the Government and all of us here woke up to the fact that there has not been done a great deal of the work that should have been done; and at this stage of the last war there was not anything like the problem which now exists because of the vastly greater number of people concerned and the vastly greater number of problems that have been built up in the intervening years.

The Premier: That is not uncommon.

Mr. WATTS: I agree that it will not be common to Australia alone. I do not suggest there will not be ways and means of making available substantial sums of money. I am convinced that the claims of this State in regard to development are likely to be a long way down in the list of priorities, unless a forcible effort is made in the near future definitely to consider the system to be followed and the works actually to be done. A Micawber-like policy of waiting for something to turn up after the war will result in Western Australia being hamstrung after the war, as it was before the war and has been during the war. That is something I do not want to see happen. While we can justify the holding up of things during the war, the people will not allow us to justify the retention of that state of affairs for a long time afterwards. The next item to which I wish to refer is the arrangement made with the Commonwealth concerning the State Savings Bank. Clause (7) of the agreement made between the State and the Commonwealth in relation to the taking over of the State Savings Bank by the Commonwealth provides that the State Government shall have the right to borrow from time to time from the bank 70 per centum of such sum or sums as the bank shall from time to time notify to be the increase in the amount of depositors' balances in Western Australia. These are the exact words of the clause in the agreement made in 1931:

Seventy per centum of such sum or sums as the bank shall from time to time notify to be

the increase in the amount of depositors' balances in Western Australia.

That agreement was made by the then Premier of this State and was ratified by Parliament. There are many other provisions, of course. Last year the Treasurer pointed out that on account of the great increase in deposits, an amount of approximately £6,000,000 would have been available under this provision; but that the State Government, at the request of the Commonwealth, had agreed to limit the amount to £390,000 a year, which was the amount received from that source during the first year of the war. The 1931 agreement provided further that, should the State Government not require the whole of such 70 per cent. of increased deposits, the bank would be entitled to retain such part as was not availed of by the State Government; and, in the event of the depositors' balances decreasing in any quarter, the amount of the decreases should be set off against subsequent decreases before the State Government should be entitled to any additional advance. I do not object to the limitation to £390,000 during the war because, on the evidence before us, no matter how much money the Treasurer had, he would find great difficulty in spending it. That is not a troublesome aspect; but the Treasurer's statement does not make it plain that when the war ends we shall be able to take advantage of the full amount to which we would otherwise have been entitled. It seems to me, from the references he made—and I caused him to say more than he intended to in his address on the Loan Estimates—we shall be limited to £390,000; and the only saving grace will be that after the war, if withdrawals exceed deposits, we shall still be able to draw £390,000 for a short period.

The Premier: For a long period.

Mr. WATTS: Not so very long. I have no doubt we shall be able to use this money in a lump sum after the war, and I do not think the agreement should have been varied, without ratification by Parliament. I understand the original arrangement was subject to Parliamentary approval, and any amendment of it should also be subject to such approval. This is the position of deposits in the bank, and they are likely to start decreasing when the war ends. The Treasurer will continue to draw £390,000 and a stage will be reached when the differ-

ence, between pre-war and post-war deposits will be less than £390,000, caused by two things; by withdrawals and by a reduction of deposits. I have read and re-read what the Treasurer said last year and this year and that, I understand, is the new arrangement made. He will be receiving £390,000 but not for a long period after the war. In lieu of being able, for reasons I have given earlier, to have the use of that money when required we shall find we have a very small sum by comparison with what we might have had, unless the forecast of actual decreased deposits after the war—which I am certain is right—proves incorrect.

I want to say a word or two on the question of variations of the figures of loan expenditure which I find in the returns submitted with the Estimates in regard to some of our works. According to the table issued with the Loan Estimates, I find that the outstanding loan expenditure on the Fremantle harbour is £2,918,395; but according to the returns issued with the General Estimates, interest and sinking fund and exchange were charged on the sum of £3,458,790. Between those two figures there is a difference of £540,000. In regard to the Geraldton harbour works, the Loan Estimates show a total expenditure of £902,834, less £14,506 unexpended, but interest and sinking fund are being charged on £1,029,709, so that in this case there is a difference of at least £127,000. In respect of the Bunbury harbour, the loans authorised and expended are shown as £604,505, whereas interest and sinking fund are being paid on a sum which is £85,000 greater; and in respect of the Albany harbour the amount of loan moneys expended to date are shown as £154,193, while the amount on which interest and sinking fund are being paid is £272,299, the difference being £118,000.

Totalling these four items, the authorisations shown in the Loan Estimates amount to £4,579,929, whereas the loan liability on which interest and sinking fund are charged is £5,449,975, a difference of £870,000 in all. I think that if our returns can be gone into in that way and differences found in items such as that, it is high time that we overhauled the system and used some new method in order that members may not have this conflict of figures when trying to understand what is the position of these various public works, many of

them of the greatest importance and the greatest interest to members of this Committee. I would now like to say a word or two concerning some other items in the Estimates. There is an item of £13,000 which it is proposed to spend on dredging the Bunbury harbour. I noticed that the Premier made no reference to this item at all.

The Premier: That is dependent on whether we can get a suitable dredge.

Mr. WATTS: My point has nothing to do with that. I have no objection to the dredging being done, unprofitable though it may be in the opinion of some people. There seems to be need to keep that harbour open for shipping in the post-war period, difficult though the task appears to be. I object to the cost—estimated at £13,000—coming out of loan money. This has happened on more than one occasion for quite a number of years. While we have surpluses in the Fremantle Harbour Trust which are taken into Consolidated Revenue, the deficiency of the Bunbury Harbour Board, which is £29,000 for the year ended last June, will simply be increased by another £600 or £700 by virtue of interest and sinking fund, if this loan money is spent on dredging. I was looking at some of the reports of the Auditor General, and I found that in his 44th report he drew attention to past practices of this kind in these words, which are to be found at page 58—

As regards the borrowing of money for maintenance dredging, it has been repeatedly pointed out that under Section 54 of the Act the expenditure should have been met out of collections prior to the payment of interest to the Treasury on capital account

In view of those considerations; in view of the revenue and expenditure differences that exist in our different harbours in Western Australia; and in view of this extremely bad method of using loan moneys for purely maintenance work that has to be done year after year, it seems to me there is every reason why the control of our various harbours should be placed under one harbour board and the whole of the funds available utilised to the best advantage in keeping all our necessary ports open and reasonably efficient, without increasing the loan indebtedness in regard to works that are definitely of a capital nature. That is all I have to say for the present on the figures arising out of the Loan Estimates.

I want to make a few comments on regional development. I recently read with interest a report issued on the 15th June, 1944, by the Premier of New South Wales, Mr. McKell, regarding the decentralisation of State planning. In the course of his remarks Mr. McKell said—

This leads to the question of exactly what will be the function of a regional development committee, and I can best indicate that by saying that it will be progressively to prepare a scheme for the development of its region in order that it might support the maximum population possible with adequate Australian standards of living. I realise that this is a broad charter, but it is a plain objective fully justified by our need effectively to occupy and defend this country. I want a clearly defined and integrated plan for each region starting with a review of natural resources and existing population and industry; traversing with precision the lines that development should take to make the most of these resources; and finishing with a statement of the population and productivity possible when the plans are implemented.

That is what we want in Western Australia and that is what we have not had. We do not know from day to day what are the broad plans that are to be carried into effect with regard to the post-war development in this State. We hear many words and we see a great many reports and there have been vast promises, none of which I hope will be of a delusory character, but like Mr. McKell, I think members here are entitled to ask for clearly defined plans for each region of the State, and that the State should be broken up into regions as has been done in New South Wales.

Mr. Willmott called attention to the state of the Committee.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

Mr. WATTS: I was observing that we in Western Australia want this regional plan and we want regional authorities or committees such as have been appointed in New South Wales to deal with and prepare plans so that we might know with precision the lines development should take to make the most of our resources, and finishing with a statement of the population and productivity possible when the plans are implemented. I say definitely we have not got that information and no step is being taken that is in evidence to arrive at that very desirable state of affairs as there is in New South Wales. I have a statement of a report made to Mr. McKell and two statements made by him to the Press regarding

the matter. The report of the Regional Boundaries Committee, consisting of Messrs. H. M. Sherrard (Chief Engineer, Main Roads Department), Professor J. M. Holmes (Professor of Geography at the Sydney University), and Mr. H. G. Harris (Acting Surveyor-General), was presented to Mr. McKell on the 20th March, 1944. The committee reported at considerable length on some matters to which Mr. McKell referred and regional committees have been put into operation for the purpose of going further into the matter.

[Mr. Fox took the Chair.]

It is not so many months ago since the Prime Minister inquired of various local authorities in our country areas whether they were prepared to put up suggestions with regard to regional planning. Some of them to my knowledge did so, but it does not appear to have borne any fruit because those local authorities with which I come into contact took some trouble—in one instance extending over a period of months—to compile suggestions of this nature. Since last July when they submitted their report, no further news has been heard. In the words of Mr. McKell—

I am conscious of the very valuable help that local authorities can give in planning of this character, and I am asking the shires and municipalities in each region to nominate six, being half the members of each Regional Development Committee. I propose that each committee shall include representatives of primary and secondary industry, and commerce, and experts in agriculture, forestry, etc., varying for each region as local conditions require.

But there has not been a similar state of affairs in Western Australia, and I firmly believe there ought to be, and it is not too late to set about it now. I am glad that the Minister for Railways is in his place because, although I do not propose to talk about railways as such, there are one or two aspects to which I would like to make reference in order that he may perhaps give them his personal attention. Presumably, in an effort to meet loan liability a little better, the Railway Department has been seeking to increase the rents that are payable for the premises occupied at Mt. Barker by the Mt. Barker Co-operative Company. Everyone knows that those premises, which are fairly extensive, have been erected on railway property, and for many years there has been no disputation between the parties as

to the rent that should be paid. The company, I submit, has paid the Railway Department a considerable amount in one way and another, not only in rent but also in labour and needed facilities, and has provided the railways with a part of their business.

At this period it has been suggested, without rhyme or reason, so far as I can see, that the rent being paid by the company should be increased. I hope that the Minister will have that point of view of his departmental officers examined and reviewed, because I submit the present is not a proper time to increase the liability per annum of a company such as this, which is serving the district in a very faithful manner and has, I believe, assisted the railways to a very great extent in the provision of business, not only there but also in neighbouring centres, and I think I am justified in urging that the company be left alone, if, as I am informed, the proposal is to be proceeded with.

Another item I wish to mention regarding railways is the need for the extension of road services. It is well to let the Committee know the exact position of the only road bus service we have in Western Australia, run by motor transport of a modern type. I refer to the road service between Perth and Kojonup. I have a copy of the railway timetable which contains this announcement—

Travel in comfort in the Railway Department's attractive cream and green bus. Obviously the Railway Department admits that this is a comfortable mode of travelling. Being of an inquiring turn of mind I looked up the Chief Secretary's answer to a question in another place about the Kojonup road bus service for the year ended the 30th June, 1944. For that year the gross proceeds amounted to £7,013, the cost of general repairs, running and maintenance, was £1,370 and £695 respectively, leaving a net profit on the service of £4,023, and the number of passengers carried was 8,667. The service follows a route of 160 miles, 50 miles of which is through virgin bush. Yet it carried 8,667 passengers in the 12 months, and out of a total revenue of £7,013, made £4,023 net profit. Thus four-sevenths of the total revenue represented net profit. If with the expenditure on new rollingstock and the carrying on of the service with the new rollingstock the Railway Department were in the position of showing four-sevenths of

the total revenue as net profit, I am satisfied that the difficulties of the Minister for Railways would be non-existent. I do not think any member will deny that.

What is the situation regarding this service as far as passengers are concerned? The member for Canning, in a recent speech, expressed the opinion that charges should be increased and then the service would be better. I suggest to him, make the service better and the public will probably be quite prepared to pay the charges. The railway service from Katanning to Perth covers 225 miles and the single fare is 22s. 8d. The Kojonup road bus travels 160 miles from Perth to Kojonup and the fare is a shilling or two more than that on the Diesel electric train. So we have this road vehicle travelling 65 miles less for a slightly higher fare to the passengers. To travel by that bus, passengers come from Gnowangerup. They deliberately pass by the Diesel train in order to catch the bus; they drive to Katanning and to Kojonup past the Diesel. They travel a distance of 63 miles to catch that bus and pay a higher fare than they would on the Diesel for travelling two-thirds of the mileage. To my way of thinking that is a fair example, coupled with the financial returns of the service, that if we first give the people the service, they do not mind paying for it; but they will not pay anything, if they can avoid it, for a service that is antiquated and archaic.

The Premier: You would not suggest that the Diesel is antiquated and archaic.

Mr. WATTS: No; the Diesel is all right up to a point, although the vehicles used on that run are too small and not powerful enough. I am not criticising them. I am simply saying that the member for Canning said the opposite to what I say. I say, "Give the service, charge more and the people will pay for it without complaining."

Mr. Rodoreda: You are on the right track.

Mr. WATTS: The service must be provided. If decent facilities are offered in a decent manner, and if they are regular and reliable, as this bus service is in 99 cases out of a hundred, then the people will respond and the Government will get the revenue which it will deserve. That is as I see the position. I cannot imagine any reasonable person, in the hot summer months or in the cold winter months, desiring to travel long distances in this State in a motorcar and be

subjected to the inconvenience of heat or cold if a reasonably speedy, reasonably priced trip was available to him in an air-conditioned motorbus. I definitely say that I am convinced of this. If steps are not taken to improve present conditions, the motorcar will be used to the fullest extent of the people's ability and the train will be left very severely alone. I do not want to see that happen.

Any criticism or argument which is indulged in by me, or by those associated with me, is not with the object of putting an end to the railways as a State institution. It is with the object of making them serve the State efficiently and well. We realise that the State is in business. Without going into any argument as to whether it is desirable or not, the State is in business and has vast sums invested in that business. In those circumstances, it is our duty to try to get revenue from any source; it is our duty to see that the revenue of the railways is as great as can be got by just means; and just means involve, first of all, efficiency. When we have got that we shall be a long way towards getting increased revenue, partly by increased numbers and increased traffic and partly because the State would be justified in making a small increase in the charge for the service rendered.

The Minister for Railways: I think that later on we may have to provide air transport.

Mr. WATTS: Yes. It is part of the same scheme of development, but we must have efficient methods. But what has happened in Western Australia? In 1933 the State Transport Co-ordination Act was passed. In effect, it could have driven competitive motor transport—the common carrier—off the road. It practically did so. As the years passed the Transport Board was compelled to issue more and more licenses for road transport in order to cope with the public demand. I have interviewed the board on more than one occasion because of the inability of the railways—the public utility—to carry out the work. The board was extremely reluctant to grant additional licenses, but finally was compelled to do so. The State has lost more money in that way than the Minister realises. That loss may have been obviated by introducing a policy ten years ago, when the State Transport Co-ordination Act was passed, of developing motor transport as an adjunct to the railway

service. But what was the attitude of the Railway Department when this extremely profitable Kojonup service was suggested to it in 1940? Cold water was thrown upon it for a long time. Such remarks as, "Do not think it would be satisfactory," "Doubt whether it would be advisable" were made. Finally it was established, and about 56 per cent. of the revenue received from it has been net profit—£4,000 out of £7,000. This efficient bus service, in its first completed year, made a profit of £2,800.

The Minister for Railways: Do you know the origin of it?

Mr. WATTS: I have a fair idea. Agitation was the origin of it, agitation by a certain gentleman who represented that part of the country. His demands were not received with acclamation; and I shall be glad if, when future propositions like that are put up to the Railway Department and to the Treasurer, they will be viewed with less asstance than that proposal was. I think I have detained the Committee long enough on this interesting subject, so I will draw to a close. My final word is this: I hope the State Government will lose no opportunity of impressing upon the Commonwealth the needs of this State, not only in the post-war period, but before our assets fall further into ruin. Let them study carefully—particularly the Minister for Railways—what is happening in the other States of the Commonwealth in so far as provision of facilities by the Commonwealth under National Security Regulations, or by the release of them, is concerned.

Let the Minister look at one of the reports of his own officers and ascertain the conditions under which the department is working, and I suggest to him that if he is then satisfied something is wrong, and that we are receiving treatment different from that which the Eastern States are receiving, he had better visit the Eastern States for a month and ponder closely on this subject. He will find there is quite a lot that he can learn. Notwithstanding that he went to the Eastern States a little over 12 months ago, and came back with little, if any information, I commend that suggestion to him. I also commend to the Premier the suggestion that we have an overhaul of our State book-keeping and follow out the recommendations of the Auditor General, by not allowing loan money to be expended on maintenance work. I suggest that we do not lose sight

of the fact that in the post-war period we want to be able to carry out the work which we have planned, besides a great many other works which ought to have been planned, but have not been up to date.

**HON. N. KEENAN** (Nedlands): The Leader of the Opposition has just delivered a very carefully prepared and very educative speech to an assembly varying from nine to twelve members until attention was called to its state. Of those nine to twelve members whom I have been watching from my seat five were sitting on the Government side of the Chamber.

The Minister for Lands: You know the state of the Committee when the Ministers were speaking.

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** That is no excuse.

The Minister for Lands: Yours is not even reasonable.

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** This debate is a matter of the greatest importance, but what interest has been taken in it?

The Minister for Works: We spy on the state of the House at various times and draw attention to it when it suits us.

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** That is no answer. The session has arrived at a time when matters of this kind should not be brought forward. It is on occasions such as this that private members have the opportunity to comment on the whole of the Government's actions and its policy. Such occasions are few under our procedure—there are only about four such occasions.

The Minister for Lands: That is true, but how long have you been in the Chamber during this sitting?

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** The whole of the time.

The Minister for Lands: You have not.

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** I contradict the Minister flatly. I have been here ever since the tea interval.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Let us stick to the debate.

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** I take it I am entitled to contradict a statement of that kind. I was pointing out that this was one of the few occasions when a private member is entitled to comment on every act of the Government and on its policy or want of policy. It is the most important occasion of all, because at this stage for the first time, comment of that character can be based on the resources which the State pos-

sesses. We have information made available to us as to what it is possible to do and can therefore make recommendations to the Government. But what do we find, Mr. Chairman? We find that this most important debate of all occurs on the last day in the last hours of the session. All that remains to be done is to get things through as fast as we can and go into recess!

The Premier: Nobody suggested that.

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** Nobody suggested it, but that is what is happening. Suggestion is unnecessary. One has only to keep one's eyes open.

The Premier: I made no attempt to block anybody.

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** I had intended to make some observations, which I hoped would be of a grave and responsible character, on this Vote; but does any member think I should proceed to do so under the circumstances prevailing here tonight?

Mr. Withers: You have five minutes to talk now.

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** I suggest the member for Bunbury goes out of the Chamber again, if all he can do is to make remarks of that description. His absence would be appreciated.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** There is much talk at present of the abolition of State Parliaments and we are going to give that movement every assistance if we carry on business on these lines, especially if we attempt to rush through the most important matter at the very end of the session.

The Minister for Works: Put your views on the matter before the Chair.

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** The Minister's absence has been marked. It would be appreciated if he would absent himself again.

The Minister for Works: Yes. If you cannot keep your temper you had better go home to bed.

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** I suggest again to the Minister that he resume his seat outside, where he has been the whole evening since the tea interval.

The Minister for Works: Why don't you sit down?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

**Hon. N. KEENAN:** I am not prepared, Mr. Chairman, to proceed with the debate under these circumstances. It is an absolute farce.

The Minister for Works: You have nothing to say. That is why.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I wish the Minister had nothing to say. It would improve his reputation enormously.

The Minister for Works: You are only bluffing.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Let us have no more interjections. The member for Nedlands will continue his speech.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not think the Minister knows what he is doing.

The Minister for Works: You are only bluffing.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Bluffing! The Minister has his arms folded like Napoleon.

The Minister for Works: You have your hands in your pocket.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not propose, Mr. Chairman, to indulge in exchanges with the Minister who, for the moment, anyhow, is not in control of himself.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: Nor do I propose to weary this tired Assembly, which is hurrying to rush into a seven months' recess. What reason is there why we should not adjourn till January?

The Premier: No reason at all.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Then why not adjourn till January, instead of rushing this business through?

The Premier: Who wants to? Who is rushing you?

Hon. N. KEENAN: The idea of asking a question of that kind in face of what is happening! I ask, is there any objection or any difficulty in adjourning until January or February so as to give proper and careful consideration to this very grave matter.

The Minister for Works: Bluff!

Hon. N. KEENAN: If that is not the course to be pursued, I do not propose to lend my aid to the continuance of this farce. I do not wish to address the Committee any further.

The Minister for Works: Absolute bluff!

MR. SHEARN (Maylands): When the Premier introduced the Loan Estimates, he said that every effort was being made to push forward the programme of house construction. His announcement gave a great deal of satisfaction to members. It must be realised, as the Premier admitted, that circumstances arising out of the war have made progress with the work very slow. Accord-

ing to statements made by the Post-War Reconstruction Commission, there is a leeway of 7,000 houses in this State and I and other metropolitan members have dozens of people approaching us asking what are the prospects of some improvement in this respect. The present conditions are appalling. We cannot offer any suggestion to people who approach us on the subject, beyond mentioning the fact that some 3,000 houses are to be built at some future time when the necessary arrangements can be made. I urge that the claims for expedition be pressed and that the Government do all that is possible to accelerate the release of men from the Army and supplies of material so that some attempt may be made to provide homes urgently needed now.

I would like to ask the Premier whether he proposes to make some strenuous efforts to induce the Commonwealth authorities to accelerate the work. I am aware that the Premier is acquainted with the situation, but I have my doubts as to the strength of the advocacy of the State Government when I note what has been done in South Australia and Victoria. In the light of what happens there, it seems as though this State has been, as the Premier almost admitted, victimised because of the patriotic part it has played in the war effort. This State has always led in war and peace in every national effort and it seems extraordinary that side by side with such a record is the fact that we are always penalised. The Premier knows that building activity has never actually ceased in South Australia and Victoria.

The Premier: But it has been restricted.

Mr. SHEARN: They have continued all through, possibly because the Premiers of those States refused to stand up to the obligation imposed upon them by the Prime Minister, which was quite different from the attitude adopted by the Premier of this State. Naturally I do not take exception to the Premier's attitude, but, in view of the facts, I think the Premier should put this State's point of view very forcibly before the Commonwealth authorities so that we may receive special consideration in the allocation of men and material for the post-war housing scheme. Perhaps the Premier will be able to give us some information as to the possibility of making use of the facilities of the Allied Works Council. As everyone is aware, tremendous undertakings have been carried out with great expedition

for war purposes, and I think the organisation could be availed of to engage in building operations on behalf of the State. The position in the metropolitan area is truly shocking. We hope that the war will end within the next 12 months or so and unless provision is made against the time when the troops return, conditions here will be such as we hardly dare to contemplate.

I also wish to refer to the position in which pensioners find themselves. Repeated applications have been made to me by them regarding the position they find themselves in respecting household sewerage connections. The Minister may say that funds are not available for such work, but many of these pensioners find themselves in an invidious position. They have not the means at their disposal to have their premises connected by private contractors and they cannot afford to have the work done departmentally, yet the local authorities continue to debit them with charges, which means that the accumulated accounts will increase costs beyond 100 per cent. It may be suggested that the charges simply accumulate, but it means that all the people in the area are detrimentally affected by the continuation of the nauseating antiquated system of pan removals. I do not know whether the Minister contemplates in his post-war planning some effort to deal with this problem.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—Railways and Tramways, etc., £101,000; Harbours and Rivers, £85,700; Water Supply and Sewerage, £170,592; Development of Goldfields and Mineral Resources, £108,450; Development of Agriculture, etc., £48,225; Roads and Bridges, Public Buildings, etc., £94,000; Sundries, £621,040—agreed to.*

This concluded the Loan Estimates for the year.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

## **BILL—APPROPRIATION.**

### *Message.*

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

*As to Leave to Introduce.*

**THE PREMIER** [10.25]: I move—

That in accordance with resolutions adopted in Committees of Supply and Ways and Means, leave be given to introduce the Bill.

**MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER** (Subiaco):

Mr. Speaker,—

Mr. SPEAKER: This is just a formal motion!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Quite so, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Does the hon. member wish to oppose leave to introduce?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Yes, definitely. Fancy introducing a Bill at this stage! I have not had time to go through it. This is simply iniquitous. It should not be brought down at this late stage of the session. I definitely oppose leave to introduce a Bill like this at this time. It is definitely too late in the session and too late in the night.

**THE PREMIER** (in reply): I hardly think that the hon. member understands the position. This is merely a formal Bill to appropriate the revenue that we have been discussing for the past seven or eight weeks in connection with the Revenue Estimates and the Loan Estimates we have just disposed of. All the Bill seeks to do is to appropriate the revenue already agreed to by members. The Bill is always treated as a formality.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: It should have been here much earlier.

The PREMIER: But it could not possibly be introduced any earlier. It cannot be introduced until we have passed the Estimates.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: It is too late to consider it now.

The PREMIER: But this is just a formality!

Question put and passed.

Leave given.

*First Reading, etc.*

Bill introduced by the Premier, passed through all stages without debate and transmitted to the Council.

## **BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

Received from the Council and, on motion by Mr. McLarty, read a first time.

**STANDING ORDERS.***Report of Committee.*

Mr. MARSHALL: I submit the report of the Standing Orders Committee and shall be as brief as possible in moving that the various Standing Orders dealt with by the Committee be adopted by the House. Preceding my motion I suggest that every member must accept some responsibility for the omissions or commissions of the Standing Orders Committee. Every member must recognise that there is some responsibility attaching to him in the making of suggestions and alterations. We have held several meetings, and in order that there may be no misunderstanding I say that at the second meeting the Standing Orders Committee had to produce an addendum in order to correct some recommendations that appeared in the Committee's original report.

**Standing Order No. 61:**

The first Standing Order dealt with is No. 61, on page 31 of the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly, reading—

Members shall be entitled to retain seats occupied by them at time of their taking their seats for the first time after their election, so long as they continue members of the House

It is well known that this Standing Order is so inexplicit that there have been various disputes between members who have wanted to occupy the same seats. We found it difficult to determine these questions when they arose. Members will realise that it is difficult to understand what the Standing Order really means. It makes no provision for elections, nor any other provision in order to get over certain difficulties which members become confronted with when they desire to change their seats. The recommendation to alleviate the position will appear in the Standing Orders. The report reads as follows:—

The Committee suggests that this Standing Order be deleted and the following new Standing Order inserted:—

Members occupying seats prior to an election shall, provided that no change of Government is involved, be entitled to occupy such seats if again returned, providing they do not indicate their desire to change to another seat then vacant by notifying the Clerk. Members elected for the first time, or in the event of a change of Government, shall make their choice of seats by notifying the Clerk; and, if such

seat is then vacant it shall be reserved for him.

The reason for this change is that disputes have arisen over the interpretation of the words "first time after their election." The meaning of the words is the "first time after taking their seats after a dissolution." This new Standing Order will get over this misunderstanding.

In the main report of the Committee, submitted to the House on the 9th November, it was suggested that this Standing Order should be deleted and another submitted in its place. After further consideration by your Committee, it was found that the original suggestion was not quite grammatically correct. The Committee submits the following new Standing Order, to replace the one first suggested:—

A member occupying a seat prior to an election shall, provided no change of Government is involved, be entitled to occupy such seat if again returned, unless he indicates, by notifying the Clerk, his desire to change to another seat then vacant. A member elected for a first time, or in the event of a change of Government, shall make his choice of seat by notifying the Clerk; and, if such seat is then vacant, it shall be reserved for him.

Thus the responsibility is placed on one of the Officers to take charge of the House and the seats, and to that Officer we look when we wish to change our seats in the House or intend to get or keep a seat in the House after an election. Up to the present there has been no Officer to give members information, no-one able to state whether a seat is vacant, as no records have been kept. I do not say the decisions of the Standing Orders Committee are water-tight or infallible; we are quite ready to receive criticism after a decision has been made. I move—

That the recommendation be agreed to.

Mr. DONEY: I attended the several meetings which led up to the construction of this report. Having listened to the member for Murchison, I am able to say that what he has just related to the House is correctly stated.

Question put and passed; the recommendation agreed to.

**Standing Order No. 109:**

Mr. MARSHALL: The next situation in which the Standing Orders Committee recommended alterations arose from Standing Order 109, which is as follows:—

At the time of giving notices of motion, questions of which notice has been given to the Clerk at the Table before 5 p.m. may be put to Ministers of the Crown relating to public affairs; and to other members, relating to any Bill, motion, or other public matter connected

with the business of the House, in which such members may be concerned.

Members will have a better appreciation of the recommendations of the Standing Orders Committee now. It has always been the practice to close the time for giving notice of questions one half-hour after the House has commenced its business. The Standing Order seems to assume, therefore, that the House never starts at any other time than 4.30 p.m. During the last few days we have started at 3 p.m. and once at 4 p.m. Thus we make the Standing Order more workable without affecting the rights and privileges of members as experienced by them during past years. The Committee's recommendation concerning Standing Order 109 is as follows:—

This Standing Order, by the amendment suggested by the Committee in its main report, does not state where the Questions have to be lodged. By the amendment now suggested, this will be made clear. Instead of adding the words "The latest time for receiving Questions shall be thirty minutes after the House assembles," it is suggested that the following words be added:—"Such Questions must be handed to the Clerk at the Table, but not later than thirty minutes after the House assembles."

There is no limitation of privileges; the recommendation merely makes the Standing Order more workable. I submit that there is no occasion for a member to submit on Thursday a notice of a question to be answered on Wednesday, but he might for the convenience of the Minister submit on Tuesday a question to be answered on Thursday. I move—

That the recommendation be agreed to.

Mr. WATTS: I commend to the House the acceptance of the amendment. On Tuesday we lodge a question by 5 p.m. and it can be answered on Wednesday by 4.30 p.m. unless the Minister desires to postpone it, to which one takes no exception. If we lodge a question by 5 o'clock on Wednesday it is answered by 4.30 on Thursday and if we lodge it by 5 o'clock on Thursday it is answered by 4.30 on Tuesday. In one case there is a period of 48 hours, during which the offices are open, before an answer is given and in the other cases a period of 24 hours. If a member happens to be a few minutes late lodging a question on Friday it is held up till the following Wednesday; and from Thursday at 5.30 to Wednesday at 4.30 is almost a week. Questions sometimes

crop up after the House has risen on Thursday and a member does not like sending to Ministers questions without notice. They may not be in their offices or it may be inconvenient for other reasons. So questions are held up for the period mentioned. The amendment will necessitate no more inconvenience than that the notice paper will not be available on Friday, and I am satisfied that members are content if it is ready by Monday. If advance information is required it can be obtained quite readily from the Clerk after the House has adjourned, if he is in his office, or the next morning. I do not know that many members are interested to know on Friday what amendments are on the notice paper for the following week; if they are, they can ascertain by inquiry. Nothing will be lost and something will be gained if the amendment is agreed to.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I appreciate the point of view of members who seek an opportunity to ask further questions in sequence on sitting days following each other, rather than have delays occasioned. As one who is asked the average number of questions put to Ministers, I would like to express a certain point of view in case there is a misunderstanding in regard to the inability of members to obtain answers to questions on certain occasions. It is often extremely difficult, because of the inquiries that are necessary, to give accurate answers on the day the questions are asked. I have always endeavoured to oblige members by answering questions on the day after they are asked and the day on which they appear on the notice paper, and to give all the information sought. I often go to the Clerk before going home at night to see whether any questions are being asked of me for the next day, in order to know whether I would have to make any special effort, in spite of the thousand duties that occur during the day, to answer the queries raised. I would like a system to operate—and I cannot see how that is possible unless duplicates of the questions are prepared—whereby on the evening a question is submitted the Minister would have an opportunity to see it. That would facilitate the answering of the question and the supplying of better information than we are able to obtain sometimes at such short notice. The Ministers do not desire to hedge with regard to ques-

tions but in the public interest to give all information possible.

Mr. SPEAKER: I want to point out that if the amendment were carried it would mean that the notice paper could not be available until Tuesday. The amendment refers to questions being handed in up to 5 p.m. on Friday, but the office closes at 4 p.m. and the officers go home at 4.30. Consequently the copy could not be taken to the printer until Monday at the earliest.

Mr. SEWARD: In the circumstances, I move an amendment—

That the following words be added:—  
 “Except on the last sitting day of the week when questions may be lodged with the Clerk at any time up to 12 o’clock noon on Fridays.”

There is no need for Tuesday’s notice paper to be out at 10 or 11 o’clock on Friday. If it is available on Monday there is sufficient time for members to give consideration to it.

Mr. MARSHALL: There is some merit in the amendment. I can recall when we had to stand in our places and give notice of questions. On Thursday, if we intended to ask a question on the following Tuesday, we had to give notice before other business commenced. This procedure of handing in questions has brought about the anomaly which the amendment seeks to correct. I do not quite grip the Minister’s argument. I was waiting to hear from some Minister who knows the procedure, because I have not been a Minister and do not know what takes place when the questions have been handed in.

The Minister for Lands: We do not see them until they arrive late in the morning of the following day.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is not fair to the Ministers. This amendment neither aggravates nor improves the position. An attempt is being made to have questions answered on Tuesday in lieu of Wednesday. If the last minute fixed is 12 noon on Friday a Minister will get notice of a question by Friday afternoon or early Monday morning, and he would have all Monday and Tuesday in which to prepare his answer. That will give the Minister more time to answer a question than he has when notice is given on Tuesday of a question to be answered on Wednesday. Members can get over the difficulty by giving notice on Tuesday of their desire to have a question answered on Thursday. That would be quite suitable to

many members. The amendment does not deal with the point raised by the Minister but it is most acceptable.

Mr. STYANTS: I support the amendment. I have never been satisfied with the Standing Order as it has operated since I have been in this House. I have always thought it wrong that a question put in at 6 p.m. should not be answered till the following Wednesday. Had the member for Pingelly not moved this amendment I would have moved one on similar lines. There is difficulty on the part of Ministers in getting out replies to questions asked before 5 o’clock on Tuesdays and Wednesdays; but, as was pointed out by the Chairman of Committees, they have much more time over the week-end when they are in a better position to obtain information required than on the first two days of the week. It is not mandatory for Ministers to answer questions the day after they are asked. If there is any difficulty in securing information, the procedure is adopted—and quite rightly—of postponing an answer. In most cases, however, the Ministers are able to and do get the information from the heads of their departments. I support the amendment. It will be a great improvement, though we still have to wait a long time for answers.

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

Standing Order No. 120:

Mr. MARSHALL: The next Standing Order to which we gave consideration was No. 120. This reads—

No member may speak twice to a question before the House, except in explanation or reply, or in Committee of the whole House.

I suppose that well within the memory of every member is the difficulty we experience when the House is sitting in cases where a member desires to move an amendment to a question, and Standing Orders provide that he can speak only once. When an amendment is desired that involves a member’s rising more than once, he cannot complete his amendment. Even a Minister has, on occasion, been involved in difficulty and has had to seek the aid of another Minister or member in completing an amendment. To get over the difficulty we recommend a proviso to the Standing Order which will permit a member to complete an amendment in those circumstances. I do not want members to be under any misapprehension. The Commit-

tee recommends that the following proviso be added:—

Provided that this Standing Order shall not be so construed as to prevent a member from completing an amendment initiated by him while speaking to the question.

If a member has to rise two or three times to complete an amendment, he will be able to do so. I move—

That the recommendation be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the recommendation agreed to.

Standing Order No. 141:

Mr. MARSHALL: The next amendment is to Standing Order 141 which reads—

All questions of order and matters of privilege at any time arising shall, until decided, suspend the consideration and decision of every other question.

Members will recall that on one or two occasions, perhaps more, a point of order has been raised and it has been found difficult and at times almost impossible for the Speaker to give a decision at once. I can remember one Speaker having delayed giving his decision for the better part of a fortnight. Some points of order involve technicalities and legalities and time is required to give them due consideration. Not long ago it was suggested that you, Mr. Speaker, should postpone your decision and I directed your attention to the fact that if you did it would suspend consideration of every other question until you gave your decision. We have sought to overcome that difficulty and recommend a new Standing Order as follows:—

All points of order and matters of privilege at any time arising shall, until decided, suspend the consideration of the question under discussion. But the Speaker may, with the concurrence of the House, defer his decision and, in such case, the question then under discussion shall be adjourned sine die.

If the recommendation is adopted the Speaker may with the concurrence of the House suspend giving his decision and then the House may proceed with other business. This will make the procedure more practical and simpler. I move—

That the recommendation be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the recommendation agreed to.

Standing Order No. 200:

Mr. MARSHALL: Standing Order 200 reads—

The doors shall be closed and locked as soon after the lapse of two minutes as the Speaker

shall think proper to direct; and then no member shall enter or leave the House until after the division.

Although I had studied the Standing Orders closely for years I did not appreciate that this discretionary power was given to the Speaker. We have always followed the practice of locking the doors immediately after the expiration of two minutes, but it will be seen that, if the Speaker so directed, the doors need not be locked until some time later. The Committee recommends the tightening up of the Standing Order to bring it into conformity with the practice over the years. We recommend—

That the words "as soon" in the first line and "as the Speaker shall think proper to direct" in the second and third lines be struck out.

The Standing Order will then be in conformity with the practice over the years. I move—

That the recommendation be agreed to.

Mr. DONEY: Although I was a party to this decision, I suggest that older members may know of some reason why the Speaker was given this discretion which, to my knowledge, has never been exercised. There may have been some reason for providing it and if any member can suggest the reason, I would like to hear it.

Question put and passed; the recommendation agreed to.

Standing Order No. 267:

Mr. MARSHALL: Standing Order 267 states—

The first reading of every Bill shall be proposed immediately after the same has been presented.

The point as to when a Bill is presented is debateable. If I were asked to say when a Bill is presented, I would reply that it is presented after it has been introduced by the Minister or member handling it. The recommendation of the Committee is to delete this Standing Order and substitute the following—

The first reading of every Bill shall be proposed by the Speaker immediately after the motion for leave to introduce has been carried.

This will make the position clear. I move—

That the recommendation be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the recommendation agreed to.

Standing Order No. 306:

Mr. MARSHALL: The next Standing Order dealt with is No. 306. Many years ago the Standing Orders Committee made certain recommendations which the House adopted, but I am sorry to say that the House did not complete the job. As a result of the adoption of that report, we have been practising a certain procedure and all our votes and proceedings have been invalid. The Clerk has had no authority to record in our proceedings that a Bill has been passed and intitled an Act and sent by message to the Legislative Council. The old procedure was to move three motions—

- (1) That the Bill be now read a third time;
- (2) That the Bill be passed and intitled an Act; and
- (3) That the Bill be transmitted by message to the Legislative Council and its concurrence desired therein.

It was thought to expedite the passage of measures by avoiding the necessity of moving the second and third motions. Under Standing Order 307, however, the Clerk has to certify that the Bill has passed its third reading and been intitled an Act. The Speaker who first gave effect to the alteration was Hon. A. H. Panton, who probably found that the report was complicated and almost beyond understanding. However, we propose to validate the procedure adopted by Mr. Panton, about which there has been no complaint, giving the Clerk authority to send a Bill forward to the Council as having been passed and intitled an Act. The recommendation in respect of this Standing Order is as follows:—

Instead of deleting this Standing Order and leaving nothing in its place, the Committee suggests the following Standing Order:—

After the Bill has been read a third time, it shall be considered passed and intitled an Act, and forwarded by Message to the Legislative Council for its concurrence.

Without this Standing Order, the Clerk has no authority, under Standing Order No. 307, to certify that a Bill has been passed.

The amendment embodies what is really the existing practice. I move—

That the recommendation be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the recommendation agreed to.

Standing Order No. 337:

Mr. MARSHALL: The next recommendation relates to Standing Order 337. It deals with the procedure now being adopted to bring into existence Select Com-

mittees. This procedure is almost farcical; it is unbusinesslike, and a great deal of time is wasted in distributing ballot papers. The Committee gave the matter grave consideration and spent much time in trying to evolve a simpler provision; but it failed dismally to improve upon the corresponding Standing Order of the Legislative Council. In the end, I am sorry to say, the Committee had to adopt that Standing Order. I think members will agree that it simplifies the procedure. It would not prevent the taking of a ballot in case of a dispute. I understand it has worked well in the Council. The recommendation reads as follows:—

It is recommended that this Standing Order should be struck out, and the following new Standing Order inserted in lieu thereof:—

337. Members to serve on a Select Committee shall be nominated by the mover; but if one member so demand, they shall be selected by ballot.

This Standing Order provides for the election of members to a Select Committee. The present practice entails a great deal of delay and, as the names of the members to be placed on the Committee are known among members, it is not a secret ballot.

I do not know of any argument that has arisen in the 23 years since I have been a member over the selection of members of a Select Committee. This will simplify the procedure. I move—

That the recommendation be agreed to.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I would like a further explanation of the recommendation, as I feel that it is not democratic. We have to go to another place to find out what is done there, but that is a House of Review. It is not supposed to be a party House. The mover might recommend that the Select Committee should be comprised wholly of members of his party. That would not matter, however, because it is provided that if one member disagrees a ballot must be taken. I remind the House—I do not know whether I am in order in doing so—that a few moments ago I rose to object to what I thought was a Bill being read a first time, when I ascertained that what was before the House was the consummation of the Estimates. I withdrew my objection. New members will probably not know the Standing Orders and therefore would not be aware that a member can demand a ballot, or they might forget that they can claim one. Not many members know the Standing Orders as the member for Murchison does. I feel there is something wrong about the recommendation.

I agree that the taking of a ballot might cause some trouble and that time might be wasted in distributing ballot papers, but that time might be usefully employed in trying to find out who are the best members to act on a Select Committee. It is most important to appoint the right persons to a Select Committee. I am not prepared to vote for the adoption of this recommendation on the explanation given by the member for Murchison.

Mr. WATTS: I am thoroughly satisfied with the explanation given by the member for Murchison. In fairness to him, I think I am truthful in saying that I was substantially responsible for the interest which the Committee took in this Standing Order.

Mr. Marshall: That also is true.

Mr. WATTS: I discussed the question of the election of members for a Select Committee with him and pointed out that, in my opinion, the taking of a ballot was farcical; because invariably, in the 9½ years since I have been a member, and I think in the much longer period the member for Murchison has been a member, the procedure adopted has been this: The resolution for the appointment of a Select Committee is carried. If it is moved by a member on the Opposition side of the House, it is a recognised and established principle that there shall be two members selected from each side. The Leader of the Opposition will then speak to the Premier, or to the Minister in charge of the House, and ask, "Whom do you want?" He will reply, "The member for Murchison and the member for Kalgoorlie." If the motion be by the Premier, the Premier will say to the Leader of the Opposition, "Whom do you want?" The reply will be, "The member for Nedlands and the member for Pingelly." A ballot is taken. There may be 47 ballot papers on which the four names should appear, but it is generally found that on at least one paper the names will be mixed. I have taken the chair at Select Committee ballots and have found that to be so. I have spoken to other members who have taken the chair and have been informed that the result has been the same. In fact, I would not hesitate to say that it is expected to happen. So that a ballot is not actually taken in the way suggested by the member for Subiaco when she referred to the democratic method, because there has been a pre-selection. In fact, it is a 99 per cent. measure of pre-selection.

What the amendment proposes to do is to carry out exactly what has been done. If the member for Murchison moved for a Select Committee and proceeded to nominate four of his own colleagues, I would, or one of my friends would, immediately rise and object and a ballot would have to be taken. What he would do would be to nominate two of his colleagues and two of mine, and we would achieve exactly the same result as we have achieved for the past 23 years by taking a ballot. The amendment would not deprive any member who was dissatisfied with the nominations from demanding a ballot, and his demand would be met. It might be any kind of a ballot, a ballot such as has been taken in the past or a ballot such as that taken at a general election when a person actually exercises his choice. The practice that has been followed has been found to work satisfactorily. In my opinion, we must adopt the recommendation. What I have said seems to me to dispose of the objection that might be raised against the intention of the Standing Order in its amended form. However, I am wondering whether a difficulty might not arise in connection with it. It is worded as follows:—

*Members to serve on a Select Committee shall be nominated by the mover; but if one member so demand, they shall be selected by ballot.*

It is possible that the words "one member" might be taken at some future time to refer to one of the members nominated. The wording should be altered to read as follows:—

*Members to serve on a Select Committee shall be nominated by the mover; but if any member of the House so demand, they shall be selected by ballot.*

I move an amendment—

That the word "one" be struck out and the word "any" be inserted in lieu and that after the word "member" the words "of the House" be inserted.

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

Standing Order No. 417:

Mr. MARSHALL: I now come to the last recommendation dealing with Standing Order No. 417. It reads as follows:—

Strike out the word "Council," in line six, and insert the word "Assembly" in lieu thereof.

This mistake has remained in the Standing Orders for many years.

Members will note that this recommendation merely seeks to rectify a mistake. I move—

That the recommendation be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the recommendation agreed to.

Mr. MARSHALL: I move—

That the report (as amended) of the Standing Orders Committee be adopted.

Question put and passed; the report, as amended, agreed to.

### **BILL—OPTOMETRISTS ACT AMENDMENT.**

Returned from the Council with amendments.

### **BILL—MOSMAN PARK RATES VALIDATION.**

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MR. DONEY** (Williams-Narrogin) [11.30]: Having regard to the nature of recent road board history at Mosman Park, I anticipated that some research would have been necessary before I could continue the discussion on the Bill. On examination, however, it became obvious that no research was necessary because the Bill has been simply drafted and can be approved without difficulty. The Bill proposes to correct quite properly what otherwise might prove an expensive matter for the board. Owing to a purely technical contravention of the rating provisions of the Road Districts Act, the board laid itself open to action at law. This was taken advantage of by Mr. Justice Wolff six or nine months ago with the result that the 1940-41 rates were no longer collectable nor is it possible to amend that position in any way by means of legislation. That is a pity because it involved the board in the loss of substantial revenue. The same weakness applies to the rating down to the years 1941-42, 1942-43, and 1943-44 and the Bill is aimed to validate the rates struck for all those years. If that were not done the payment of those rates could be legally evaded. That is where the need for the Bill comes in. I support the second reading.

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 *passed*.

### **BILL—TRADE DESCRIPTIONS AND FALSE ADVERTISEMENTS ACT AMENDMENT.**

#### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of eight amendments made by the Council now considered.

#### *In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Industrial Development in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 5, page 4—Delete the words "the full name and the complete address of the manufacturer and also" in lines 6 and 7.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: It would be a regrettable step to take out the reference to the full name and address of the manufacturer. The deletion of the words would make it very difficult in many instances, and impossible in most, to fix upon the manufacturer of goods to which a false trade description had been applied. The retailer would place the responsibility on the wholesaler and the wholesaler would shift the responsibility on to the manufacturer, and he would probably say that at the time he had purchased a large quantity of that particular class of goods and could not state from which manufacturer he had procured the goods in question. If members desire to see this legislation effectively policed—unless it is effectively policed it can be of little value—it will be necessary to reject the Council's amendment. Naturally in many cases, especially in connection with goods imported from overseas, it might be found impracticable or inconvenient for the name and address of the manufacturer to be shown. In every case where it can be shown, that course should be adopted. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. DONEY: I concur in the Minister's view, and that applies also to the next amendment.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 5, page 4—Delete the whole of the proviso contained in lines 10 to 13.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: This is consequential on No. 1, and I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 5, page 4—Proposed new Section 4A—Delete proposed new Subsection 3, lines 24 to 28 inclusive.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Members will recollect the very full discussion we had on this subsection. Some doubt was expressed as to its actual meaning, and I assured members that the matter would be referred to the Solicitor General with a view to making it clearer. I asked the Solicitor General to see whether he could not alter the wording so as to make it positive as against the string of negatives that appeared in the Bill. He was able to do so and the necessary amendment was submitted in the Legislative Council. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. DONEY: The proposed new section is in a form that represents almost exactly what we wished to include.

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

No. 4. Clause 5, page 4:—Delete the words "for a second offence not less than £25 or more than £100; for a third" in lines 31, 32 and 33.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Amendments Nos. 4, 5, 6 and 7 relate to the same matter—the penalties to be imposed. The Council proposed to delete all reference to the penalties for second and third offences. The effect of the Council's amendment would be that for a second offence the penalty would be £200, which means an increase of 400 per cent. compared with the penalty for a first offence. The amendments of the Legislative Council in this regard are far too severe. The scale in the clause as it left this Assembly proceeded by reasonable steps.

I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 5. Clause 5, page 4:—Delete the words "not less than fifty pounds or more than" in line 34.

No. 6. Clause 5, page 5:—Delete the words "for a second offence not less than

twenty-five pounds or more than one hundred pounds; for a third" in lines 1, 2 and 3.

No. 7. Clause 5, page 5:—Delete the words "not less than fifty pounds or more than" in line 4.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Amendments Nos. 5, 6 and 7 might all be taken together.

Mr. DONEY: I am perfectly in agreement with the four amendments being taken as one. There may be some sound reason for the amazing changes made by another place; but I cannot divine it.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I move—

That the amendments be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendments not agreed to.

No. 8. New Clause:—Insert a new clause after Clause (7), to stand as Clause 8, as follows:—

8. A new section is inserted in the principal Act, as follows:—

7A. A trade description shall not contain—

(a) The expression "artificial wool," or "imitation wool," or "synthetic wool," or "substitute wool" in any circumstances or for any purposes or in relation to any goods;

(b) Any other expression (except the expressions "re-used wool" or "re-processed wool" when appropriately used in connection with a textile product) which includes the word "wool" and is intended to be descriptive of the goods to which the trade description is applied or of a substance used in the manufacture of the said goods, when the goods are not a textile product, or the substance is not wool.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: This is the proposed new section, in lieu of the subsection which the Committee has already agreed to delete. The actual sense of the proposed new section is that the terms "artificial substitute for wool" and so on shall not be usable in the description of any article, and that the word shall not be applied to any article or any goods unless the word is quite in conformity with the provisions of the Act. The proposed new section will safeguard woollen products by providing that the word "woollen" shall be applied only to such products. I therefore move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

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

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of Mr. Styants, Mr. Doney and the Minister for Industrial Development drew up reasons for not agreeing to certain of the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

*Midnight.*

## **BILL—LEGAL PRACTITIONERS ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of 16 amendments made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Justice in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 3 page 3: Insert after the word "fund" in line 30, the words "and has satisfied the board that he complies with Section 28A and where his trust moneys are banked."

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This clause as amended affords greater protection to the public, and will help the board to ascertain the true position as regards trust moneys. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

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

No. 2. Clause 4, page 4: Insert the words "and retained in" after the word "into" in line 35.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The amendment means that the money will have to remain in the trust account until the beneficiaries or the trustees give the necessary instructions. It strengthens the Bill. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. SEWARD: The Minister has unwittingly misrepresented the clause by stating that the money would remain until the beneficiaries or the trustees gave instructions for its withdrawal.

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

No. 3. Clause 4, page 4: Proposed new Section 28A—Delete Subsection (2).

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Subsection 1 is regarded as superfluous. I have no objection to its deletion. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. SEWARD: I am surprised that the Minister does not oppose this amendment. Trust moneys placed in the account belong to the people who have lodged them with the solicitor. I hope the member for Nedlands will correct me if I am wrong, but I consider it is absolutely necessary that we should provide that no other person shall have the right to this trust money.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If a trust account were kept for each individual client and the moneys in that account appeared to the credit of the client, it might be very well said that there was no risk. The practice in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, however, is that there is one common trust account and all trust moneys are paid into that. The object here is to compel a practitioner to keep a trust account, and to make certain that moneys paid into it will subsequently be paid out to the parties whose money was received by the practitioner and by him put into the account. Unless such a provision is agreed to, money in the trust account would be common money and payable to any creditors of the practitioner.

Mr. SHEARN: I am astonished that the Minister should have been advised not to resist this amendment. I speak from experience when I say that this is the crux of the situation. If this amendment is agreed to, the most important safeguard in the whole Bill will be dissipated.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I have no objection to the safeguard. It seems to me that, even if it is superfluous, it is not going to do any harm. The Law Society had a meeting the day before yesterday and went into quite a number of the clauses of the Bill, and it was suggested that this should be deleted because it was superfluous. I am not too sure of the position; I am not a lawyer. They may have been relying on Section 28C. At any rate, legal practitioners should know what they are talking about. I would like to withdraw my motion agreeing to the amendment.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the trust account were kept in the manner of a separate account for each client there would be no necessity for this. The money would belong to the particular client concerned. Had this Bill been submitted to the Law Society before it came here?

The Minister for Justice: Yes, to the Law Reform Committee.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Did they take exception to Subsection (2)?

The Minister for Justice: The Law Reform Committee went through it but the Law Society did not see it.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Subsection 28 (b) might mean that a trust account should be kept for each client, but it could refer to a common account.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 4. Clause 4, page 5:—Insert a new subsection to the proposed new Section 28A, as follows:—

(5) All of the provisions of this Act relating to trust funds and the audit thereof shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to a firm of practitioners and in the case where trust moneys are paid to or held by a practitioner jointly with a person who is not a practitioner.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

The amendment provides greater precautions than does the Bill.

Mr. SHEARN: I would draw attention to the fact that members of the Committee are at a tremendous disadvantage. Neither I nor other members near me have a copy of the amendments. How can we vote intelligently on amendments of which we have not a copy?

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

No. 5. Clause 4, page 5:—Insert after the word "him" in line 10, the words "and of all operations on such account."

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This amends Section 28B. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not wish to oppose the amendment but if members look into the matter they will see that it is redundant.

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

No. 6. Clause 4, page 6:—Delete the word "legal" in line 26 and substitute the word "certificated."

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

The amendment would do an injustice to the Crown Law officers and legal men in any other Government departments. Provision was made for the fund to be administered by three trustees who shall be legal practitioners, and the amendment proposes to prescribe certificated practitioners. The officers of the Crown Law Department and judges are not certificated practitioners, but they are legal practitioners and there is no reason why they should not act as trustees if selected.

Hon. N. Keenan: Does not the Solicitor General take out a practice certificate?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is not necessary for anybody working for the Crown to do so. I do not know whether he does; there are some who do not. If a certificate had to be taken out, it would be taken out by the department. A judge does not take out a certificate.

Hon. N. Keenan: He is not a practitioner.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not know whether the Commissioner of Titles takes out a certificate and he is a solicitor.

Hon. N. KEENAN: In order to maintain a Chair of Law at the University, all legal practitioners pay a fee each year. This was done by issuing a certificate of service every year. I cannot understand the statement of the Minister, because I am almost sure that a certificate is taken out by the Solicitor General and paid for by the department. It would be extraordinary if, when an obligation to pay for a Chair at the University is placed on all practitioners, there should be one section that does not meet the obligation and that one the Crown. The amendment should be accepted.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Whether the Crown Law officers make that contribution to the Chair at the University I do not know.

Hon. N. Keenan: Does the Crown Law Department pay?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No. If the amendment is agreed to—

Hon. N. Keenan: It will mean that the Crown Law Department will then pay?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I am not going to answer that question, because I do not know whether it will pay.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 7. Clause 4, page 6: Add after the word "vote" in line 35, the words "Two trustees shall form a quorum."

On motion by the Minister for Justice the Council's amendment was agreed to.

No. 8. Clause 4, page 7: Insert after the word "of" in line 1, the words "acquiring and disposing of real and personal property and of."

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. SEWARD: Should the trustees be able to use the money to acquire property? Is this a usual power to give trustees? Property might depreciate in value and money be lost to the fund.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Usually trustees are permitted to invest money only in trust funds, and if the trustees are given this power they could go outside trust funds and invest the money in property, etc. Given the wider power, they might be able to earn a larger income.

The Minister for Justice: This has been recommended by the Law Society.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Presumably the object is to give a wider range so that the fund may be built up more quickly. If the Minister thinks it wise, very well.

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

No. 9. Clause 4, page 7, proposed new section 281 (5):—Insert a new paragraph after paragraph (iii) as follows:—"(iv) ceases to be a certificated practitioner."

On motion by the Minister for Justice the Council's amendment was disagreed to.

No. 10. Clause 4, page 7: Insert after the word "neglects" in line 18, the words "for three months."

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The amendment will make the position more definite. If the board or society neglects for three months to appoint a trustee, the Governor may make an appointment. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

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

No. 11. Clause 4, page 9: Add after the word "trustee" in line 20, the words "Pro-

vided that a co-trustee of a certificated practitioner shall not be deemed to be a servant or agent of a certificated practitioner merely because he is a co-trustee":

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This is a protective provision which we should accept. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The amendment is peculiar. The idea was to compel a legal practitioner to keep a trust fund, and if any loss was incurred, the fund would have to make it good. If that practitioner has a co-trustee, which is contemplated by the amendment, the co-trustee may not be a practitioner at all. I presume the object is to retain the right of action against the practitioner by that co-trustee for contribution. However, I am not opposing the amendment because it is capable of an innocent meaning.

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

No. 12. Clause 4, page 9—Delete the figures "1958" in line 36, and substitute the figures "1955."

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This amendment will correct what is virtually a clerical error. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

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

No. 13. Clause 4, page 21—Delete the words "or with the State Government Insurance Office" in lines 8 and 9.

No. 14. Clause 4, page 12—Delete all the words appearing in lines 13 to 17 inclusive.

No. 15. Clause 4, page 12—Delete the words "the State Government Insurance Office" in lines 37 and 38.

No. 16. Clause 4, page 13—Delete proposed new Section 28V and substitute the following:—"If and when the fund amounts to Ten thousand pounds then in the event of:—

(a) the death of a certificated practitioner the trustees shall pay to his personal representative a sum equal to the aggregate amount of his contribution to the fund, and

(b) the voluntary retirement from practice of a certificated practitioner the trustees may in their discretion pay to him a sum not exceeding the aggregate amount of his contributions to the fund."

On motions by the Minister for Justice, the foregoing Council's amendments were agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of Mr. Seward, Mr. Leahy and the Minister for Justice drew up reasons for not agreeing to certain of the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## **BILL—OPTOMETRISTS ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of three amendments made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Fox in the Chair; Mr. McLarty (for Mr. McDonald) in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 2, paragraph (b), page 2—Delete all words after the word "optician" in line 8 down to and including the word "countries" in line 12.

Mr. McLARTY: The Council's amendment will leave the field wide open and I do not think it would be fair to accept it. What the Council now suggests was by no means the intention of the sponsor of the Bill. When he submitted it, the member for West Perth made it quite plain that the object was to make provision for one man, but now it is suggested that it shall be open to any person who has the necessary qualifications and has practised for five years in a country now occupied by the enemy. That alters the whole meaning of the Bill. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. NEEDHAM: At the second reading stage I pointed out the danger of opening the door just a little. The Council's amendment throws the door wide open for any man to be registered, provided he has the qualifications indicated by the member for West Perth. What little merit there was in the Bill as it left the Assembly has been completely destroyed.

Mr. SHEARN: I take strong objection to the amendment. This is a serious matter affecting the health of the community in an important aspect. The safeguard that was included in the Bill has been lost.

Mr. HOLMAN: I do not think the Council's amendment will have the effect suggested by some hon. members. I am prepared to accept the amendment for it will enable not only refugees, who may be able to satisfy the requirements of the board, to gain admission to the profession but those of our own nationality.

Mr. LESLIE: The Council's amendment will remove a restriction that was embodied in the Bill making it apply to one person. As it stands now, it will enable others in Australia similarly circumstanced to gain admission without the necessity for the introduction of further legislation. No hardship will result regarding the individual in whose interest the Bill has been introduced.

Mr. SHEARN: While I have no objection to the views expressed by the member for Forrest and the member for Mt. Marshall, I would remind them that the principal Act was passed with a specific object and to afford protection to the public. We should accept our responsibilities with that end in view.

Mr. CROSS: The Bill was originally designed to give special privileges to one man. Now it has been sent back to us and it is being dealt with as though it embodied military secrets of which most members have no information. I think the best thing would be to throw the Bill out altogether.

Mr. BERRY: I would like to enter my protest, too. We, who sit on the back benches, are expected to remain here while a favoured few discuss amendments about which we know nothing. We have not been supplied with copies, nor have we copies of the Bill in its amended form. I suggest that the position is not at all satisfactory. If we are not to know what is going on, I suggest that we be allowed to go home to bed.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 2, paragraph (c), page 2—Delete the word "practical" in line 13.

Mr. STYANTS: We have not got a copy of the Bill as amended and we cannot follow intelligently the proposals under discussion.

Mr. McLARTY: This word was inserted when the Bill was previously before the House and the Council suggests taking out the reference to a test in "practical" work of optometry. I am going to disagree with that. The discussion when the Bill was previously in Committee will be remembered. Some

members suggested that a certain examination should be passed before admission by the board, and the member for West Perth when dealing with this particular matter said it would be unfair to ask a man who was well on in years to pass some technical examination; and the hon. member suggested, if I remember rightly, that it would be unfair to ask a doctor, or some other professional man, to pass a similar examination. But he suggested to the Committee then that if this man could pass a practical examination he should be admitted. We should continue to keep in the word "practical"; otherwise the man would be asked to pass a "reasonable" test, whatever that may be. I think it fairer to the man that the test should be a practical one, and not a technical one. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I agree with the member for Murray-Wellington that the amendment should not be agreed to. When the original Bill was in Committee, the member for Mt. Magnet moved an amendment asking for a practical test, and after a little discussion the word "practical" was included. The word "practical" here destroys the value of the provision.

Mr. HOLMAN: I agree with the two previous speakers on this point, but there is another angle to be considered. This not only destroys the value of the test, but also holds the gun at the head of the person who has to pass the test. I would issue a challenge to men of my own age, or older, or in fact to any member of this Chamber who has passed a trade test, within the next month or the next three months to stand up to a theoretical test similar to that which he passed at the examination for his trade or profession. The position is that probably the trade to which some people belong does not move with the times, but my trade, the printing trade, does shift with the times. The medical man's trade or the optometrist's trade necessarily must move with the times; probably it changes entirely in 20 years.

Mr. STYANTS: The member for Forrest has convinced me that I should support the amendment. From the very fact of another place striking out the word "practical" one would be justified in saying that the test was to be both theoretical and practical. If a man of 45 cannot pass a theoretical and practical examination, he is not a competent tradesman.

Mr. McLARTY: If I remember rightly, this particular amendment was put into the Bill on a suggestion made by the member for Mt. Magnet. The member for West Perth put in the word "practical," and it was accepted by the Committee.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 2—Delete the proviso as contained in lines 19 and 22.

1 a.m.

Mr. McLARTY: I am not particular whether the Committee accepts or rejects this. The member for West Perth inserted the proviso to ensure that after a period of five years from the registration of such person as is mentioned in the Bill he shall cease to practise in Western Australia, the idea being that the war would be over by then and he would be able to return to his own country and resume his practice there. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment. If there was any safeguard in the Bill, it was contained in the paragraph we are discussing. If this is cut out and a man can enter the practice of optometry without any test and remain in that practice, the principle in the Act will be endangered.

Mr. STYANTS: I do not hold the same view as the member for Perth. It does not leave it open for a man to come in and practise if he has not the qualifications. A person would still need to have practised optometry for five years prior to the commencement of the war with Germany and to be a British subject. I cannot see any justification for granting a man permission to take up optometry in this State after having passed the necessary examinations and satisfied the board as to his qualifications, and then saying to him: "We will give you a licence for only five years." It is ridiculous to limit the period to five years. All I am concerned about is that a man should possess the necessary qualifications. I would not support any legislation permitting an unqualified person to be let loose on the public.

Mr. HOLMAN: I do not see why, once we agree that a person is qualified, we should debar him after five years' service.

Mr. LESLIE: The original Bill was introduced for a particular person. In order to induce us to accept him, a proviso was in-

cluded that he was to practise for only five years, and then go. The Council moved to ensure that the Bill should apply to any person, provided he came up to the required standard. Then the Council asked why, if any person could comply with the requirements of the board, he should be given registration for only five years, and proceeded to delete the proviso. If the Council's amendment to Subclause (b) is rejected, we must be consistent and reject this amendment.

Mr. STYANTS: I differ from the member for Mr. Marshall. The original Bill did not apply to one person but to any person who makes application before the 30th June, 1945.

Mr. LESLIE: There is only one person at present who could comply with the conditions in this Bill. Therefore the Bill applies only to that one person.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes .. .. .	26
Noes .. .. .	4
Majority for .. ..	22

## AYES.

Mr. Berry  
Mr. Coverley  
Mr. Doney  
Mr. Graham  
Mr. Hawke  
Mr. W. Hegney  
Mr. Hoar  
Mr. Holman  
Mr. Kelly  
Mr. Leaby  
Mr. Mann  
Mr. McLarty  
Mr. Nulsen

Mr. Owen  
Mr. Pantan  
Mr. Rodoreda  
Mr. Seward  
Mr. Shearn  
Mr. Styants  
Mr. Tonkin  
Mr. Triat  
Mr. Watts  
Mr. Willcock  
Mr. Wilson  
Mr. Wise  
Mr. Willmott

(Teller.)

## NOES.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver  
Mr. Leslie

Mr. Needham  
Mr. Cross

(Teller.)

Question thus passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of Mr. Needham, Mr. Watts and Mr. McLarty drew up reasons for disagreeing to certain of the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

Sitting suspended from 1.34 to 2.12 a.m.  
(Saturday).

## BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION. ACT AMENDMENT.

### Second Reading.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [2.14 a.m.] in moving the second reading said: This Bill has been passed by another place, and is to amend the Industrial Arbitration Act, 1912-41. It is designed to provide for preference in employment to be given to active service men and women. I would draw the attention of members to the definition of "active service" and "active service men and women." "Active service" means—

Service by an enlisted person or a person appointed to the Naval, Military, Air, Medical or Nursing Services in a locality which was subject to aggressive action by enemy naval, military or air units, during the period of such person's period of service.

"Active service man or woman" means—

A person who enlisted or was appointed for service abroad and who has been on active service during a period of war as a member of the Naval, Military, Air, Medical, or Nursing Service of any of His Majesty's Forces and who at the time that he or she claims preference is domiciled in Western Australia; but does not include any such person who was discharged from any such force by reason of misconduct.

Mr. Triat: Does that include members of the Mercantile Marine?

Mr. McLARTY: The term "active service" covers soldiers who served in the 1914-18 war, and those who are serving in the present war. The Bill does not go further than the last war. It provides that the employer shall give preference to an active service man or woman unless reasonable and substantial causes exist for not doing so. In determining what are reasonable and substantial causes for not appointing an active service man or woman the employer has to take the following into consideration:—

- the length, locality and nature of the service of the active service man or woman;
- the comparative qualifications of the active service man or woman and of the other applicants for the office or employment;
- any other relevant circumstances.

But the employer need not employ such service man or woman who has been at any time convicted of an indictable offence. Any active service man or woman who is refused an appointment may appeal to an industrial magistrate, and the reasons which I gave

that an employer has to take into consideration before he can refuse employment have also to be taken into account by the industrial magistrate.

Mr. W. Hegney: Would members of the Civil Construction Corps come under that?

Mr. McLARTY: I do not think they would. If an employer satisfies the industrial magistrate that an applicant is not physically fit or that he is not mentally fit, and that he has not the necessary skill to fulfil the position for which he applies, his application can be refused. These are the principal points of the measure.

Mr. Triat: What about the penalty clause, the penalty of £100?

Mr. McLARTY: That is for non-compliance with the legislation. I know that under the National Security Regulations, if a man or woman returns from active service he or she can command employment with his or her former employer, or with the employer with whom they were working prior to enlistment. The circumstances are such that some of those employers are no longer in the position to employ, and perhaps one could instance such circumstances in connection with the goldmining industry.

Mr. Triat: They are ready and willing to employ.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes, but some of the mines are closed down, and on that account they would not be in a position to employ.

Mr. Fox: If they had any sense they would not go back there.

Mr. McLARTY: The National Security Regulations do not cover all that is required in regard to the employment of returned service men or women. There is one class of returned man about whom I am particularly concerned, and I have put his position before the House on a previous occasion. I refer to those boys of 18 who had just left school and had been unable to embark upon a career because they were called up for active service. A great many of them have served abroad and a good many of them have made the supreme sacrifice.

Mr. Triat: What about the boys who are only 16 today and have had no chance?

Mr. McLARTY: Those boys will not have a former employer to appeal to. They will come back, and many of them will be looking for a job. Surely it is only common justice that they should be looked after! Nothing could be more disastrous to their future than that they should, on their discharge from the

defence forces, have to face a period of unemployment. Not only would such a state of affairs be demoralising to a young soldier, but it would also have a demoralising effect upon the country. So I consider we are in duty bound compelled to make provision for these young people. I am not going to speak at length on the sacrifices our soldiers have made. Every member of this Chamber appreciates what the service men and women have done for us in this war. I do not intend to detain the House by giving a recital of the deeds of members of our Fighting Forces since the war began. I remind members, however, that this Bill has been based largely on the Queensland Act.

The Minister for Mines: There is another provision in that Act which has been left out.

Mr. McLARTY: If the Minister will inform me what it is, I will probably reply to him. One must commend the Queensland Government for the action it has taken. Other States are also making provision in this direction. Almost every State in Australia is about to make necessary provision of this sort. The Commonwealth Government contemplates taking action in regard to the future employment of service men and women, but the Commonwealth Parliament is not sitting at present. This Parliament will finish the session some time today, and probably some months will elapse before it meets again. Consequently, if we pass the Bill, it will give security to our service men and women, and if other legislation is introduced in future, this measure cannot do any harm. I commend the Bill to the House with the hope that it will be passed. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** I have been in this House a long time and have heard many complaints from the Opposition about important legislation being brought down at a late hour of the session. Here it is a quarter past two and we have presented to us one of the most important measures that has been submitted to Parliament for a long time. The hon. member who introduced the Bill told us that we are aiming at finishing the session today.

Mr. McLarty: The Bill was brought before the Upper House on the 7th.

**The MINISTER FOR MINES:** But it has been introduced here at a quarter past

two. The Government has not had an opportunity to look at the Bill.

Mr. Marshall: I have not even got a copy of the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Much less has the Government had an opportunity to discuss its attitude to the Bill. However, I am speaking for myself. I regret the procedure, so far as returned soldiers are concerned, that has been adopted in this House for a long time. Those who have long been members, particularly the soldier section, will remember that, when I was Speaker, we appointed a sub-committee consisting of the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the National Party and myself and agreed with returned soldiers in the Legislative Council that matters pertaining to returned soldiers would be submitted to the committee and, if necessary, a recommendation would be made. This arrangement was carried on for a long time. There are members who will recall some of the very important legislation that was initiated, particularly the measure relating to the Anzac House license. When the whole of the returned soldiers put forward any proposal, members who were not returned soldiers gave it full consideration and there was very little trouble.

A new idea seems to have been introduced now. Notwithstanding that there are several returned soldiers amongst the members of another place both Labourites and anti-Labourites, a civilian who knows nothing about soldiers has introduced this Bill. I would like to know whether the measure came from the R.S.L.

Mr. Doney: I think it has been asked for.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am surprised if it has the approval of the R.S.L. I know something of the league because I have taken a good part in the debates of the executive. The last Federal Executive drafted a Bill of which I have a copy, and any member who desires may see a report of the proceedings of the conference held in Adelaide recently. The draft Bill was sent to the Prime Minister requesting him to introduce it in the Commonwealth Parliament. If that measure is passed and becomes law, it will supersede anything that the States may do in the matter. Consequently, we find the R.S.L. sending a draft Bill to the Commonwealth asking it to bring in legislation which will supersede anything the States may do. If the R.S.L. is behind this

measure, which I very much doubt, it is not very consistent.

I am totally opposed to a provision of this sort being embodied in the Industrial Arbitration Act. Why that statute should be amended for this purpose, I do not know, because I have yet to learn that the court appoints anyone; it has been constituted to settle disputes between employers and employees. Yet we find legislation of this sort being introduced to amend the Industrial Arbitration Act. If that Act is to be amended, surely members are aware that the only parties recognised by the court are the organised trade unions and the organisations of employers! Surely, if this legislation is to be introduced into the Industrial Arbitration Act, the natural corollary is that the returned soldiers who are to get any benefit under the Bill will get the same benefit as the returned soldiers enjoy in Queensland.

Mr. McLarty: What is that?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If the member for Murray-Wellington wants to know, they get preference to unionists. I am a great believer in preference to unionists and I am prepared to go as far as any other man to achieve it. The Industrial Arbitration Act, however, provides for workers in organisations registered under the Act. There are thousands of girls in the Army overseas and elsewhere. Some hundreds of them will probably return and go into domestic service. What advantage would this Bill give them? They are not members of an organisation or union registered under the Industrial Arbitration Act. Attempts made from time to time to secure registration for them under that Act have been defeated by those in the very place from which this Bill emanated. So that is one section of the community which will be debarred from benefit if this Bill becomes law. Let us consider another section. Many of the men returning will no doubt work on the land for farmers. What benefit will they derive under this proposed legislation, I ask the member for Beverley?

Mr. Mann: They will have preference in employment.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Under this Bill?

Mr. Mann: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member has not read the Bill, because the only land workers registered under the Industrial Arbitration Act are the shearers.

There is no organisation of farm workers, except in special industries such as the tobacco-growing industry. Where is the organisation which will give farm workers the benefits proposed to be conferred by this Bill?

Mr. Mann: There is a Federal union today.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have now mentioned two big sections—male and female—which will not get protection under this proposed legislation. I am totally opposed to these provisions being inserted in the Industrial Arbitration Act. As I have already stated, the Arbitration Court has no power to appoint people. Let us examine the Bill. It is the most extraordinary measure that I have read. It is an attempt to delude unsophisticated people into believing that they will reap some benefit under it. Let us examine the definitions contained in the Bill. The first defines active service, as follows:—

“Active service” means service by an enlisted person or a person appointed to the Naval, Military, Air, Medical or Nursing Services in a locality which was subject to aggressive action by enemy naval, military or air units, during the period of such person's period of service.

Then we come to the succeeding definition—

“Active service man or woman” means a person who enlisted or was appointed for service abroad and who has been on active service during a period of war as a member of the Naval, Military, Air, Medical or Nursing Services of His Majesty's Forces and who at the time that he or she claims preference is domiciled in Western Australia; but does not include any such person who was discharged from any such force by reason of misconduct.

Here we have the catch—“does not include any such person who was discharged from any such force by reason of misconduct.” I suggest to the returned soldiers in this House that we get down to fundamentals. Scores of the best fighting men both in the last war and in this have lost their temper, and in such circumstances it is quite easy for them to smack a corporal or a sergeant and be sent to Fremantle for their misconduct. They may be A.W.L. for a week or so, and for that offence be confined in the Fremantle gaol for 50 or 60 days and then discharged. The fact that they might have been guilty of such an offence would debar them under this provision from obtaining preference in employment.

Mr. Leslie: Because the Army does not recognise them. They are not discharged for that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There is a complete difference between this war and the last.

Mr. Leslie: That is the trouble; you are still in the last war.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I was in the last war. The difference is this, and it must be recognised. The men in the last war were volunteers; the men in this war were conscripted, and yet our friend says, “Because the military do not believe.” The military authorities do not believe in anything, especially so far as regards a man's freedom of speech.

Mr. Holman: There is no democracy in the Army.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There cannot be democracy in the Army. Let us face facts. A fighting force must be a fighting force and must be disciplined. There is no such thing as democracy in an army. To carry convictions for misconduct under military law into civil life to the detriment of the soldier is something to which I am not going to be a party. That is the first thing in the Bill to which I object. Then we come to the question of reasonableness. Let us consider another part of the Bill—

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this Act or in any award or industrial agreement made thereunder, whenever an appointment is made to an office or employment in the State, and an active service man or woman, as well as other persons are applicants for that office or employment, an employer shall, subject as hereinafter provided, appoint an active service man or woman to that office or employment in preference to other persons unless reasonable and substantial cause exists for not doing so.

Mr. Rodoreda: What is meant by “reasonable?”

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The catch is in the last few words. The member for Roebourne asked for a definition of the word “reasonable.” The definition is not in the Bill. The Bill goes on to provide that in determining whether reasonable and substantial cause exists for not appointing an active service man or woman the employer shall consider the length, locality and nature of the service of the active service man or woman. In the name of Heaven, what does that mean? Again, I say to the returned soldiers in this House—and they know this as well as I do—that two men can join the

Army and go through camp life. They join a battalion which goes into action. The first time one of the men goes to battle, he is struck by a shell with his name on it or is hit by a burst of machine gun fire. He has had about 10 minutes of actual war service. The other man could be in the Army for two years and never see the front line. When it comes to locality, however, the magistrate looks at the man's paybook and says, "This man has only been in the front line for a few minutes."

Mr. Mann: Why stir yourself up in that way?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have two boys who might come under this Bill.

Mr. Mann: I also have two boys who might.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member should not get excited.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Beverley will keep order.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: He is getting excited.

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the Minister resume his seat? I want to caution the member for Beverley to keep order and allow the Minister to continue his speech.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I was pointing out that this particular clause—

Mr. Mann interjected.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If the hon. member wants to pull his coat off, let him pull it off somewhere else.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will proceed and not pull his coat off for anyone here.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am sorry. I am buttoning it up. The member for Beverley is only having a bit of fun with me. He is taking advantage of my unsophistication! Then the Bill provides that the industrial magistrate shall have regard to the considerations referred to in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of Subsection (3) of the proposed new Section 61A. The nature of the service of the man should not enter into the matter at all, because the Army is made up of all sorts of services. There is the man who goes over the top; there is the stretcher-bearer, who is just as essential as the man who goes over the top, and there are men in the other branches of the service, all of whom have essential duties to perform. But I fancy that the magistrate who knew nothing about active service would feel disposed to grant prefer-

ence to the man who had been over the top with a rifle and a bayonet rather than to grant preference to a stretcher-bearer, although I consider the latter has the worst job in the Army.

Then paragraph (b) deals with the comparative qualifications of the active service man or woman and with the other applicants for the office or employment. I ask members, as men of the world, to read that paragraph carefully. I venture to say that any employer or any magistrate who so desired could find reasons why the qualifications of the man who went oversea were not equal to those of the man who did not go oversea. Paragraph (c) deals with "any other relevant circumstances." A man does not need too many whiskies and sodas to know what other relevant circumstances are. Then we come to the proviso—

Provided that such employer need not appoint such active service man or woman if he or she has been convicted, at any time, of an indictable offence.

A returned soldier may be applying for a pick-and-shovel job, or for a job in a mine, yet, because he may have been convicted of an indictable offence in his youth he would be debarred from the benefits proposed to be conferred by this measure. I have been through two wars and I have never believed that my comrades were angels, nor are we looking for angel's wings sprouting from the returned soldiers of this war.

Mr. Mann: No.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for Beverley agrees with me. The effect of this provision would be to debar perhaps some of our best fighting men, who may have been awarded the D.S.O., or even the V.C., from being granted preference in employment because of some mistake in their youthful days in respect of which they were convicted of an indictable offence. We would say to such a man, "Notwithstanding all that you have done for your country, we are sorry, but under this law there is no preference of employment for you."

Mr. McLarty: Do you really believe that?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have had a lot to do with the Arbitration Court, far more than has the hon. member. The late Mr. Justice Burnside was once discussing an Act of Parliament with me. I was unsophisticated enough to tell the judge what the position was. I told him that I had participated in the debate and what Parliament had

decided. His Honour replied to me, "I agree with what you say, Mr. Panton, and that is quite right; but this is what you have said in the Act. I have to interpret what is there." That is what every judge will do. It is not a matter of what we think or what was our intention in legislating along certain lines. It is what we finally say in the form of an Act of Parliament. Then there is this in this Bill—

Moreover, if an employer satisfies the industrial magistrate that the appellant—

He is the man who is applying for the job, and the employer may not like the look of him, and the man may appeal to the magistrate to get satisfaction. This is what the employer will have to satisfy the magistrate upon—

- (a) would be unable to perform the duties appertaining to the office or employment by reason of lack of skill or reasonable degree of efficiency.

The man applies for the job and the employer says, "No, I do not think you will suit." The man has the right of appeal to the industrial magistrate. The employer does not give the man a trial, and he does not know what the man's efficiency or skill may be; but he goes to the magistrate and has to prove what is set out in paragraph (a). Is the industrial magistrate going to say to the employer, "You must give the man a trial"? The Bill does not say that. It goes on—

- (b) is physically or mentally unfit to undertake the duties of the office or employment involved.

The poor old soldier has to prove that he is physically and mentally fit for the job. He will have to get some doctors to certify that he is physically and mentally fit, or will have to drag them into the witness-box to testify on his behalf. The other paragraph reads—

- (c) has been convicted of an indictable offence at any time.

Again, that indictable offence crops up. In my opinion, this Bill has no right to come before us at this stage. It has no right to seek to amend the Industrial Arbitration Act, which was passed for the purpose of settling industrial disputes. This is not an industrial dispute and cannot be such a dispute. It may involve questions of policy on the part of Governments, but that is another phase. If a Bill to give preference to returned soldiers is to be introduced, it must

be a Bill that will stand by itself and not be mixed up with industrial legislation, which will always be to the detriment of the returned man. Lastly, it must not be a Bill through which anyone could drive a team of horses, and that is what this Bill is. Knowing soldiers as I do, I would not agree to any Bill that contained a provision that, because at some time in his life, a soldier who may have proved himself one of the finest ever to have faced the enemy on the field of battle, has committed an indictable offence, he must be debarred from getting employment.

Legislation of this description needs a lot of consideration and, without going into that phase, I content myself with saying that this is no time to bring in such a Bill. The Returned Soldiers' League of Australia is now awaiting action by the Commonwealth Government in bringing down legislation to deal with this subject. That legislation will supersede all such legislation as may have been passed by the States. Why waste the time of Parliament in discussing a paltry measure like this? I say to the R.S.L. and to anyone else interested in this matter that it is their job to wait for the Commonwealth legislation. If it is not satisfactory, they can then approach the State Government. I certainly oppose the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and passed.

## **BILL—RURAL AND INDUSTRIAL BANK.**

### *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it did not insist on its amendments Nos. 9, 11, 17 and 25, disagreed to by the Assembly, but insisted on its amendments Nos. 2, 5, 7, 15 and 20, and that it had agreed to the further amendment made by the Assembly to amendment No. 18 made by the Council.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move—

That the Assembly continues to disagree to the amendments made by the Council.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

*Assembly's Request for Conference.*

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move—

That the Council be requested to grant a conference on the amendments insisted on by the Council, and that the managers for the Assembly be the Minister for Works, Mr. Watts and the mover.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

**BILL—APPROPRIATION.**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

**BILL—TRADE DESCRIPTIONS AND FALSE ADVERTISEMENTS ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it did not insist on amendments Nos. 1 and 2, disagreed to by the Assembly, but that it insisted on its amendments Nos. 4, 5, 6 and 7.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Industrial Development in charge of the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I propose to deal with all the amendments insisted on by the Council in one motion. The amendments Nos. 1 and 2 that the Council no longer insists upon related to the name of the manufacturer, together with his address, being attached to the trade description. That phase was vital from my point of view and that of this Chamber. By not insisting on its proposed amendments, the Council has met us fully there. The balance of the amendments upon which the Council still insists relate to the penalties provided in the Bill. I explained this matter clearly when we previously dealt with it. I think we have nothing to gain by continuing further to disagree to the Council's amendment. The penalties are not altogether as I could desire. I move—

That the amendments be no longer disagreed to.

Mr. DONEY: I am not disposed to continue disputing the point, having regard to the Minister's attitude. The Council's pro-

posal is futile, and I certainly can see no sound reason for a fine of £50 for a first offence and then one of £200 for a second offence. I admit that such a penalty might not necessarily be imposed, but I regard the amendment as very strange.

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

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

**BILL—LEGAL PRACTITIONERS ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it did not insist on its amendments Nos. 3, 6 and 9, disagreed to by the Assembly.

**BILL—UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it insisted on its amendments Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, to which the Assembly had disagreed, and on its original amendment No. 2 to which the Assembly had made an alternative amendment.

*In Committee.*

Hon. J. B. Sleeman in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

The PREMIER: I move—

That the Assembly continues to disagree to amendments Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 made by the Council.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER: I move—

That the Assembly insists on its amendment No. 2, to which the Council has disagreed.

Question put and passed.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

*Assembly's Request for Conference.*

The PREMIER: I move—

That the Council be requested to grant a conference on the amendments made by the Council and on amendment No. 2 insisted on by the Assembly, and that the managers for the Assembly be the Minister for Education, Mr. Leslie and the mover.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## **BILL—SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Council's Further Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for a conference on the amendments insisted on by the Council, and had appointed Hon. C. F. Baxter, Hon. H. L. Roche and Hon. E. H. Gray as managers for the Council, the Chief Secretary's room as the place of meeting and the time forthwith.

*Sitting suspended from 3.47 to 4.50 a.m.*

### *Conference Managers' Report.*

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A conference has been held. The managers for the Assembly were not successful in an attempt to obtain agreement with the managers for the Council in respect to the Council giving way on the amendments made to the Bill. Mr. Baxter was one of the managers for the Legislative Council. The amendments were two in number and had to do with the question of providing in the Bill for accommodation to be erected after the war for shearers. This accommodation it was proposed should be divided into compartments in which not more than two shearers were to be accommodated. As I say, we were not successful in convincing the managers of the Council of our point of view. However, there is sufficient left in the Bill to warrant our accepting it. I therefore move—

That the amendments insisted on by the Council be agreed to.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## **BILL—OPTOMETRISTS ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it insisted on its amendments Nos. 1 and 2.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; Mr. McLarty (for Mr. McDonald) in charge of the Bill.

Mr. McLARTY: I move—

That the Assembly no longer disagrees to amendments made by the Council.

Both Houses spent a great deal of time in the consideration of this Bill and I am

anxious that it should not lapse. The man concerned will still have an opportunity under the measure, as amended, to obtain admission to the profession of optometrists, but it will be necessary for him to pass certain examinations to be set by the board. That provision will, of course, apply to any other persons desiring to qualify as optometrists.

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

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

*Sitting suspended from 4.55 to 5.30 a.m.*

## **BILL—RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK.**

### *Council's Further Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for a conference, and had appointed Hon. G. B. Wood, Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch and the Chief Secretary as managers for the Council, the conference to take place in the Speaker's room at 5.35 a.m.

## **BILL—UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Council's Further Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for a conference, and had appointed Hon. J. A. Dimmitt, Hon. L. Craig and Hon. E. H. Gray as managers for the Council, the conference to take place in the Chief Secretary's room forthwith.

## **BILL—SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the conference managers' report.

*Sitting suspended from 5.31 to 7.50 a.m.*

## **BILL—UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Conference Managers' Report.*

The PREMIER: I have to report that the managers appointed by the Assembly met the managers appointed by the Coun-

cil to consider the amendments on which the Legislative Council insisted, and agreed as follows:—

(a) Amendments Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 shall be withdrawn.

(b) Amendment No. 2 shall be accepted.

(c) A further proviso shall be added to paragraph (g) of Subsection 10 in Clause 4, Subclause (1), of the Bill as follows:—

Provided also that two of the members to be selected and co-opted under this paragraph shall be persons who are members of Convocation.

This really means that the original proposals in the Bill that there should be six members elected by Convocation stands, but that two of the four co-opted members shall be members of Convocation, though not subject to election. The clause regarding returned soldiers has been retained. I move—

That the report be adopted.

Question put and passed, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## **BILL—RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK.**

### *Conference Managers' Report.*

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have to report that the managers appointed by the Assembly met the managers appointed by the Council. Perhaps it is unnecessary for me to say that much discussion and argument ensued. I submit the following report:—

It was agreed that amendments Nos. 2 and 5 be agreed to; that amendments Nos. 7 and 15 be not agreed to, and that amendment No. 20 be amended by substituting for Clause 90 a new clause as follows:—

90. (1) Subject to Subsection (2) of this section the term "owner" in the Road Districts Act, 1919-1943, and in the Municipal Corporations Act, 1906-1943, respectively, shall not extend to the Bank or the Commissioners as mortgagee in possession or otherwise.

(2) In respect of rates assessed under the said Acts upon land comprised in any security held by the Bank in the Rural Department of the Bank, the Commissioners, if and when they enter into possession as mortgagee, shall become and be liable for and shall pay—

(a) the amount owing at the time of the entry for any such rates then in arrear up to an amount not exceeding the amount of rates assessed for any one year of the period in relation to which the rates are in arrear; and

(b) current rates as they fall due during such time as the Commissioners remain in possession as aforesaid.

(3) While any security held by the Bank in the Rural Department of the Bank remains in force the Commissioners shall take all proper measures to ensure as far as possible that the borrower whilst he continues to occupy or use the land comprised in the security pays as and when they fall due for payment all rates assessed under the said Acts upon the land comprised in such security in accordance with his covenant implied in the security to make such payment.

(4) Whenever the Bank or the Commissioners sell the land comprised in any security held by the Bank in the Rural Department of the Bank in exercise of the mortgagees' power of sale under the said security, the Commissioners shall cause to be included in the conditions of sale a condition that in addition to the purchase price to be paid for the land on the sale thereof, the purchaser shall and will forthwith upon such sale being effected pay to the Commissioners for payment by them to the road board or the municipal council entitled thereto the amount of all rates assessed under the said Acts upon the said land and owing and unpaid at the time of such sale.

I move—

That the report be adopted.

Mr. WATTS: In regard to the first of these amendments, I would like to say that it takes out the words "subject to the Minister." Except that it would have meant the loss of the Bill, which I was not prepared to contemplate, I would have preferred these words to remain in accordance with the decision of this Assembly; because I do not regard it, as I said when the message came from the Council in the first place, as being a reasonable proposition that the Minister should not have a measure of control in both departments of the bank. Still, the agreement has been arrived at that the words be deleted. The new clause has reference to a provision in regard to road board rates and the obligations of the bank in regard thereto. I agreed to this, too, but I must express a feeling of regret that it does not in any way deal with the accounts of the agency department but only with the rural department. Still, I feel that the position has been improved and that the best has been made, in the circumstances that exist, of a very difficult job.

Question put and passed, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

### **BILL—RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK.**

#### *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the conference managers' report.

### **BILL—UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT.**

#### *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the conference managers' report.

### **ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.**

**THE PREMIER** [7.56 a.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn to a date to be fixed by Mr. Speaker.

Question put and passed.

### **COMPLIMENTARY REMARKS.**

**THE PREMIER** [7.57 a.m.]: That concludes the business of this session, and I would like to extend to you, Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, his deputies, the officers of the House, "Hansard" and the Press the compliments of the season. While the Press reports have been somewhat circumscribed, I think that within the war conditions existing we have had a faithful reflection of the business transacted in Parliament. The danger which faced the State this time last year when we were about to adjourn has, I think, steadily but surely moved away. I hope that an equally big improvement in conditions will take place during the next 12 months and that during the ensuing year we will emerge victorious at least from the European war, even if, by some mischance, the South Pacific war is not concluded victoriously. I hope that the coming festive season will be the last wartime Christmas we shall have to endure. Most people have very near and dear friends or relatives who are away, and this is a period of great anxiety to them. I think members of the House would extend sympathy to the relatives and friends of those who have suffered losses, and to the other people of the State who are undergoing a period of anxiety on account of the

absence of friends in the danger zone and who may possibly at any time—although we hope not—receive bad news.

This is a period that none likes to go through, and I hope it will soon be terminated. To my ministerial colleagues and the members of my Party, I am deeply grateful for the loyalty and assistance given to me. To the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party, I extend thanks for the courtesy extended to me at all times. I thank members of both sides of the House for their assistance in enabling me to carry out the business of the House. We have covered a wide field and the session has been fairly fruitful. We did not get all we set out to get—we never do—but we have accomplished something that we hope will be to the betterment of the State in the future. I extend to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all members of the House the compliments of the season and trust that when we meet again prospects will have been immeasurably improved and that we shall be on the road to victory.

**MR. WATTS** (Katanning): I would like to concur with the Premier in the good wishes he, on behalf of himself and those associated with him, have offered to you, Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, your staff, the "Hansard" staff and the Press. The session has been a busy one. There has been a good deal of legislation of a more constructive nature than has been noticeable in some of the sessions since I have been here. The session has been marred only by its conclusion. I do really feel that some means should be found whereby a sitting of the kind we have just passed through could be prevented. I do not believe it is impossible to find a cure. It is obvious that there cannot be an application of intelligence of the highest order in circumstances such as we have passed through in the last 15 or 16 hours. However, that is by the way. The session is over and the work done, and we are now approaching the festive season. When I said I wished to extend to you, Sir, and to the others the same good wishes as the Premier has extended, I am sure it was recognised that I spoke in all good faith.

I wish to extend the same good feelings to the Premier and those associated with him on the benches on that side of the House and

to express them to those associated with me. My experience during the session has been that no friends could be more loyal or more active in carrying out their duties and assisting in the business of the House. My friends on my left I gladly include in the expression of hope that the Christmas season will be a good time for us all and as the Premier remarked, not marred by any bad tidings, and that we shall meet early in the coming year to deal with some of the problems that are still outstanding and that cannot be left to stand over much longer, those particularly in which the decisions by the Commonwealth Parliament must first be made. I heartily join in the good wishes expressed by the Premier.

**MR. McLARTY** (Murray-Wellington): On behalf of those members who occupy the cross benches, I would like to express gratitude to you, Mr. Speaker, for the able and impartial manner in which you have carried out your duties during the session, and I take the opportunity of wishing you, the Chairman of Committees, the officials of the House, "Hansard" and the Press a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in expressing the same good wishes to all members of the House. The Premier has mentioned that the coming year will be

one that will bring very great anxiety particularly to those people who have dear ones on the fighting fronts. Upon all of us devolves the serious duty of doing everything possible to bring the war to an early and victorious conclusion and I can only express the hope that the year 1945 will be marked by the Christmas message of peace on earth and goodwill to men.

**MR. SPEAKER:** On behalf of the Chairman of Committees, the Deputy Chairmen, the officials of the House and the "Hansard" staff, I thank the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Murray-Wellington for their very kindly references. I believe that everything that has been said of them is well deserved, and I take this opportunity to thank them personally for the great assistance they have afforded me. With their assistance and the good behaviour of members of the House my task has been very easy. I doubt whether it is possible, while this terrible war is raging, for anyone to have a happy Christmas, but I wish you and yours as happy a Christmas as is possible in the circumstances, and trust that by the time we re-assemble, peace on earth will reign once more. I thank you all for your good wishes.

*House adjourned at 8.5 a.m. (Saturday).*