

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 29th September, 1948.

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

QUESTIONS.

HOUSING.

As to Contract and Day Labour Building of Rental Homes.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) How many rental houses have been built during the two last six-monthly periods by—

(a) contract;

(b) day labour?

(2) How many men have been employed on the construction of houses by day labour during the last two six-monthly periods?

(3) What is the average cost of building a brick house in the metropolitan area by—

(a) contract;

(b) day labour, taking into account reasonable administrative costs?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Commonwealth-State rental houses completed for six-monthly periods ending—
31/12/47—By contract, 337; by day labour, 109.

30/6/48—By contract, 324; by day labour, 76.

(2) Number of men employed by the Public Works Department on day labour in construction of Commonwealth-State rental houses—

24th December, 1947—304.

30th June, 1948—336.

(3) These figures will take some time to extract and relate to each other, and are being obtained.

MINING ACT.

As to Covenant of Lessees.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

Does he consider that he is acting within the strict legal interpretation of Section 96 of the Mining Act in granting a license to dispense with the performance of a lessee's covenant to work the mines, having regard for the fact that Section 96 provides that the Minister must be convinced that the lessee concerned has made reasonable efforts to work and develop the mine, and further, that the continued working and developing of such mine would result in unnecessary loss to the lessee?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

The practice pertaining over many years and approved of by the hon. member for Murchison when Minister for Mines has been continued, viz., when the mines are fully manned with all available labour, a special license has been granted, but only after necessary certificate from the Inspector of Mines.

RAILWAYS.

As to Midland Company's Freight Charges.

Mr. ACKLAND asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is it a fact that producers using the Midland Railway Company's railways consigning stock and produce to and from Watheroo, 121 miles north of Midland Junction, pay—£23 11s. 6d. freight on a six-ton truck of kerosene from Fremantle; £13 10s. 1d. freight on a bogie truck of lambs to Robbs Jetty; £3 13s. freight on a 10-ton truck of super. from Bassendean; £9 19s. 8d. freight on a 10-ton truck of wheat to Fremantle North Wharf; £6 4s. 9d. freight on a small truck of cattle to Subiaco; whereas producers using the Western Australian Government Railways over the same distance, for example, from Wongan Hills, pay—£19 9s. 8d. freight on a six-ton truck of kerosene from Fremantle; £12 4s. freight on a bogie truck of lambs to Robbs Jetty; £3 8s. freight on a 10-ton truck of super. from Bassendean; £8 14s. 8d. freight on a 10-ton truck of wheat to Fremantle North Wharf:

(2) Is it a fact that under its agreement with the Western Australian Government, the Midland Railway Company is compelled to seek ministerial approval to the fixation of rail freights on the company's railway?

(3) Has ministerial approval been given to recent rail freight increases to the Midland Railway Company?

(4) If the answer to No. (1) is in the affirmative, will he take the necessary steps to see that the Midland Railway Company so reduces its rail freight charges over its railways in order to place producers and others served by that system on a footing comparable with users of the State railway system?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, except that there are a few inaccuracies in the Midland charges—£23 11s. 6d. should be £23 13s. 11d.; £13 10s. should include 5s. haulage; £9 19s. 8d. should be £9 13s. 10d.; £6 4s. 9d. should be £6 5s. 8d.

(2) Under the Midland Railway Act the Midland Railway Company has to obtain the approval of the Minister for Railways to any freight or passenger rates charged.

(3) and (4) The Prices Commissioner had approved of an increase of 33½ per cent. and the Government felt it could not act contrary to this, except for a condition that consideration should be given to ways

and means of reducing the burden to areas further out.

TIMBER INDUSTRY.

As to Inspection of Metropolitan Mills.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) Is he aware that considerable delay takes place, after a complaint is lodged by the secretary of the Metropolitan Timber Workers' Union, before an inspector under the Factory and Shops Act is available to inspect timber mills in the metropolitan area?

(2) Is he aware that the Factory and Shops Department objects to sending an inspector to timber mills in the metropolitan area, and that representations have to be made to the chief inspector of the timber industry in Bunbury?

(3) Is he further aware that such delays are dangerous for those employed in metropolitan timber mills?

(4) Will he take steps to appoint a workmen's inspector for timber mills in the metropolitan area, and thus help to improve the working conditions in the industry, and minimise the danger of accidents?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) No.

(3) Where reports have been received, attention within 24 hours has always been given.

(4) The appointment of a workmen's inspector for the timber mills in the metropolitan area is under consideration.

BETTING.

As to Ante-Post Market.

Mr. SMITH asked the Minister representing the Minister for Police:

(1) Is he aware of the existence of an ante-post betting market in the metropolitan area as reported in "The West Australian" of the 18th and 25th September, 1948?

(2) Could he inform the House as to whether this market is conducted on the highways or in common gaming houses?

(3) Has this illegal activity police protection, and if so, is it by ministerial direction?

(4) When does he propose to institute action to suppress this ante-post betting market with at least the same rigor with which S.P. betting on the highway and elsewhere is now harassed?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Most, if not all of ante-post betting is done by commission agents in private offices by telephone.

(3) No.

(4) Betting by telephone has been held by the courts not to be illegal.

LAND SALES CONTROL.

As to Statement by Minister.

Hon. A. H. PANTON (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

Is he correctly reported in this morning's issue of "The West Australian" under the heading of "Land Sales Control" when he is alleged to have said: "The regulations gazetted yesterday also extend exemption to licensed premises and to land on which factories, workshops and other business premises have been constructed."

The MINISTER replied: Yes.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Builders' Registration Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council:

2, Fisheries Act Amendment (Continuance).

Passed.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

PAPERS—POLICE SERGEANT R. KENDALL.

As to Transfer and Appeals.

Debate resumed from the 15th September on the following motion by Mr. Yates—

That all papers in connection with the three appeals lodged by Sergeant R. Kendall of the Police Department and all papers in connection with the inquiry held on Sergeant Kendall's transfer from the C.I.B. to the Uniformed Branch by Mr. H. D. Moseley be laid on the Table of the House.

to which an amendment had been moved by Mr. Graham as follows—

That all the words after the initial word "That" be struck out.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth—on amendment) [4.40]: In view of the statements made by the member for Canning in relation to the administration of the Police Department or certain aspects of it and the comments made by the Acting Leader of the Opposition and other members, the Government feels that there should be a suitable inquiry into such aspects of the administration of the Police Department as it would be fitting and proper to include in the scope of such an inquiry.

The inquiry should, I think, be conducted by a Judge of our State, if one is available but, if not, we propose to seek the services of a Judge from another State. In an inquiry of this sort, those present should be confined to people who have occasion to be in attendance. An examination of administration of this nature involves the personal records of officers of the Force who may be interested, and apparently it will involve also a consideration of matters referred to the police that have been investigated by members of the C.I.B. in the course of their duties, but in some cases or possibly in all cases have not resulted in any charge being laid or any court proceedings being taken.

Information given to the police or collected by them is usually regarded as confidential in character, and I think that in such an inquiry consideration should be given, not only to members of the Force but also to private citizens whose names may be involved in the investigations made by any Royal Commissioner. I consider that the position will be met by the publication for general information of the report of the Royal Commissioner after he has made the necessary examination of the various matters referred to him. If we secure for his duty a Judge of one of the Supreme Courts of the Australian States, we shall have an assurance that the position will be thoroughly investigated with a due sense of responsibility.

In consultation with the Minister for Police, I shall be glad to discuss with the member for Canning and the member for East Perth, as the movers of the motion and the amendment respectively, and also,

if we may be permitted, with the Acting Leader of the Opposition the terms of reference to ensure that they include everything that should properly be included in a reference of this sort. The motion of the member for Canning referred to the tabling of certain papers and the amendment of the member for East Perth replaces that motion by a proposal for an inquiry. I am now informing the House that the feeling of the Government is that such an inquiry should be held.

Mr. Marshall: Is it to be a departmental inquiry or an inquiry by Royal Commissioner?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is to be a Royal Commission conducted by a Judge of the Supreme Court of this or one of the other States. Quite possibly it will be a Judge from one of the other States if we can obtain his services. I was saying that the motion was to table certain papers relating to Sergeant Kendall's case and the amendment supersedes that in that it proposes to substitute an inquiry by a Judge into these aspects of the administration of the Police Department. We propose to hold an inquiry, which will thereby meet the amendment of the member for East Perth.

In relation to the original motion for the tabling of papers concerning Sergeant Kendall's transfer and the examination of his transfer that was made by Mr. Moseley, one of our police magistrates, I have told the House that I was quite agreeable to the papers being tabled, but I would suggest, if the member for Canning approves, that the matter might now be superseded by the inquiry and that the papers should be placed before the Royal Commissioner to be dealt with by him as one of the matters requiring his attention in the course of the inquiry. If, however, the hon. member desires that his motion be given effect to, that is a matter entirely for him and I am quite prepared to lay the papers on the Table. I think, however, that if we are to have an inquiry, the adoption of that course is really not necessary.

There should be no need for me to say anything more. If an inquiry is to be held as we propose, then the matter becomes subjudice and there will be no occasion, and in fact there would be no propriety, in attempting to discuss any further the

merits or demerits of the suggestions made in connection with the administration of the Commissioner of Police or the administration of the departments by two other senior officers who were named by the member for Canning. So the situation is that we propose to accede to the request for an inquiry and will arrange for it to take place as soon as possible and that we shall secure the services of the most authoritative person, namely, a Judge to undertake the inquiry.

Mr. Graham: Will you indicate an inquiry into what? I want some idea of the extent. Does it mean two or three or a greater number of persons who have expressed dissatisfaction?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The inquiry should be aimed at clearing up any outstanding matters that are involved.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Open wide?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Within limits. We do not want to have a Supreme Court Judge listening to any person who has some sort of grievance because a traffic policeman was rude to him at an intersection, or to minor matters or to matters that are old. We want the inquiry to relate to members of the Force who may feel that there is something that has been unfair to them in respect to their promotion or transfer or their position in the Force. If there is any other matter relevant to the administration that might well be cleared up at the same time and may be determined on the suggestion of the members who moved the motion and the amendment or any other member, the Government will give consideration to including it in the terms of reference.

Mr. Nimmo: Will this inquiry be held in public?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The idea is that the inquiry should not be held in public. When an inquiry is being held into a matter of this sort where the personal records of members of the Force are involved and where the names of citizens will be introduced, no good purpose could be served by conducting it as a general public inquiry. At the same time I would say that if the Royal Commissioner thought the public interest would be served by a general public inquiry, that discretion should be left to him. Otherwise I see no reason why matters which may be personal,

not only to members of the Police Force but also to private citizens, should be the subject of a public inquiry. I do not think the occasion warrants that.

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville—on amendment) [4.51]: This is a most extraordinary procedure. First of all the member for Canning moved that certain papers be laid on the Table of the House. Naturally he had to give reasons for his motion. I think he went a long way beyond what was required in that respect. That, however, was in your hands, Sir; and as a very old member of the Chamber once told me, "You can say anything you like until the Speaker stops you." The member for Canning had a fair go. He moved that the papers be tabled and the Minister made certain explanations and the definite statement that he was prepared to table the papers. Then the member for East Perth moved an amendment which rather cut out the whole of the argument of the member for Canning.

I consider that the papers should have been tabled; and after having read them, the member for Canning should have decided whether to move for a Royal Commission or to drop the matter altogether. But the member for East Perth moved for an inquiry; and now the same Minister who was prepared to lay the papers on the Table of the House suggests that they should not be tabled but that a Royal Commission should be held. He states that an inquiry will be made, which will not be public, whereas if the papers had been tabled the information contained therein would have been available to the public. I, myself, do not want to see the papers. I am not a bit particular about what is in them—

The Minister for Housing: I am prepared to table the papers.

HON. A. H. PANTON: —but I object to a member on one side of the House moving for papers to be laid on the Table, and another member on the other side getting up and moving for a Royal Commission; and the Minister saying that he will discuss the matter with those two members, with a view to deciding what shall be the terms of reference of the proposed inquiry. My view is that, the motion for the tabling of the papers having been moved, the whole matter is in the hands of this

House and not in the hands of the Minister or the Government. I do not think the Government has any right to say, "We will have a Royal Commission," which to all intents and purposes would stifle any further discussion, if such discussion is desired. I do not know whether a discussion is required, but I am making my protest as to the way in which the matter has been handled.

The member for East Perth—and I am sure he will not mind my saying this—moved the amendment off his own bat. So far as I know this party was not in any way enlightened as to what he intended to do. Had he consulted me, I would have said, "It is not our baby at all. It should be left with the member for Canning." But the member for East Perth took the opportunity to move the amendment and must therefore share the rearing of the baby with the member for Canning. I, however, wish to dissociate myself from both the motion and the amendment. I repeat that this matter is in the hands of the House, and it is not right for the discussion to be closed—

The Minister for Housing: The matter is still in the hands of the House.

HON. A. H. PANTON: I know; but the inference to be gathered from the remarks of the Minister is that, as a Royal Commission is to be appointed, the matter should be allowed to rest at that.

The Minister for Housing: What more can we do?

HON. A. H. PANTON: I do not know that there is much more we can do; but I think that if any members desire to discuss the matter they should not be bluffed or stopped from doing so by the speech made by the Minister.

The Minister for Housing: I quite agree.

HON. A. H. PANTON: So long as the Minister agrees, I am satisfied.

The Minister for Housing: I do not want to stifle discussion.

HON. A. H. PANTON: I think that in future once this sort of thing is brought before the House it should remain in the hands of the House. The member for Canning having moved for the tabling of the papers, they should be tabled. The hon. member read a lot of statements. Whether they were correct or not is a matter of in-

difference to me at the moment. But many things were read from statements signed by officers of the Police Force, and those things did not redound very much to the credit of somebody in the Force. Those statements having been made, we are now going to have a secret Royal Commission, unless the Royal Commissioner decides otherwise.

The Premier: It will not be secret; the findings will be given to the public.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: That is no good. It is useless for the Premier to tell me that. The member for Canning read quite a number of statements and would have read a lot more, I suppose, if he had had the opportunity. The information he gave went into the Press and everybody knows about it. If the papers were tabled as requested, we would know whether the statements made were right or wrong; but if the evidence is to be given privately and only the recommendations are to be made public, who is to know what information was laid before the Commissioner? That is not playing the game. However, I have made my protest, and I think that in future these matters should be handled differently from the way they have been managed on this occasion.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Geraldton—on amendment) [4.56]: I agree with the member for Leederville. Not knowing any of the inner workings of this business, I cannot understand why the member for Canning was not invited to peruse the papers in the Minister's office in the first place, thus preventing a very unsavoury episode. On account of the refusal to let him see the papers, he has been forced to move that they be tabled. I stand behind that motion and no other.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison—on amendment) [4.58]: The procedure adopted on this occasion is foreign to that which is usually practised. This Chamber has always been given an opportunity to make a decision on these matters before the Government has committed itself.

The Minister for Housing: You can still do so.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You have committed the Government, though.

Mr. MARSHALL: On this occasion some arrangement has been made outside the Chamber on a subject the decision on which, as the member for Leederville said, rightly belongs to this Chamber. Once a motion is moved in this House it is the property of the House, and only this Chamber has the power to decide what shall be its fate. I have no interest whatever in this matter. Like all other departments, the Police Force will find that from time to time its administration will fall foul of some of its subordinates. That is natural, particularly in a big organisation. The complaints that have been made may be justifiable or not; we do not know. But when accusations are made against a very responsible departmental officer, this House should be fully informed on the matter, and we cannot get that from any Royal Commission or other body of inquiry. As the representatives of the people members are entitled to know all the facts involved.

The Minister for Housing: What more do you want?

Mr. MARSHALL: I suggest to the member for East Perth that he withdraw his amendment. If the House will permit him to follow that course he can then add to the motion the substance of his proposed amendment. If that is done the papers will be tabled and, if the Government and the House agree, we will also have a Royal Commission to inquire into the matter. I do not doubt the integrity or probity of Royal Commissioners but, from my lengthy experience in this Chamber, I feel that there is always an inclination on their part to take the line of least resistance, to smooth matters over to a great extent and to make as light as possible of whatever may be the trouble. For that reason I would prefer that the matter be investigated by a Select Committee. A Select Committee knows the information it wants, and goes after it.

I wish to see the papers and to know whether the information placed before the House by the member for Canning is correct, and whether he submitted all the facts. As representatives of the people it is our responsibility to know what is going on in Government departments and, if injustices are being done to State employees by departmental heads, to take whatever action is necessary. If, on the other hand, the

probity of departmental heads is being besmirched by employees, it is the duty of this Chamber to take action in that matter. I have often said in this House—particularly in recent times—that there is a growing desire on the part of some individuals to seek power and impose their authority upon others.

There is far too much of that sort of thing going on, with boards, commissions and departmental officers all pushing State employees and other individuals about from place to place, regimenting and indexing the people, from the highest to the lowest, in some cases. I am getting tired of that and I believe the House would be well-advised to take a serious view of the present situation. While members might argue that they are not in any way associated with the Communist Party we are all, by our inaction, permitting that same foul influence to gain a hold in our departments. We should be up and doing to prevent that. That is the main reason why I would like to see the amendment withdrawn, and I appeal to the member for East Perth to follow the course I have suggested so that we may have the papers tabled and also have an investigation by a Royal Commission.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
(Hon. A. F. Watts—Katanning—on amendment) [5.5]: I feel that it would perhaps be desirable for another representative of the Government to intervene in the debate at this stage, as I would like to impress upon members—in considering this matter—that we are dealing with what I think may probably be regarded as one of the most important departments of State. Without a loyal and efficient Police Force, the conduct and management of the State's affairs would not be as easy as is the case at present and there is always the prospect, in these turbulent times, that that loyalty and efficiency may be called upon to the utmost.

I do not think there is any member of this House who, looking upon the matter and taking an overall view, would say other than that hitherto the efficiency of the Police Force and its loyalty in the service it is called upon to perform have been undoubted. What contribution are we going to make to the maintenance of that efficiency

and loyalty to duty—which have characterised the Police Force in the past—if we are to give unrestricted opportunity in a public examination for all complaints to be brought forward by officers who for one reason or another are not entirely satisfied with what has happened or not happened to them during their service as members of the Force? Rumours of the sort of thing mentioned by the member for Canning in the course of his speech had reached me when I sat on the opposite side of this House.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They have been reaching me for the past twelve or 18 months.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Therefore the genesis of this matter has not been in recent months or even during the life of the present Government. It existed, at least to some degree, at the end of 1946, and I fear the situation has more in it than the mere question of the administration, good or bad, of the Police Force as such.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I do not think there is any doubt about that.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Although in the ordinary course of events I would insist on an inquiry of an entirely public character, I think that in dealing with a matter such as this we must take into consideration whether such an inquiry would make any contribution to the efficiency of the Police Force, or the reverse. I am firmly of the opinion—to use the common parlance—that the public washing of dirty linen would not contribute much to the efficiency and loyalty of the Force. Therefore the observations of the Minister for Housing as to the proposed inquiry meet entirely with my approval. I think it is a matter for the Royal Commissioner himself to decide whether or not the circumstances of any particular case justify its public ventilation. If that opportunity is not afforded to the Royal Commissioner and that right is not given to him the prospects of seriously damaging the efficiency of the Police Force cannot be lost sight of. It has been suggested that the procedure that has been followed in this matter is unusual, and perhaps that is so in view of what has been the custom and usual practice in the past.

The member for Canning produced a great deal of evidence—I think we can take it as evidence because it was provided by certain officers of the Police Force—and I

do not know whether he had similar documents prepared by other officers of the Force. If he had documents of that kind the terms of the inquiry suggested by the Minister for Housing would not prevent such officers from presenting their legitimate views to the Royal Commissioner. The member for Canning moved for the tabling of the papers and the Minister for Housing said he was prepared to table them. That would have left the question of whether an inquiry was warranted entirely in the hands of the Government, without advice from the House, because no movement would have taken place in the House to tender that advice, but when the member for East Perth came forward, in the manner in which he did, and moved as an amendment that the matter be the subject of an inquiry, of course the Government had then to consider what its attitude was towards that proposition. It did not previously have to consider that proposition, when the Minister for Housing first spoke.

When the amendment was moved the Government had, in my view, to consider what was proposed, in order that it might inform the House what its views were. What other course was open to the Minister? Could he say "The member for East Perth has moved for the appointment of a Royal Commission of inquiry, and I do not care whether the inquiry is held or not?" That would not have been regarded as a satisfactory answer, so the Minister gave a considered opinion as to what action should be taken and then, because of the proposal for an inquiry, which went further than the mere tabling of the papers, he suggested that although he was still willing to table the papers and did not retract from the point of view previously expressed, he preferred that the papers should also be included in the inquiry. It seems to me that that is the reasonable course to pursue. The commencement of whatever extraordinary procedure there has been in this matter was the amendment of the member for East Perth.

I do not think the member for Murchison was far wrong when he said—I take it that is what he said—that it should have been the subject of a separate proposition, not involving the question of the papers at all. For my part, in view of all that has been said and what has taken place because of the amendment moved by the member for

East Perth, I would suggest that the House should not ask for the papers to be tabled but should consent to an inquiry on the lines suggested by the Minister for Housing, as I do not think the tabling of the papers would do the Police Force any good and, if it would not do that, it would not do the people of the State any good. Such a course would only encourage, to some degree, the dissatisfaction which is alleged to exist in certain sections of the Force.

I think—and trust the House will agree—that the best way to settle the matter is to have a responsible Royal Commissioner conduct an inquiry with the powers and by the methods suggested by the Minister for Housing. By that means I believe we will be able to arrive at a conclusion as to the truth or otherwise of the contentions that have been raised in this matter. In that way we will get a full report from the Royal Commissioner, together with his recommendations as to what, if anything, should be done, and we will not run the risk of creating internal trouble in the Police Force. I cannot see how anything but trouble can arise if there is to be a public inquiry with the head-lines that we know we must expect when the matters selected to be published are often those of the greatest public interest and not those that really go to the root of the matter. I am not anxious for one moment, and I know the Minister for Housing is not, to prevent this House from having any say it likes on the question, but I am suggesting that it should give consideration to the various aspects I have mentioned before it arrives at a decision other than that which is contemplated by the Minister for Housing. The member for Murchison suggested that if this House carried a recommendation to have a Royal Commission, the Government would have to appoint one, but if the House did not carry it, apparently the Government would not have to appoint one.

I have been told many times, when sitting on the other side of the House, that this House can carry what resolutions it likes about Royal Commissions, but they are only recommendations to the Government. Therefore, I submit that if that argument is correct, as I feel sure it is, it was very necessary indeed for the Minister for Housing to come forward and give this House an assurance that he was prepared to institute an inquiry and to explain to the House what

type of inquiry it would be, and to advance reasons why the inquiry should take that form. He did that so that the House would know what the Government intended to do and what type of inquiry it intended to have. Surely there is no doubt in the mind of any member of this House, whether the amendment moved by the member for East Perth be carried or not, that the Government has considered it desirable to hold an inquiry of the type to which the Minister for Housing has referred. I trust everybody will agree that that is the best type of inquiry that we can have, and that it will make a substantial contribution towards a settlement of the difficulties that have for some time been threatening to damage, to some degree, the most efficient and loyal Police Force which today exists in this State.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle—on amendment) [5.17]: It seems to me that the remarks of the Minister for Education were not too complimentary to the Minister for Housing because he suggested that there was a proposition before the House to which the Minister had agreed. Then the member for East Perth came along with a suggestion and the Minister sat up and apparently said, "It is a good idea. We will have to consider it." Did not the Minister have the initiative to move without waiting for the member for East Perth to do so?

The Minister for Education: It was not necessary. We do not appoint commissions without resolutions.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I do not know any of the parties concerned in this matter, except the Commissioner, whom I always thought to be a fair, conscientious and capable officer. After the statements and the accusations that have been made by the member for Canning, in fairness to the Commissioner and everybody else, the paper should be laid on the Table of the House so that members can see just what has happened. It is no good the Minister suggesting that we have another inquiry, because last year the member for Canning asked the Minister if he would table the papers concerning this case, and the Minister said, "Definitely no." This year, the member for Canning moved that the papers be laid on the Table of the House, and the Minister stated that he would do that. The member for East Perth moved an amend-

ment to that motion, and the Minister changed his mind and said that he would have an inquiry made. We do not want any more inquiries.

A very capable officer, in the person of Mr. Moseley, a police magistrate, inquired into the matter, and this House has a right to know, just as the member for Canning has a right to know, what Mr. Moseley's findings were. What harm can it do for members of this House to know what those findings were? It seems remarkable to me that the Government should refuse to allow members to see the papers for themselves. Probably a local judge will be appointed to conduct the inquiry, and perhaps next year the member for Canning will have another grievance and the Government will probably say that it is going to ask a judge from the Eastern States to go into the matter again. I have nothing against the Commissioner, and I consider him a capable and conscientious officer, but, in fairness to everybody, I think members should know what is contained in the papers.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam—on amendment) [5.20]: The motion and the amendment are both necessarily still in the hands of members of this Chamber. It is true that if the amendment were to be proceeded with and carried, the motion for the tabling of the papers would not in fact be voted upon by members of the House, and therefore could not be carried. There seems to be some confusion of thought regarding the importance of the motion in the scheme of things. I am quite sure that had the member for Canning, in moving his motion for the tabling of the papers, confined himself to that issue, no amendment to the motion would have been moved and no request for a Royal Commission would, at this stage, have been put forward.

It was because the speech of the member for Canning ranged over a much more vital and wider field than the individual case of Sergeant Kendall, that it became obvious to me that the tabling of the papers in connection with the demotion or regression of Sergeant Kendall, would in no way meet the case as put forward by the member for Canning in support of his motion. That hon. member made, in the written documents which he read to this House, some amazing allegations and charges against the Commissioner of Police. Many of those allega-

tions and charges had no relation whatever to the demotion of Sergeant Kendall. I quite agree that members of the Government had no option, once the amendment moved by the member for East Perth was put forward, but to face up immediately to the issue by the appointment of a Royal Commission, or some other suitable form of inquiry. The Government could not escape it. Even if the amendment moved by the member for East Perth had not been submitted, I still consider the circumstances outlined in the speech of the member for Canning would have been so serious, in relation to the administration of the Police Force in this State by the Commissioner, that members of the Government would still have had a duty upon their shoulders to face the question of whether a searching investigation was necessary.

The charges made by the member for Canning, based upon the documents supplied to him by officers of the Police Force, impressed me sufficiently to believe that there was no escape from a searching inquiry which, of course, the Government would have to initiate and authorise if it were to take place. Therefore, although the course which the debate in connection with this matter has followed might appear to be unusual, all the circumstances surrounding the matter are most unusual. The charges contained in the documents read by the member for Canning are so pregnant with detrimental effect in relation to the control and discipline of the Police Force as to have made it essential for members of the Government to face the issue squarely and decide whether an inquiry on a high level should be initiated or not. In all the circumstances, I think the Government has made a correct decision. Whether this decision might have been avoided had the Minister given to the member for Canning the right confidentially to study the file in connection with Sergeant Kendall, I do not know. I have not been able to understand why the member for Canning was refused that right when he made a request some time last year. However, he was refused, and the only course open to him, following that refusal, was to assert his undoubted right as a member of this House, and bring forward a motion for the papers to be placed on the Table of the House.

It seems to me that the main question, if not the only one, left to members of this

House to decide is whether, in view of all that has been said, and because of assurances given by the Government, the motion for the tabling of the papers should now be carried in order that every member might have an opportunity of studying the file if he so desires. I accept the decision of the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the whole matter as being an earnest of the Government's anxiety to put an end once and for all to these charges, insinuations and rumours that have been spread throughout Western Australia by interested people over quite a considerable period. I am quite convinced in my own mind that there is a great deal of dishonest propaganda carried on against the Commissioner, and, in the interests of all concerned, including the Commissioner, I think that a searching investigation is now imperative.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle—on amendment) [5.29]: This is a remarkable situation. The Police Force is an industrial organisation, and yet we have a member of it approaching a private member in order to bring his complaints before Parliament so that an inquiry can be held. As a trade unionist, that appears to me to be an extraordinary way to do business. I consider that the proper thing for this individual, Sergeant Kendall, to have done would have been to approach his union and ask it to take the matter up for him. How do we know that the union desires us to do anything in the matter?

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: We are not concerned with what the union thinks.

Mr. FOX: I think we should be.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Now you have drawn the crabs!

Mr. FOX: I know we can always draw a bite from the anti-trade unionists! I am speaking as a unionist and I regard it as the duty of any individual to approach his union and ask that his case be taken up for him. If his request were complied with and the union considered an inquiry was needed, it would be for the union to approach Parliament to request the Government to have an investigation carried out, as in this instance, concerning the charges made by Sergeant Kendall through the member for Canning. All we have before us are the letters written by Sergeant Kendall and ex-parte statements made by him through the

member for Canning. Where shall we arrive, if we are to have a Royal Commission appointed to investigate every statement made in this Chamber?

In this instance, however, in view of the serious statements, I consider the only reasonable course to adopt is to authorise an inquiry, and I think the basis of the investigation should be the statement made by the member for Canning. It is not the baby of the members sitting on the Opposition side of the House. The matter has been brought forward by one of the Government's supporters, and we can leave them to carry the baby. I know the Commissioner of Police only slightly. I do not know that I have ever seen Sergeant Kendall, but I do not know a great deal about the Police Force. I regard it as fine body of men, although there may be one or two exceptions, as there are in every section of society. I think the proper course to adopt, in view of the statements made by the member for Canning, is to have a searching inquiry by a Royal Commissioner.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth—on amendment) [5.34]: In view of the statements of, and undertaking by, the Minister for Housing, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment. With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I trust members will not be of the opinion that there is any attempt to deny them their right to discuss the subject, and if my amendment is withdrawn, it is open to any member to continue the discussion by moving for the addition of a few words to the motion.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

MR. YATES (Canning—in reply) [5.35]: Since I first brought this matter before the House to give members an opportunity to hear of the alleged unrest and dissatisfaction in the Police Force, I have been approached by other members after publicity had been given to the facts. I am convinced from the documents supplied to me that the appointment of a Royal Commission, as agreed to by the Government, is fully warranted. I am very pleased that the Minister has decided to appoint a commission to deal with the matter. I desire to draw the attention of the House to an editorial that appeared in "The Daily News" on Saturday, the 11th September, in which

the following appeared:—

Mr. Yates accused the Commissioner of being a martinet and a bully who had driven some good men out of the Police Force and impaired the health of others.

I do not know whether the reporter who reported that had the full facts of the case.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot raise any new matter at this stage.

MR. YATES: I am not dealing with new matter at all. What I am referring to deals with what I brought before the House.

MR. SPEAKER: At any rate, no new matter must be introduced.

MR. YATES: I desire to point out that I made no accusations against the Commissioner of Police in the course of my speech. I did not accuse him of being either a martinet or a bully. I brought the whole matter before Parliament mainly because I was denied the right, which I considered I possessed as a member of this Parliament, to peruse the papers dealing with the inquiry held by Mr. Moseley into the transfer of Sergeant Kendall from the C.I.B. to the uniform branch. That inquiry took place last December and was not at the instigation of the Minister, although it was with his acquiescence and at my request. I put before him the facts leading up to the transfer of Sergeant Kendall and also told him that the case had been dealt with by the union although apparently no satisfaction had been secured by it, according to Sergeant Kendall.

In the circumstances, I then approached the Minister and asked him to permit me to peruse the papers dealing with the inquiry. I also suggested to him that if I found the inquiry had vindicated the transfer, I might be prepared to drop the matter. From December until the present day, I have been denied access to the file. I do not know the reason why the present Minister for Police acted as he did, but to prove that I have been denied the right to peruse the file, I shall quote a small portion of a report that appeared in "The Police News."

MR. MARSHALL: Can you tell me how long it is since Mr. Moseley held his inquiry?

MR. YATES: It was held on the 18th December of last year. Members will see that the Police Union also wanted to get

the information that I sought. "The Police News" states—

On the 9th June, 1947, another special meeting of the executive was held to deal with Sergeant Kendall's complaint, which had been received in writing. It was decided to send a complaint to the Minister for Police, without prejudice and without comment. This was done and nothing further was heard of the matter until Mr. H. D. Moseley, S.M., was appointed to hold a departmental inquiry into the reasons for the transfer. Mr. Moseley's decision has not been made public and your executive has been informed by the new Minister for Police (Mr. H. Parker) that the decision arrived at will not be given to either the department or Sergeant Kendall.

So, evidently I was not the only party interested in the report.

The Minister for Housing: You will realise that it was a document for the confidential information of the Minister.

Mr. YATES: Yes, at my instigation.

The Minister for Housing: Even so, it was for the Minister's information.

Mr. YATES: I claim that as a member of this Government I should have the confidence of the Minister.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You are not a member of the Government!

Mr. YATES: I am still a member of the Government.

Hon. A. H. Panton: No, you are a supporter of the Government.

Mr. YATES: Well, perhaps that is the way to put it.

The Minister for Housing: Perhaps the hon. member is merely anticipating.

Hon. A. H. Panton: As the member for Canning grows older, he will appreciate the difference.

Mr. YATES: The only course open to me was to bring the matter before the House in order to request that the papers be tabled. I have listened with great interest to the various speakers who have dealt with the subject, and I am still of the opinion that the papers should be tabled even though the Government has agreed to appoint a Royal Commission. So much has been said about the matter in the Press that we should have them. "The Daily News" in the editorial to which I referred previously said—

The Kendall case is the key to the whole matter and the Government should release all the reports.

If the papers are made available, the position regarding the Royal Commissioner or his finding will not be affected, seeing that the file will be placed before the Commissioner in any case. I want to make it quite clear to the House that I am not antagonistic to the Commissioner of Police in any shape or form. I even suggested to the present Minister for Police that I should discuss this matter with the Commissioner before bringing it before Parliament. He advised me against seeing Mr. Doyle and, acceding to his request, I did not approach the Commissioner. The member for Perth, when seconding the amendment, mentioned that there had been much propaganda in the Eastern States newspapers and suggested that my speech in the House was the culmination of that propaganda. I desire to point out to that hon. member that that is not so at all. I am not interested in anything that is put into newspapers, and I have had nothing to do with that particular paper at all.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I should hope not.

Mr. YATES: I am not interested in what it publishes, but what I am interested in is that, in the event of complaints being made against anyone in control of a public department, it should be the duty of a member of Parliament to take steps to have an inquiry made so that an opportunity will be given to have the complaints investigated and if proved unwarranted, to clear the officer concerned or, alternatively, if they should be proved correct, to cause the dismissal of the man from the service.

In this instance, the evidence submitted has been from one side only, as supplied to me. There is a lot more to be produced. The information deals not only with statements by members of the Police Force but with actual facts relating to happenings during the last two or three years. All that information will be placed before the Royal Commissioner and it will be left to him to decide whether or not the Police Force has been administered honestly, impartially and for the benefit of all the people of the State. It is not for me to say whether the Commissioner of Police or any of his officers have been working to the detriment of the original intentions underlying the set-up of the Police Force, because I have heard only one side of the case. That is why, after having been denied access to the file, which

has a great bearing on the future of at least one member of the Force, I had to bring the whole matter before the House for it to decide whether or not my action had been correct. I submit the motion to the House.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

MOTION—FISHING INDUSTRY.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 22nd September on the following motion by Mr. Leslie:—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the condition of the fishing industry in Western Australia and means whereby greater supplies of local fish at reasonable prices can be made available to the consumer.

THE MINISTER FOR FISHERIES

(Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—North Perth) [5.45]: The Government has no objection to the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into this industry, although I feel that all the information, or most of it, that it would elicit is already on the departmental files. The industry went into recess during the war. There was a reduction of about 60 per cent. in the number of persons employed in it at the termination of the war, so it was then at a rather low ebb. The Government has taken a keen interest in the re-establishment of the industry and, at the close of hostilities, was able to acquire from the Commonwealth Government nine boats of 60 to 70 ft., suitable for engaging in deep sea fishing on our coast. These boats were made available to syndicates of ex-servicemen and professional or skilled fishermen. In addition, refrigeration units were also provided. I may safely say that, as a result of this action, the industry has materially benefited and the scheme has been highly successful.

The Government has also encouraged the Fremantle Fishermen's Co-operative Society, which is now carrying on business at the fish markets at Fremantle. These markets had not been in use for a number of years. The society is forging ahead and will ultimately, I have no doubt, prove successful. The society was assisted to enable it to obtain the necessary refrigeration plant that is always required if a successful fishing enterprise is to be conducted. During the three months, May, June and July, 189,000

lb. of fish passed through the fish markets at Fremantle, a not inconsiderable quantity, in my opinion. Again, a society known as the Mandurah Co-operative Society has been formed which is now conducting fish marketing operations and I think this society will prove to be successful. It has not yet been able to accomplish the marketing of fish on a retail basis, but hopes to do so in the near future. The Fremantle society is selling large quantities of fish direct to consumers.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Any cheaper?

The MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: Yes. The price is not unreasonable.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It must be sold to millionaires.

The MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: Oh, no. The Government has also assisted other concerns which have been recently established. I would mention the plant at Albany for the purpose of processing fish by what is known as the snap-freezing process. This plant is today one of only three such plants in Australia. I recently had the opportunity to discuss the plant with the food processing officers of the C.S.I.R., who informed me that it was a credit to those who had designed and installed it. The Albany organisation intends to market fish by what is the most modern method in the world today. In America, large quantities of fish are marketed in filleted form, snap-frozen, in convenient cartons, which can be sold in shops not specially designed to sell fish in an unfrozen state. By the snap-freezing method, the flavour and texture of the fish are fully preserved; and the marketing of it in the filleted form avoids all wastage to the consumer. I have here a small package of fish which I desire to show to members; it has been in my drawer for some little time. Members will observe the very convenient way in which the fish is marketed by this method. The carton contains one pound, which is done up in cellophane.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Is that a local pack?

The MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: Yes. It comes from Albany and will keep in that condition for months. When used, it will retain its full flavour and texture.

Mr. Fox: How much is that fish per pound?

The MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: I do not know, as it has not yet been actually put on the market. In establishing this industry in our State, we have taken a step in the right direction.

Hon. E. Nulsen: There is an excellent opportunity to establish a similar plant at Esperance.

The MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: Yes. For the information of the member for Kanowna, I may say that in all probability this company will be purchasing fish caught in Esperance waters and conveyed overland to Albany.

Hon. E. Nulsen: There are good trawling grounds at Esperance.

The MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: Yes, they are considered to be very good. Another advantage of processing fish by this method is that transportation costs will be low, because it will take up very little space when compared with the quantity being transported. Again, there is no waste and no smell.

Hon. E. Nulsen: It should be excellent food for Goldfields residents.

The MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: Yes. During the past year or so, additional processing factories for canning fish have been established at Hoptoun and Albany. Processing plants are also operating at Belmont and Geraldton and there are in course of construction plants at Esperance and Busselton. It is now known that sardines in plentiful quantities are to be caught off the coast of Albany and Esperance, and there is little doubt that they will be processed within the near future. I wish to quote some figures showing the quantities of fish caught in 1941 compared with the quantities caught in 1947. The figures are as follows:—

	1941	1947
	lb.	lb.
Salmon ..	54,888	2,859,853
Crayfish ..	107,648	2,335,826
Other fish ..	2,913,904	4,135,713

From these figures members will observe how great has been the expansion of this industry. The Government has given every encouragement and assistance to the industry to enable it to make this great progress. It has given approval for slipways to be constructed for the use of fishing craft at Mandurah, Busselton and Albany. Nego-

tiations are in progress for the importation into the State of two large 300-ton trawlers of the Mersey class, which it is hoped will be in use on our coast within six months. Every encouragement should also be given to ensure a good distribution of fish in the metropolitan area. I am pleased to say that during the past week there has been a considerable increase in the quantity of fish sold at the metropolitan markets.

During the last four days the increase has been an average of 1,000 pounds per day. This has enabled small shopkeepers and hawkers to obtain fish at a competitive price, and with an assurance of a continuity of supplies. It means that fish again are being sold on the open market. An apparent increase in the fixed price of fish has taken place. I say, apparently, because according to the information I have obtained from the experts of the Prices Branch, the price of fish was never accurately controlled—it could not be—because fish cannot be identified or classified altogether. Just to give the House some idea of the present prices on the open market, compared with the previous fixed prices, I shall quote some figures which applied on Tuesday last—that is yesterday—as follows:—

	Previous fixed price.	Market price.
	s. d.	s. d. s. d.
Mullet ..	0 10	0 11
Snapper ..	1 3	1 3 — 1 4
Whiting ..	1 1	1 3
Silver Bream ..	0 10	0 11½
Yellow-eye Mullet	0 9	0 11 — 1 2½

Mr. Kelly: Are they wholesale or retail prices?

The MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: They are all wholesale.

Mr. Smith: Yesterday's prices were higher than the previous fixed prices?

The MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: Yes. Although there has been a comparatively small rise on the open market, it has enabled the small dealer to get his supplies without being at the mercy of, shall I say, the large merchants who have exercised a material influence on the fish market during the control years. Some of those large merchants have, on more than one occasion, been prosecuted for breaches of the prices regulations. I am of the opinion that the present situation is distinctly advantageous.

Mr. May: Have you the retail prices of those fish?

THE MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: No. The retail price of South African fillet has not gone up at all. The retail prices of local fish, from inquiries I have made, are purely proportionate with the wholesale increases that I have quoted.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Much more fish is being caught than in 1939. Why is it so much dearer now?

THE MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: Possibly it is due to price-fixing. I feel that once things settle down, fish will be supplied at a decreased price. It may, however, be some time before that comes about because one serious influence on the fish market today is the trade in crayfish tails. It is so profitable that many fishing boats are engaging in it with the result that we are not getting all the fish that we would otherwise have.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Those tails are being exported.

THE MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: Yes. For the year, 1947, some 2,335,826 pounds of crayfish was caught, and a large proportion was exported. I am informed that this year that figure will be increased by at least 500,000 pounds. I might mention, as an item of interest, that one of the boats that I earlier referred to as having been purchased by the Government and handed over to some returned soldiers, will be entering Fremantle within the next day or two with 28,000 pounds of fish brought from Shark Bay and further north. It was caught on a cruise of three weeks. So members will realise what wonderful fishing grounds Western Australia possesses.

Mr. Hoar: The prices will still remain too high.

Mr. Hegney: They snap-freeze them, do they not?

THE MINISTER FOR FISHERIES: They freeze them, but they do not snap-freeze within the commercial meaning of the word. Snap-freezing means that the temperature of the fish is lowered to freezing point within two hours. The boats have not the plant to do that. The C.S.I.R. is making a careful survey of the fishing potentialities of Western Australia, which are known to be very great and amongst the best in Australia. More than one expedi-

tion has been made by air this year, and some schools of salmon that were seen were, I believe, exceedingly large. This industry has made, and is making, great progress, and although I feel that the bulk of the information that could be obtained by a Select Committee is already known to the Government departments concerned, there can be no harm—there might be a lot of good—in a full inquiry and for that reason the Government sees no objection to the motion.

On motion by Hon. E. H. H. Hall, debate adjourned.

PAPERS—WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Port Hedland Scheme.

Debate resumed from the 22nd September on the following motion by Mr. Hegney—

That all papers dealing with the Port Hedland water supply be laid upon the Table of the House,

to which an amendment had been moved by the Minister for Works (Hon. V. Doney—Williams-Narrogin) as follows:—

That the words "laid upon the Table of the House" be struck out.

MR. HEGNEY (Pilbara—on amendment) [6.8]: I listened to the Minister's reply last week and, in view of the circumstances outlined by him, when he indicated that the files would amount in weight to about seven cwt., I do not propose to offer any objection to his amendment.

Amendment (to strike out words) put and passed.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [6.9]: I move—

That the words "made available to the hon. member for Pilbara" be inserted in lieu of those struck out.

Amendment (to insert words) put and passed.

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

Sitting suspended from 6.10 to 7.30 p.m.

MOTION—TIMBER INDUSTRY.

As to Benefits for Workers.

Debate resumed from the 22nd September on the following motion by Mr. Reynolds:—

That in the opinion of this House the timber workers of this State are entitled to the same

benefits as the Collie miners are receiving under the Collie Miners' Amenity Fund proclaimed in March, 1948.

THE MINISTER FOR FORESTS (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth) [7.31]: The member for Forrest suggests that there should be legislation to provide a fund for amenities for timber workers on the lines of that passed by this House last year providing for amenities for workers on the Collie coalfield. With the idea that we should steadily increase amenities, I am entirely in sympathy. Not only are amenities desirable for people in the country but they are also desirable for the people in the city. At the same time, we realise that people in the city enjoy many advantages which are denied to those in the country and, when we come to consider facilities for recreation and education and those various matters that nowadays are included under the title of amenities, I think it must be agreed that the first call for consideration should be in connection with those who live in country areas and particularly those who live in the remoter parts of the State.

When we consider amenities, I think we are obliged to do so in relation to the whole field of the population of the State while recognising that there are some sections of the people who, by reason of their work or the locality in which they work, are in need of more consideration than other sections who are more favourably situated; the latter comprising mostly those who live in the metropolitan area or the larger towns of the State. The motion suggests that, as regards an amenity fund, the workers in the timber industry should be dealt with in the same way as were the Collie miners. I think that the comparison is hardly valid, and when I say that it does not minimise the desirability of providing amenities, where needed, for workers in the timber industry.

It has always been recognised that men who work in coalmines are in a very special category. They spend their working lives underground and under conditions that are arduous and very uncomfortable. For that reason it is recognised, I think, in all countries, that as some compensation for the calling they follow—a calling which is so vital to the well-being of the whole economy of any country—they have special claims for the provision, as far as possible, of

what we call amenities to offset the normal dull conditions under which they work. I recognise that timber workers are called upon, in some instances, to live in isolated communities and in individual cases, although not a large proportion of workers, they have to work on their own in the forests, sometimes miles from the mill which is the headquarters of their immediate industry. So they, Mr. Speaker, are not so favoured regarding recreational and educational facilities as are people who live in the metropolitan area; but I do not think that we can place timber workers, in relation to the nature of their calling, in the same class as the men who work underground in the coalfields.

There is another very important comparison that we must bear in mind. The Collie coal industry is centralised in one town. Collie can be said to be devoted almost entirely to coalmining. The lives of the people in the industry revolve round the mines. The town is a highly centralised one and the industry and the people who work in it are collected in one small area. For that reason the administration of a scheme, such as the one agreed to by Parliament last year, becomes comparatively easy and well suited to the distribution of the amenities that may be acquired under the scheme. In addition, the Collie coal industry is permanent. It is not only stationary; it is not only compact and centralised, but the industry is one that will go on in that same spot for the next—I will not place any limit on it—200 years, which is quite a long enough period to mention for the moment.

However, the timber industry is in a very different category. People who work in it are collected in a considerable number of towns and communities. They do not even work in communities because, as the hon. member has said, a number go out and work in twos and threes in different parts of the forest, and, even more important, the industry is one where the communities, in a number of cases, are temporary. I am going to say a word or two more about that, but it is considered that in a number of instances the communities are of a temporary character, and when the forest is cut in a particular area it has to be closed for re-forestation and the communities must move elsewhere to develop other areas.

Mr. May: They take the amenities with them.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: They cannot take a cricket ground or a tennis court with them.

Mr. May: I had something more important than that in mind.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: They take some things with them and I am glad to know that that is the case, but there are a number of amenities that may not be taken away and I will mention some in a moment or two. It is most important to remember that what may be applicable to one industry may be applied with great difficulty to another industry. Then again the Collie coal industry is centralised and must be centralised in the hands of a few large organisations and, in particular, it produces a product of which 85 per cent. is bought by Government instrumentalities. In that respect it is rather unique. But the timber industry is in the hands of a great number of people, many of whom have comparatively small assets and comparatively small financial ability. In the case of some communities they have a life that will expire within a year in that particular area.

I know of one mill the life of which is estimated to be one year; but another one, the largest mill, has an estimated life of five years. Last year there were 40 new spot mills which started operations in this State and they were mostly run by small people. Their life in a particular spot may not extend over many years. The necessity for any great degree of expenditure may perhaps be not easily supported in the case of mills of such short duration. So I venture to suggest that we should look at these industries as separate industries. What may be applicable to one may not be suitable to another, and what may be applicable to a permanent centralised industry like that at Collie is not so applicable to a varied and separate industry such as the timber industry.

Allow me to say in favour of the idea of improved amenities that in the last few years a very important change has come over the outlook of the timber industry. In the past the industry was regarded as of a temporary nature at almost every centre but, with the development of forestry and of communications, it is more possible now

to plan for a comparatively long life for a community engaged in the industry and for the mill than was thought to be possible previously. I think that feature is one which can assist in the future wellbeing of the workers in the industry. On the other hand, there has come over the industry another change of some importance. In the old days, as members like the representatives of Nelson, Forrest and Collie know, a mill community was obliged to look for its entertainment and recreation in the immediate precincts of the mill, but with the development of roads, motorcars and transport generally, a considerable change has taken place in the outlook.

Mr. May: Those things cost money.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: They do, but not so much as in Perth. When I was in Pemberton not long ago, I made a point of inquiring of the mill workers what they did during the long week-ends, because now they do not work on Saturday. I found that a very much larger proportion than I thought would be the case spent their week-ends on the seacoast 17 to 20 miles away. They regarded it as a fairly regular week-end recreation to go to the seacoast for fishing. I believe some of them have shacks at Windy Bay. While I do not suggest that all go in their own motorcars, they would no doubt go in cars obtained from their friends, or what they thought fit to hire. That is a most excellent amenity, and I was delighted to hear of it. I thought nothing could be better than that men who had spent an exacting week in the mill with all the noise and everything else, should be situated sufficiently near the coast to spend a long week-end on a fishing excursion.

What I desire to mention is that, at some of the more important mills, the workers tend to seek their recreation and amenities in the neighbouring towns. I am told by mill-owners that this has a not unimportant effect on the amenities in some of the mill towns. Whereas in the old days the employees would be interested in starting recreation grounds or other mill amenities in their own centre, now, with the aid of transport by cars and buses, many of them prefer in their spare time to enjoy the better amenities or the better entertainment they might get at picture shows provided by the larger town.

The member for Forrest, in his statement which I read with interest, raised a number of factors which, in the time at my disposal, I have not been able to examine fully, and so I shall suggest to the House later that this matter requires a full examination which the Government and I, as Minister for Forests, will be willing to undertake. I asked some of the sawmillers for their views on the matter, but beyond an interview of some 20 minutes, I have not had an opportunity of exchanging ideas with them. I hope to be able to discuss the position with them at some later date.

There are centres in the timbermilling industry the facilities at which are obviously very limited as regards amenities, recreation and entertainment compared with those provided in more settled localities. Some places, as I have said, have a short life, and it is not easy to provide facilities of perhaps an expensive kind and permanent nature. Other settlements, however, have not unsatisfactory provision on the whole for entertainment. I would not say that the facilities are perfect, but I think it would be desirable, for the information of the House, to mention one or two settlements in which the industry is carried on.

I asked for particulars of amenities at the various mill towns, which have been sent to me, but they are too long to detail at this stage. However, take a town like Pemberton, with which I, in common with many members, am personally familiar. According to the information supplied to me, Pemberton has a hall which is used for recreational purposes and which the State Sawmills Department has just re-floored by a gift of timber from the mill—a very proper thing to do. The department has some interest in the amenities and has just provided a new floor for the hall. So there is a hall for recreational purposes at Pemberton, which is almost entirely a sawmilling town; in fact, the State Sawmills actually own a large part of the town, and the buildings in that part of the town. There are pictures twice weekly; there are two tennis courts, golf links, a swimming pool, which I consider to be the most beautiful in the whole State, a football, cricket and trotting ground, a rifle range and two billiard tables. Free firewood is granted to the employees.

Mr. Hoar: Where?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: At Pemberton, but they pay for the carting. Electric light is provided by a private company and water is free. There is a sanitary and rubbish-removal service; a hotel exists on the townsite; the local store has refrigerated space; there is a postal service with a delivery of letters to each home, and delivery from the local store of commodities, including bread. I do not know whether I should mention this as an amenity, but it is included in the list and so I had better do so—there is a local bookmaker.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I thought the Government was going to stop all that.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: The hon. member is being facetious. Let me turn to another mill. I am looking at the real position of the mills, not that I suggest that the member for Forrest has disclosed other than the real position, but we should view the position as a whole and realise that there are some mill towns where the conditions of life are far from what we desire, but they are not without some form of recreation. Pemberton is perhaps the best of the mill towns known to me. The mill cottages are let at a very low rent compared with rents paid anywhere else. The charge is in some cases 4s. 4d. a week, and I speak with diffidence in the presence of the members I have mentioned because they have much more detailed knowledge than I possess, but in some places I believe the rents go up to a maximum of 12s. 6d. Is not that so?

Mr. Hoar: That is so.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I think the maximum rate for the latest and best type of mill house is 12s. 6d.

Mr. May: You could buy some of them for 12s. 6d.

Mr. Styants: Including the white ants.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I could make use of a few of those homes. The housing situation on some of the mills is not what we would desire. The report of the Royal Commission quoted by the member for Forrest indicated that. If I remember rightly, however, at the time the Bill was before us two or three years ago, the sawmillers told the Minister—I believe it was the member for Leederville—that in providing future houses they would conform to an improved standard, and I understand

that the houses erected have conformed to that standard and that the later houses are of a much more satisfactory type than the old ones. Some of the old ones are far from satisfactory, but we hope that they will be replaced as quickly as possible, bearing in mind the demands of people in other localities who have not a house to live in, let alone one having a few white ants. Here, people have to put up with the Argentine ant.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Which is the worse?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I think the Argentine ant is the worse; the white ant does not get into the food. Let me turn to another State sawmill—an isolated community. The people on that mill have a claim to all we can reasonably do in the way of assisting to make their lives more interesting. I refer to Hakea where there are a tennis court, a football ground, a hall, pictures every fortnight and a rifle range. The houses have the ordinary household services, and free water is provided.

Mr. Reynolds: The supply at many of them is limited.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Transport to the siding is provided free; there is refrigerated space in the store; there is a billiard saloon, and we have recently obtained for these people a much-needed amenity in the form of a gallon license.

Mr. Reynolds: I fought very hard to get that.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: The water problem is not peculiar to mill towns. There are other towns right through the State where the water problem is often more acute, and they are large towns, too. There are other towns in the State which depend on tanks for their water, just as some mill towns do. I am sorry to say that the water difficulty in our State is not one which is peculiar to mill towns. At the same time, that is something which I think should be improved as occasion arises, and it is being done by degrees. I have not had time to go into the various things that have been done; but I know that, for instance, £250 has just been provided at the Holyoake mill for a new hall and the people have been lent an electric lighting plant, so that their hall can be supplied with electric light when they have occasion to use it.

Amenities depend a great deal on the interest of the people in these communities. Some are admirable. Amenities are a matter of co-operation between the companies and the mill communities, and a good deal depends on the enthusiasm and interest in those communities. I know one mill which some time ago was interested in obtaining better library facilities. The millowners made arrangements with the Perth Public Library for a service to be provided, and books of the best possible type were sent there. The people had a choice of books for information, recreation and education. But after two years that library service failed for lack of support from the community.

Mr. Reynolds: Where was that?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: That was at Jarrahdale. So it is a co-operative matter, one in which the millowner can assist the community and the community can assist the millowner. I am glad to say that the problem of isolation has been overcome to a large extent by modern transport services, because the majority of mills are within 20 miles of a town of some size. In a number of cases, if not in most, there is a form of transport by means of bus services which enable people to go from the mill centre into the town.

Mr. Reynolds: It costs money to go.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: It does. But I do not think that in that respect the city dwellers are nearly as well off as the people in the timber mills. At Pemberton, for instance, there is no transport cost at all. It takes the people two minutes to walk from the mill to their houses and a further two minutes to reach the centre of the town. Although there may be periodical transport costs involved in a mill worker going to the township, the worker in the metropolitan area pays bus or train fares every day for himself and his wife and children. The total thus paid per week is as much as would be paid in some cases by a mill worker who takes his periodical trip to the nearest country town. When one takes the rent factor into consideration, on the merely monetary side—which I suppose is not the most important one—the mill worker has certain definite advantages as against the metropolitan resident.

When it comes to an amenity of a major kind, such as electric lighting, it is not easy

to provide a plant which would cost perhaps thousands of pounds for a community serving a mill the life of which may be a few years only. Again there has been some diffidence about a large-scale expenditure in this respect in view of the expansion of the State electricity service, which in due course will provide many of these communities with light and power brought from the State mains, and in which case local services would become of no value, or of very little value indeed.

The member for Forrest presented some figures regarding the proportion of young people in the industry. That is always a factor which needs to be carefully watched; because we find in the case of some industries, such as the pastoral industry in the far North—and I think the member for Roebourne and the member for Pilbara may be disposed to bear me out in this—that much of the responsibility and work in industries in the far North and North-West are being undertaken by elderly people and the younger folk do not show the same enthusiasm to go there as was shown many years ago. But in the timber industry, on the figures quoted by the hon. member—

Mr. Reynolds: And they are authentic.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I have no doubt of that, because I am accepting them and am making some reference to them. In those figures the hon. member commenced with the year 1940, in which the proportion of young people in the industry who were under 21 was 14.5 per cent. of the total engaged in the industry. Then he proceeded to 1946, where the proportion had dropped to 9.7. Those were the war years; and while the timber industry was to a certain extent manpowered, most young men between 18 and 21 were determined to get away into the armed services and did, in fact, bring pressure to bear on their employers who, in quite a number of cases, felt it was very natural for those young men to wish to go and facilitated their going. So between 1940 and 1946, it is not at all unusual to find that the proportion of young men in the industry between 18 and 21—the adventurous age—fell.

Mr. Reynolds: In 1935 I think the percentage was 13.2, and in 1930 somewhere about 14 per cent.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: If so, the percentage increased, because in 1940 it was 14.5.

Mr. Reynolds: Only a decimal.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Something like 7 per cent. during that period, which is not bad. In 1940 the percentage was 14.5 and in 1946, at the end of the war, it had fallen to 9.7. But the following year—1947—it rose again to 10.5 per cent. While I have not the figures, I am advised by those in the industry that this year the figures are better still. The young men are, in fact, going back to the industry, as the figures of the hon. member show if he compares 1946 and 1947. While it is most important that we should see the industry is made attractive to the younger men and women, for the sake of decentralisation, at the same time we realise that on these figures the timber industry has had as good an experience as, if not a better experience than, any other rural industry of which I can think. But that does not mean we should not attempt still more to make this industry acceptable and attractive to the younger men and women of our community.

Mr. Reynolds: They are staying there because they cannot get houses in Perth, otherwise they would flee from the industry.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I venture to think that it will not be very long before there will be a movement from the metropolitan area to the rural industries.

Mr. Reynolds: I hope you are right.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I think so.

Hon. A. H. Panton: So long as they do not go from Leederville it will be all right.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: That is a very favoured spot, where they are well looked after. I think that there will be found in the rural industries opportunities which will tend to attract people and lead to a larger relative increase in those industries. The war years artificially built up the population of the metropolitan area, and I feel that it is likely a reverse trend will come into operation before very long; and a very good thing for the State it will be—something we should do all we can to encourage. The timber industry is so important that I thought I would be justified in spending some little time in dealing with the matters raised by the member for

Forrest. I think the timber workers of this State have done a particularly fine service to the community.

Mr. Reynolds: So they have.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I think they are making a contribution the value of which we cannot over-estimate, in supplying a product which is so much needed by their fellow citizens. So I want to say how much I, as Minister for Forests—and I am sure the people of the State, too—realise the importance of the services that these men are carrying out.

Mr. Reynolds: Well and truly spoken!

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I have attempted, though using only a very small fraction of the information I have about the various towns, to give some idea of the happier aspects of mill towns and communities—because they have some more favourable aspects; but at the same time I think that the matter of amenities in the timber industry is one which we should seek to improve as much as opportunity permits. However, I do not feel that I can support a motion that ties any proposal for amenities in the timber industry to the framework which applies to the coalmining industry. They are two different industries. They are completely different in economic and other factors and need to be studied as two entirely different elements of this particular question.

I wish also to get some more information on this matter by consultation with those engaged in the industry—both the sawmillers and the union, and Parliamentary representatives who have a special knowledge of the details of the industry. I hope it will be possible to arrange a conference which the union, Parliamentarians and millers will have opportunity of attending, in order to discuss what can be attained progressively in improving the conditions of life in the industry. I feel we should direct our attention to the smaller communities mentioned by the member for Forrest and of which the member for Nelson has spoken to me from time to time, because although they are not devoid entirely of some means of recreation, they are undoubtedly in a less favourable position than that of many larger mill towns such as Pemberton and Manjimup.

Although—as with other industries—the mills have been limited in opportunity by

the war years. I believe the millowners are anxious to achieve whatever is possible in improving the recreational, educational and other conditions of their workers. I know they are striving for that end. I have been told from time to time of the contributions of all kinds made by the millers towards those objectives and to assist the people in the various communities whose desire it is to improve conditions and amenities. I know the millowners will continue to do that, whenever conditions permit. From the point of view of housing, in particular, they are doing all they can, and are seeking to provide a much better type of dwelling. I have seen the recent settlement of Quininnup. The houses there are of the latest and best type.

I have been at the new State sawmill on the Shannon River. Although the mill there is not yet in operation the townsite has been laid out by the town planner, Mr. Davidson, and it will be built on in due course in accordance with his design for an ideal bush town. I feel that we should take into consultation the various interests involved. I would not be prepared to accept responsibility for committing myself to any one idea—

Mr. May: Would you include representatives of the Forests Department in the conference you mentioned?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Yes, I think it would be an important factor. I have seen a number of our Forests Department's bush settlements and I think they have more acute problems than have the mill towns.

Mr. May: There is nothing wrong with the houses at those settlements.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: The houses are better, but the isolation is much greater. In many cases they have not even a hall, and have nothing but bush roads. They consist of perhaps eight or 12 houses and are deficient in opportunities for recreation or entertainment after working hours.

Mr. May: You could include them with the bush timber workers.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I would be glad for their position to be examined in conjunction with that of the timber workers. I ask the House to accept the fact that the question of amenities in

the sawmilling industry—and in due course other industries also—is worthy of attention, without becoming committed to any particular proposal. If we arrange a conference such as I have mentioned, out of that discussion may come some real contribution towards the progressive improvement of conditions in the mill communities, and particularly the more isolated of them. I move an amendment—

That all words after the word "house" in line 2 of the motion be struck out and the following words inserted in lieu:—"The Government should examine the position as to the provision by the sawmilling industry of amenities for timber workers."

MR. HOAR (Nelson—on amendment) [8.22]: I listened with interest to the speech of the Minister on the proposal to have an amenities fund provided for timber workers. Although he does not approve of the motion as at present worded I am pleased to see that his amendment in no way opposes the general principle that an amenities fund could or should be provided after consultation with those concerned in the timber industry, which includes the employers' association, the Timber Workers' Union and certain members of Parliament. I think the amendment is an improvement on the motion. One could speak at great length on the timber industry of the State and, with all due respect to members, those who have not had close personal contact with the industry might find it difficult to appreciate what others were trying to express. At a conference such as that proposed by the Minister there would be round the table practical men who had been engaged for years in the industry—both employers and workers. Such a conference could produce good results and probably an understanding between the different sections of the industry, along the lines proposed by the member for Forrest.

There is no doubt that over the years the timber industry has played a tremendous part in the progress of this State and it is only reasonable, even at this late hour, over 100 years after timber was first exported from the State, that we should endeavour to do something for those who are prepared to go out into the bush with their wives and families and undertake the recovery of this valuable commodity. The timber industry went through many phases

in its earlier years, but I think the most important happening in the industry in this State was when a steam sawmill was first established at Guildford in the year 1844.

The Minister for Forests: The last report of the Forests Department contains an interesting historical survey.

MR. HOAR: I must read it. There is no doubt that the establishment of a power-driven mill at Guildford in that year revolutionised the recovery and preparation of timber and made it available in larger quantities than previously, both for the home market and the markets of the world. The fact that men were for the first time gathered together in the industry also created an entirely new situation in the social life of the workers. For the first time they were banded together and it was only natural that, with ordinary social instincts of men in association with each other, they should seek to improve life in the camps in which they found themselves. That applied both to their working conditions and the social side of their lives. As the mills throughout the State developed both in size and number, and as the industry penetrated further into the forests, so did the responsibility of the millowners become greater. Some kind of living quarters had to be provided for the men in order that they might do their work under reasonable conditions.

The early history of the industry shows that the dwellings provided in those days were of an extremely crude nature. Then there came a time when women began to follow their menfolk into the forests, and reared their families there, with the result that still greater social changes took place in the industry. Facilities for education had to be provided, together with opportunities for social functions, sport, and so on, and a better class of housing was essential. All those matters were attended to in a crude way, though in many instances the management or owners of the mills had nothing whatever to do with it. The Minister made reference to the pick of our timber towns, Pemberton. I lived in that centre for 23 years. Not only do I know the industry as it exists there, but I took part in most of the activities that were responsible for the amenities mentioned by the Minister.

In order that there may be no misconception on the part of members I will relate what took place at Pemberton. The State Sawmills built a hall there and placed it in the hands of a committee that was expected to run it at a profit in order to pay for any maintenance and repairs. Occasionally the committee showed a profit, and sometimes it did not, and for many years the hall deteriorated to such an extent that, had the State Sawmills not stepped in as mentioned by the Minister, the whole building would probably have fallen over. The picture show twice weekly at Pemberton has nothing to do with the State Sawmills. That show is not held in the State Sawmills' hall, but in a private hall built by a private person. The golf links were built by a working bee and, although I was closely interested in that sport, I have not been able to find anything that the State Sawmills did towards it. Nor can I find anything that the State Sawmills did in regard to the swimming pool.

A sports ground was provided, the land cleared and the only things that the State Sawmills provided were a few fencing posts and some second-hand pickets to keep out the people who should have paid to go in. The rifle range also was built by a working bee while the electric light plant is privately owned and the users of it are charged. The free water which the Minister quoted, is allowed for in the Timber Workers' Act and it is compulsory for all millowners to supply it. In addition to these amenities there is a youth club which is doing a wonderful job, but the State Sawmills had nothing whatever to do with it. The building itself was provided by the Education Department when making available certain vacant schools and the local people did the rest. If we look at the amazing array of amenities at Pemberton we find that the only matter that has been in any way attributable to the State Sawmills is the hall, and something had to be done to that or it would have fallen down.

The Minister for Forests: The people themselves usually provide amenities. They do in Perth.

Mr. HOAR: That is quite true, and I believe in self-help to that extent. In regard to Pemberton I would say that it is

the biggest timber town in the South-West and employs approximately 250 men, who, with their wives and families, represent a large population with a big income each week, consequently they are able to pay for things and raise money for certain purposes which no other community of which I am aware, particularly those general purpose mills with only 50 to 75 men employed, would be able to do. It is in those particular cases, not only in regard to the smaller spot mills, where there is not sufficient income per week to pay for the cost of amenities, that something must be done. If a hall is built in such a place it must be run at a loss because there is insufficient income to run it at a profit. I do not say that there would not be some difficulty, as the Minister has said, in making arrangements for an equitable distribution of any amenities fund that may be created in respect to the numerous spot mills that are springing up. If we can do anything to improve the conditions at those mills then it should be done.

Whilst the general forest policy is a good one and provides for the establishment of large mills on a long term basis, nevertheless the policy of smaller spot mills following up and cutting over those areas for perhaps a two-year period, is simply breaking down social conditions in the timber industry. It is not building them up. Today we have no less than 167 mills operating in this State, and over 100 of them are of that particular type where there is no reasonable kind of dwelling to live in, and no sport or recreation whatever. It is just a case of work, eat and sleep, and consequently there is plenty of room for an agreement, at the conference suggested by the Minister, for the establishment of an amenities fund.

We should realise that timber workers are an entirely different set of people from what they were 40 or 50 years ago. As a result communities are being developed with all the social desires that are to be expected in the circumstances, with education going on apace, and there is developing a type of individual who is mentally and culturally superior to those that existed in the earlier days of the timber industry. Consequently provision must be made from some source to enable those people, and to encourage them in the first place, to go out into the forest and earn their

living, and secondly to induce them to stay there. The difficult problem will be to keep them there. I know, as do all members, that some attempt was made by the previous Government to improve the general housing conditions of timber workers, but under no circumstances would I approve of any portion of an amenities fund being used to improve the housing conditions; that should be the responsibility of millowners.

The Minister for Forests: Housing is separate from amenities.

Mr. HOAR: After careful inquiry and a careful study of conditions throughout the State by men competent to do so, a Bill was agreed to in this House and sent to another place. We know the fate of that Bill. The other place thought little of it and apparently could find no good point in it, or members there would have allowed it to go to the Committee stage so that amendments could be moved if necessary. Apparently members of another place thought that timber workers' conditions should not be bettered and the Bill was booted out on the second reading. The timber workers themselves were watching the passage of that Bill far more closely than most members of this House realised. They have now entered a stage of passive resistance, if I can use that term, but when I use it I do not mean as regards their labours as they do not work less because of it.

As a result of the defeat of that Bill by another place, timber workers lost all hope of ever getting any decent conditions in the timber industry and many of them made up their minds to leave it. In spite of the Minister having told us tonight that the position is not alarming with regard to the employment of young people in the industry, I can tell the Minister for certain that this timber industry of ours, at the present time, is declining.

Mr. Reynolds: Unfortunately, that is true.

Mr. HOAR: The number of people in it is becoming less, and we have been forced to get displaced persons from overseas to fill the gaps. Another 100 of them are going to my district within the next few weeks and are to be engaged in the timber industry. The fact of the matter is that the owners or managements of the timber

mills of this State have always felt that their responsibilities have been fully met so long as they have provided mills with sheds over them in which the men can work, some sort of dwellings and halls which, as the Minister has quoted, are built in many instances. They feel that everything else should be left to the individual. That is an entirely wrong line to take and is a bad move. People who are left entirely to their own resources, particularly if they are few in number, need more encouragement and smaller communities get very little encouragement from the managements or owners in the timber industry.

As a result scores and scores of my own personal friends looked upon the opening of the last war with relief because it gave them an opportunity to leave the industry. They have told me frankly that under no circumstances will they come back. During the years before the war many of them went short of all sorts of things in order to send their children to better class schools, and provide them with a good education so that they would not be forced to enter the timber industry. There must be a reason for this and it is to be found in the lack of cultural and social life of people in the forest areas. It is only a lack of money, not a lack of human material because there is good material in the timber areas. These people want assistance and encouragement in every way, and amenities should be made available to overcome the isolation when they go into the bush on this particular work. The timber industry does not do enough by just providing a means of employment.

If we look at the industry as it exists today and go back a little way into its history we find out that the old days, where large tracts of land were offered at next to no cost, have gone. The forest policy of today will provide us with good hardwood timber such as jarrah and karri in perpetuity, and that is a very fine thing. We must build up our forests. I was pleased to see that the State Forests have been built up to over 3,000,000 acres, which has made this constant supply of timber possible. On the industrial side we find that through the advent of all kinds of modern machinery we can produce timber in large quantities to supply the markets of the world as well as our own requirements. The

workers' conditions have been governed in recent years by boards and the Arbitration Court which have set a standard, but the very thing that is most important in a man's life has never been tackled by anybody, and that is the social and cultural aspect.

If our timber is as important as the Minister has said it is—in fact it has brought over £49,000,000 into this State since we first started to export it—then some provision should be made to include in the price of that timber sufficient to provide some amenities for those who are prepared to face this isolation. "It is an easy matter to find ways and means of spending money in the timber industry and of spending it wisely too on libraries as well as on all branches of sport, swimming pools where possible and even gardens. Where there is a community in the timber industry which has gardens, a swimming pool, sporting facilities and amenities of that nature, it is always happy and quite willing to carry on with the job. It is one where the women-folk are happy and their children are brought up in the right atmosphere. In most centres, however, the population is disgruntled because of the lack of these things, and people are seeking other methods of improving their lot. That is what is happening in the industry today.

There is no doubt at all that the bulk of the men in the timber industry at the present time are men of my own generation, who in ten or 15 years' time will be retiring on pensions. Where are the men to replace them? Something must be done to provide amenities in order to keep the industry Australian and British. There is no question about that. Whether it should be done by Act of Parliament or by agreement at a conference of interested parties, as the Minister suggested, is just a matter of choice. Personally I agree with his view and think that some good could come out of such a conference. I am very happy indeed to know that he raises no hostile objection at all to the proposal contained in the motion.

On motion by Mr. May, debate adjourned.

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 22nd September.

MR. ACKLAND (Irwin Moore) [8.44]: I wish to support the second reading of the Bill. I do not suggest for one moment that it is a perfect measure. Although I am of opinion that it will require some amendment, I do believe that the underlying principle of it is one which should commend it to members of this House. The member for Murchison, when speaking of the Bill, put his finger right on the nerve centre of it, when he said that during the 10 years that the Act had been in operation the road boards and volunteer workers, who were members of the bush fire brigades, had protected the interests of the insurance companies. It was more to their interest than to that of anyone else concerned. At the present time the insurer pays his premiums and then does all the work that is necessary in fighting bush fires.

The road boards are finding the equipment for the bush fire brigades, and the insurance companies are by far the greatest beneficiaries from the work that is done. Before this legislation was introduced some 10 years ago, the executive committee of the Road Board Association spent many months in investigating the possibility of how best to bring the brigades into existence. They received a considerable measure of support from Parliament by the adoption of the various measures that were recommended, and I believe the advisory body that has been set up has done a very good job. The local governing bodies appoint the fire control officers, and nearly all the boards throughout the State have availed themselves of the provisions of the Act in carrying out the work.

When I tell the House that nearly 80 road boards in the country areas have formed and equipped 323 bush fire brigades, they will have some idea of how enthusiastically this movement has been taken up, and the great amount of work that has been carried out. The expenditure, naturally, has varied considerably because in many districts the spending of a great amount of money has not been warranted. In some instances the boards have not expended more than £100, but at other centres, particularly Manjimup, Kojonup and Bruce Rock, the whole matter has been gone into thoroughly and each of the bodies concerned has spent several thousand pounds in equipping most efficient fire-

fighting units. In addition, several of the boards have been prepared to subsidise various farmers in the district by finding the equipment to be kept on their properties for use there or in any other part of the district in fighting fires that might break out locally.

Today it is not at all uncommon—in fact, I think it is the general practice—to find on up-to-date farming properties the erection of ramps on which are set up 200 gallon tanks, full of water and in close proximity a force pump that can be fastened to the back of any vehicle in two or three moments for use in fire prevention. We find that to a certain extent the Underwriters' Association has already shown some appreciation of what is being done. That body has so altered the conditions of insurance policies that provision has been made for a 5 per cent. reduction in premiums on properties where harvester-tractor combinations carry knapsack sprays with them in the course of their work. To a certain extent that has proved very satisfactory. Three or four instances come readily to my mind where fires that could have cost many thousands of pounds have been extinguished in two or three minutes, because the tractors were carrying that type of equipment.

When we consider that a haversack spray contains only three or four gallons of water, all of which is used in a matter of moments, it will be recognised that there is a great deal of luck attached to putting out a fire on a heavy stubble field. There is no comparison between what can be done by that means and what can be done by properly established and efficient fire-fighting equipment that has been manufactured for that particular purpose, and carries a great deal of water and with it an engine-operated force pump. More especially is that so when the equipment includes chemical extinguishers and smaller spray pumps as well.

The Minister for Lands: Do you think you could get the brigade there in time to save a fire in a crop?

Mr. ACKLAND: I speak from experience when I say that the brigades have been very effective in that respect. They cannot be on the spot in a matter of moments, as is possible with a knapsack spray. Nevertheless, the brigades are on the spot in a very short time. We have

seen them operating in the country districts where fires have gone far beyond the capacity of people to fight them without the proper equipment, and yet with the arrival of the brigades they have been quickly brought into subjection. I was very disappointed that the Minister should have opposed the Bill along the lines he pursued. No doubt some criticism of the measure would have been justified, but to condemn it wholesale was, to say the very least of it, extremely disappointing.

I am convinced that the Bill, when dealt with in Committee, could be made quite workable. There are one or two matters that require alteration such as the provision for work outside a district and for the Minister appointing competent officers to inspect equipment. As a matter of fact, I was so interested in the matter that I took it upon myself to discuss it with a representative of the Underwriters' Association in the hope that we would secure some co-operation and that the underwriters would make some suggestion for the better working of the legislation. They criticised it, quite rightly, but there has been very little constructive help in what they had to say. They seemed to be very diffident about striking any arbitrary reduction of premiums to 25 per cent. and claimed that the establishment of bush fire brigades did not justify such an all-round or any other percentage without statistical data and to do anything without a much wider experience was, they considered, unsound. There may be justification for that attitude, but on the other hand I say that the establishment of bush fire brigades, such as we have in at least three road board districts, has reduced the risk to the insurance companies very considerably indeed.

That reduced risk has been obtained at the cost of a great deal of expenditure by the districts concerned, and where any district can furnish proof that it or any part of its area was adequately provided for with regard to fire protection, there is every justification for the insurance companies being asked to contribute towards the expenditure that has been incurred. I would inform members generally that during the Royal Show next week, the brigades will be in attendance and, after the grand parade on Wednesday next, they will give a demonstration of how they work and what they can do. I respectfully suggest

that members should embrace the opportunity to inspect the brigades and ascertain for themselves just what is being done and how they are protecting the interests of the insurance companies. I believe that when the Bill is again debated at a later date, members generally will support it because they will realise the justification for the legislation.

MR. HILL (Albany) [8.57]: I have pleasure in supporting the Bill, particularly as I believe the weaknesses in it, which were referred to by the Minister, can be remedied in Committee. I say without hesitation that bush fires constitute one of the greatest menaces we have, both in peace and war. I have had all the experience I want of them. It is very depressing to travel mile after mile through blackened country, and it is indeed hard to have to engage in fighting a bush fire. We must do our best to control bush fires, and I am confident that the best means of achieving that end is by the establishment of efficient fire brigades. I am positive that the Bill will encourage their establishment. The legislation will not greatly concern the people in my district because the only insurance we effect there is with regard to the fruit crops, which have to be insured against hail.

One of the dangers of bush fires is in the event of war. Before the outbreak of the recent hostilities, I discussed the matter with some other people in the country, and we realised that if an aeroplane were to fly over the south-western districts on a favourable day, it could start a bush fire on a front of some hundreds of miles. During the war I was very anxious from time to time when I heard the forest fire hazards issued over the air. I did not like it and discussed the matter with the Under Secretary for Civil Defence. I pointed out to him the danger, and no warnings about bush fire hazards were broadcast after that.

Some years later, I was talking to a senior officer of the Forests Department. He said to me, "You are the one who stopped that, were you not? We heard that the complaint came from south, but we did not know it was you. Do you know, we did not realise what valuable information we were giving to the enemy until those warnings were stopped?" We must take every means in our power to prevent

bush fires; and, as I have already pointed out, our bush fire brigades are doing excellent work. Not only are they well organised, but there is no lack of volunteers when a bush fire breaks out. With a brigade, however, we have somebody at the top and an organisation. As this Bill will, I feel confident, lead to the formation of such brigades, I support it, and I appeal to other members to do so.

On motion by Hon. E. H. H. Hall, debate adjourned.

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Railway (Brown Hill Loop Kalgoorlie-Gnamballa Lake) Discontinuance.
- 2, Hospitals Act Amendment.
Without amendment.

BILL—MCNESS HOUSING TRUST ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Order Discharged.

On motion by the Minister for Housing, Order discharged.

BILL—MARRIAGE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate adjourned from the 21st September.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [9.4]: This Bill proposes to make certain amendments to the Marriage Act. Whilst I favour some of them, I cannot agree to the amendment overriding a parent's refusal to grant permission to a minor to marry. I think the amendment would be mischievous and it could create much family discord. The Bill provides that in remote areas, where there is no clergyman or agent of the Registrar General, upon application by some religious denomination a lay person shall be given authority to perform a marriage ceremony. That proposal, so far as remote areas are concerned, is both laudable and justifiable; but why should it be provided that the lay person should be nominated by some religi-

ous denomination? The Minister made that point quite clear. What he said was—

Of course, no such registration of a marriage can take place unless it is desired by the religious denomination to which the parties belong, or in respect of which the parties desire their marriage to take place.

The Bill, however, does not say that and, in my opinion, it cannot be construed to mean it. The Bill provides—

In respect to any particular marriage, any person whose name, designation, religious denomination and usual place of residence have been registered according to law in the office of the Registrar General as authorised to celebrate that particular marriage.

Read in conjunction with the parent Act, that means that an additional person shall be given authority to perform a marriage ceremony in remote areas, but the Bill is silent on the point of the person having to be nominated by some religious denomination. I do not think he should be, either. It may be, of course, that the Minister intends to make such provision by regulation, but I think he would be wrong in doing so, as I can see many difficulties arising in connection with it. In the first place, the religious denomination to which the couple intending to marry belong may not be inclined to make a nomination. Two denominations may be concerned, one of which might not be prepared to sanction the marriage unless it was performed within the precincts of the church and in accordance with its religion. That is another difficulty I see.

The law provides two methods by which a couple may get married. There is the civil marriage, in a registrar's office, and there is the ceremony performed in a church. I have no objection to the nomination of a lay person by a religious denomination if the denomination will make the appointment and it is suitable to the couple who wish to get married; but provision should also be made, in the event of the nomination of a lay person by a religious denomination not being suitable, that, upon application by the two parties to the proposed marriage, the registrar shall appoint a lay person, with power to perform the ceremony. I hope the Minister will give my suggestion some consideration. He was quite definite, when introducing the Bill, that it would be necessary in the performance of a marriage ceremony to have a lay person appointed only

upon the request of a religious denomination, and I think that would be entirely wrong.

Another point I wish to deal with is the provision for a marriage certificate in triplicate. At present, the Minister performing the ceremony is required to make out three distinct certificates each containing the signatures of the parties to the marriage. One of the certificates is handed to the bride, one is kept by the minister for his own record and the other is sent to the registrar. The Bill provides that in the case of a marriage celebrated by a registrar three certificates shall be made out. While I agree to the proposed alteration so far as the minister is concerned, I cannot see the necessity for three certificates when a marriage is celebrated in a registrar's office.

The Act provides that the registrar, upon performing the marriage ceremony, shall hand one certificate to the contracting parties and shall then record in his register the details of the marriage, the second and third certificates being sent to the Registrar General. There may be some good reason for sending the two certificates to the Registrar General but, if so, it is not apparent to me. Where a marriage is celebrated by a registrar, two copies of the certificate should suffice, one copy to be handed to the contracting parties and the other—after the District Registrar has entered the particulars in his register—sent to the Registrar General. At present, two certificates are sent to the Registrar General and one is then made up in book form and kept for record purposes.

The method of appeal in cases where a parent refuses permission to a minor to marry is that the minor shall have the right to appeal to a judge of the Supreme Court or to a magistrate. In the event of this amendment being agreed to, I would like the Minister to give the House some idea as to the costs a minor might have to pay, should he or she be liable to pay them. Will the objecting parent whose objection may be overruled have to pay the costs, or the minor who makes the appeal to a judge or a magistrate? Although the procedure to be adopted in a divorce case is not complicated, it is fearfully expensive, and I feel that a minor whose appeal has been successful may find himself mired in heavy costs because it may be provided that legal assistance can be ob-

tained for this purpose. When anyone engages a legal advocate he is quickly run into enormous expense. I hope the Minister will give us some idea as to what he proposes to do to limit the cost in the event of this amendment being carried.

The Bill also provides that, instead of as at present a father's consent only being necessary, the mother shall have the right of refusing or giving consent. I would say, on general principles, that the mother would have an undoubted right, just as a father has, to say whether her child, under 21 years of age, is to be married. Very often the mother would be a better judge than the father, particularly if it were a case of a daughter being married. Parents very often have different standards of values, so that a mother may take quite a different view from the father when assessing the prospects of the success of the marriage of her daughter, and she would, in many cases, be the better judge. But the Bill seems to be contradictory in that it proposes to give the mother the right to say whether she will give her consent, and in another portion it overrides any decision she may come to. It does not seem to me to be logical to give her that right and, at the same time, allow a public servant, in the person of a magistrate or judge, to over-rule her objections.

I believe that to give a minor the right to appeal against the decision of his or her parents would provoke quite an amount of bad feeling between the child and the parents, particularly if authority is given to both parents to refuse consent. I think we would find in most cases where one parent has given consent and the other withheld it, that the child concerned would naturally side with the parent who was prepared to give consent to the marriage. I can see quite a lot of domestic discord and friction as a result of such a condition of affairs.

The Minister for Housing: If the parents disagree, would you attempt some method of resolving the disagreement, or just regard it as a failure of consent?

Mr. STYANTS: If the measure is left as it is at present, with only the father's consent necessary, I would have a decided objection to the provision that the child should have the right of appeal to a magistrate in the event of the father's refusing consent, and I propose to state my reasons.

Then there is the question of the consent in the case of the proposed marriage of an illegitimate child. No provision is contained in the Act for consent to be given or withheld by anyone, but the Bill proposes that where the child is in the custody of the mother, her consent shall be necessary. If the child has been taken from the mother and put in charge of a guardian, then the guardian shall have the right to give or withhold consent to the marriage. Here again it is proposed to give someone, either the mother or the guardian, the right, which they do not at present possess, to refuse consent to the marriage of a minor and, at the same time, to give a public servant, in the person of a magistrate or a judge, the right to override their refusal.

I want to state my objections to the proposals in the Bill that, where parents refuse to give their consent to the marriage of their child, the child, as a minor, shall have the right to appeal to a magistrate or a judge and have the parents' objection set aside. The Minister said there would be cases of vindictiveness and family quarrels. While I admit it is possible to state instances of a parent's consent being withheld because of vindictiveness, they would be few and far between. I think I would be able to cite a greater number of cases where the refusal of the parent was well justified, and proved to be so by the events of the future. Most members regard the family unit as the foundation and the sheet anchor of our social system.

Anything that is done to undermine the authority of parents over their children is a step in the wrong direction, and one that will upset the home life of the family unit in this State. I do not know of anything that would tend more to undermine the authority of a parent than this right of appeal. It is said, and I think correctly, that much of our juvenile delinquency is due to lack of parental control. Nothing would deal a greater blow to the authority of a parent than for some precocious or impulsive child to have the knowledge that, irrespective of the type of alliance that he or she may be proposing to enter into, there is a means of having the parents' objection overridden.

Bearing in mind the fact that the average age—these figures can be substantiated by the Commonwealth Year Book—at which

females marry in Australia is 25½, and that of males is 28½ years, it will be realised that in the majority of cases those who desire to marry and are refused consent by their parents, are impulsive and precocious individuals. The very fact that in this State alone some hundreds of marriages take place each year where the daughters, particularly, are under 21 years of age, indicates that parents in the vast majority of instances do give their consent. There would be few instances where the parents do not give consent unless there were some good reason for their action. Parents are responsible, under the law of the land, for the actions of their children until they are 21 years of age. But we propose here, in connection with one of the most important steps that a child can take—that of entering into matrimony—to take away from the parents the right to say whether they think the marriage is likely to prove successful or not.

The Bill, as far as this particular proposal is concerned, hinges very closely on what we read of the communistic system where the father of a family is regarded as something in the nature of a stud sire, and the mother in the nature of an incubator, and where the State has the sole control over the family and, in many instances, the children are taken away and placed in institutions. I ask members this: Who, in their opinion, is more likely to be the better judges of the prospects of a marriage, the parents who have borne and reared one or the other of the contracting parties, or a public servant who would be interested only, in a coldly official way, and often without knowledge of the background of the case?

I think the answer undoubtedly is that the parents would be the better judges, and I maintain that no case could be put up to say that they would not be the better judges, or that anyone else should be given a prior or overriding authority. This is an important proposal, and members should give serious consideration to it. It is suggested that in the event of the parents' refusing consent to the marriage of a minor, the minor should have the right to go before a magistrate or a judge. I want members to realise what that involves. The parents may know that the opposite contracting party to the proposed marriage with their child, has some physical or mental taint, or that there is some defect in the family, but for charitable reasons they have refused either to make their own

child disclose it or for humanitarian reasons they themselves have declined to make it known that that was their ground for objecting to the other contracting party.

If this proposal is carried out, it will mean this: Assume that parents are objecting to their daughter who is under 21 years of age marrying a person whom they know has someone in his family who has either a mental, physical, or hereditary defect. The disadvantage is that it will go before the magistrate and it will become necessary for the parents of the child to appear in court and state their objection. What an inhuman thing it is going to be for the young fellow who is going to marry the girl. The family skeleton that there was insanity or some physical or hereditary defect in his family is going to be uncovered and the bones strewn over the court floor. It would be a deplorable thing! It would probably bring about bad feeling even if the judge decided to overrule the parents' objection. What would be the thoughts of the prospective son-in-law to his prospective mother and father-in-law after a case of that kind had been heard? I believe it would mean a lifelong estrangement so far as the parties were concerned.

We should not agree to that portion of the Bill. I know that the Minister has said that in rare cases parents have, for no good reason, perhaps from vindictiveness or spitefulness, refused to give their consent to the marriage of their son or daughter as the case may be. As against that, I think we can quote many more cases where the parents' refusal to give their consent to the marriage of their child before reaching the age of 21 has saved such child from matrimonial disaster. The worst it could do would be to delay the marriage for six or 12 months, or in very rare cases a matter of two or three years. In many instances an additional six or 12 months to a person under 21 years of age may prove to be of great service if only to give time for more calm deliberation as to the important step which he or she proposes to take.

I feel certain that the majority of parents place the welfare of their children above all other considerations, and that only in very rare instances would they refuse consent to a marriage simply because a child was under the age of 21 years except where they had some very good reason. They

usually give consent as desired by their children, and I cannot agree that the right and wisdom of the parents should be overruled by a public servant who in many instances would be only officially interested, and would not know the background of the case unless one of the parties had to disclose a mental taint or some hereditary defect in the family. The parents would have as their paramount consideration the welfare of their child, but the magistrate or the judge, with every consideration given to their judgment would, in many cases, be unable to give a decision that would be in the interests of the child as would the parents themselves. I will oppose that portion when the Bill is dealt with in Committee. The other clauses, with some explanations that should be given by the Minister, I believe are quite desirable and should be acceptable.

MR. READ (Victoria Park) [9.37]: I desire to voice my disapproval to the Bill because I think it is most unnecessary. Many times in this Chamber we have discussed Bills dealing with social regulations which have been tried over many years. I think those rules and regulations that apply at the present time to the marriage of minors are working quite satisfactorily. The Minister, in explaining the Bill, dealt with the present set-up. He said perhaps—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not read from "Hansard."

Mr. READ: —the most important provision was that dealing with the consent of parents, and the part a local Justice of the Peace played in regard to the consent which was given when either or both parents were not present in the State. It is proposed that a minor can appeal to a magistrate or a judge. That in itself is possibly a costly and difficult approach, whereas a Justice of the Peace is familiar, in most instances, with the family history of those who apply to him, and he is also a local man and is accessible at some time to the young couple concerned and their parents. I have had some experience of this set-up and whilst I may have made some legal mistakes on several occasions, I feel I have been morally right in all of them.

When I am approached by a young couple wishing to marry I always inter-

view the minister who is to perform the ceremony. I also make inquiries from their immediate relations where perhaps the mother or father are not present, and usually the family doctor interested in the case. The majority of these marriages are for people in poor circumstances and they are marriages of emergency. If, as explained by the last speaker, the objection by the parents is to the history of a glandular or subnormal condition in a family which is known only to the parents, then it is much better that the couple should wait until they reach the age of 21 years at least. They can then decide for themselves and avoid having their case brought before a magistrate.

I recall one instance which occurred some two or three years ago. The father was in Kalgoolie and the mother in Sydney. Their daughter, who was a minor, was working in Perth and the father refused consent to the marriage on account of religious principles. In consultation with other members of the family and the Minister, I gave my consent. That couple are now happily married and have two children. What possibly was wrong in a legal sense has turned out to be a happy marriage.

The Minister for Housing: I think you overrode the Act that time.

Mr. Read: I think I did.

The Minister for Housing: Yes, I think you did.

Mr. READ: The matter of the consent of both the mother and the father is very difficult. I think, in a case of that description, the Minister was quite right when he emphasised the importance of the mother's decision, and that it was equal to, if not more important, than that of the male parent. However, I do think that the consent of one or the other should be sufficient. To my mind, this measure puts more difficulties in the way of marriages of minors than ever before. I do not know, but perhaps the Minister has heard of a great difficulty arising in making an appeal to a judge. The difficulties and the additional cost to those people will be such that the Bill would be more harmful than the present formula which we go through in order to alleviate cases that are urgent and in most instances distressing.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [9.44]: I do not propose to delay the House very long, but I cannot let the opportunity pass to speak on such an important subject. It is difficult for me to understand why the Minister should say that the mother should now have equal sanction with the father in giving consent to the marriage of a minor. Surely the Minister will admit that there has been no great difficulty in the past in regard to consent being obtained from the parent in the case of the marriage of minors, and that he can see clearly the difficulty that will arise. At present the mother, knowing that the father is the only authority that can give or withhold consent to the marriage of a minor may, if she feels that the father's decision is wrong, hold some consultation with him, but she knows that he is supreme and that his decision is final. But what will be the position under this measure? She will endeavour to exercise her authority and by so doing I fear will create a great deal of domestic unhappiness.

Under the existing law, whatever the mother may do in the way of consulting the father about giving or withholding sanction, she realises that that is as far as she can go. In 99 cases out of 100, she, having conferred with the father, would be satisfied with the decision, whichever way it went, but if she felt that she was the equal of the father in the eyes of the law and had a right to dictate to him, the effect must be to cause considerable unhappiness.

What is more we shall, if we adopt the amendments, make conditions more difficult for the minor. I suppose we have all had instances of parents disagreeing in the matter of giving consent to the marriage of a minor. Sometimes the father would sanction it and the mother would not and vice versa. Such cases are numerous. The Minister on the one hand would endeavour to do something to enable a minor to overcome the difficulty when sanction is refused, but, on the other hand, he will be making it far more difficult for a minor to obtain sanction. Surely if a minor can get past one parent, the position cannot be improved by calling in the mother and giving her equal authority! Probably we shall create a position that will cause not only the mother but also the father much regret. I suppose it is recognised that the father is the head of the family.

The Minister for Housing: I think that idea is rather old-fashioned.

Mr. MARSHALL: In the eyes of the law, anyhow, it is so. If the law provides that he shall exercise this legal right, we shall not be improving the situation by pandering to the mother and giving her an equal right—a course that will probably cause her many heartaches. As I have stated, we shall be making the position more difficult for the minor by bringing the mother into the picture. The Act has worked smoothly. I know of no case of hardship having been caused to anyone and I prefer its provision to the proposal in the Bill.

I consider that the member for Kalgoorlie produced strong reasons in substantiation of his argument that there would be very few who would go past the decision of the parents and approach the court. The Minister probably had in mind that such cases would be heard in camera and that no publicity would be given them. At any rate, I suggest that if the Bill be passed, provision should be made to that effect. Such cases should not be open to the public to wallow in.

The Minister would be unwise to alter the parent Act as proposed. I see no justification for the alteration. Where it is a marriage of expediency, there will be no difficulty in obtaining consent. I cannot see why the Minister should desire to interfere with the Act, which has worked well, and I urge that we would be well advised to leave it alone. We do not want to be the means of creating domestic discord between husband and wife and also between parents and children. I feel inclined to support the member for Kalgoorlie. I repeat that the Act has worked smoothly and that we would not be justified in making the proposed amendments.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth—in reply) [9.53]: I am indebted to members for their discussion of a subject the importance of which is admitted. This Bill has already been passed by another place.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: That is no recommendation, surely.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: While listening to the member for Murchison, I thought for a moment that I must be present because, 2,000 years ago, under Roman law,

the position was very simple. A father had absolute possession of his children; he could hold them in slavery, even dispose of their lives, and any property they held belonged to him. The father was head of the family. We have travelled a long way since then and I venture to say we shall travel some distance from today, whether for better or worse remains to be seen. If I may be allowed, I shall deal with the points raised by the member for Kalgoorlie in particular during the Committee stage. Whatever the situation may be and whatever the views of members may be on the matter of an appeal, there are some aspects of the Bill that deserve support.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	18
Noes	..	..	..	18
				—
A tie	..	..	..	0
				—

AYES.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Murray
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Seward
Mr. Hall	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Watts
Mr. Mann	Mr. Wild
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Yates
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Brand

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Brady	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Pantou
Mr. Fox	Mr. Read
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Reynolds
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Styants
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. May	Mr. Rodoreda

(Teller.)

Mr. SPEAKER: The voting being equal, I give my casting vote with the ayes to make further consideration of the Bill possible.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st September.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [9.59]: This measure is like the curate's egg—good in parts. There are parts that I consider are not altogether acceptable, but which

might be deserving of consideration. It appears to me that the Minister is endeavouring to amend the parent Act in a piecemeal way. Some of the provisions, which were very fully explained by the Minister when he introduced the Bill, might be said to be very necessary. But why the Minister, when endeavouring to amend the Act in other directions, did not go all the way and complete the job, is something I cannot understand. This measure is somewhat contingent on the one we have just been discussing. It has a very close relationship to that measure, inasmuch as the Bill we are now considering provides for the registration of births, marriages and deaths, while the previous measure concerned the law of marriage itself.

The first provision to which I take exception is that which amends Section 13 of the Act. Under this provision, the Minister proposes to limit the time that will be permitted to a medical practitioner to issue a certificate of death. I do not know why the Minister wishes to have inserted the words "within ten days"; because it has been the practice, so far as I can ascertain, for a medical practitioner to issue a certificate immediately on the demise of a person he has been attending. I know of no delay whatever in the issuing of a death certificate. I have known of cases where undertakers have hesitated to bury a body until a certificate was issued.

What I fear is that if we limit the time now and stipulate that no more than ten days will be allowed a medical practitioner in which to issue a certificate, we will give encouragement to medical practitioners to delay the issuing of such certificates. My opinion is that instead of a limit of 10 days being provided, the word "forthwith" should be inserted. I do not think we should allow any time whatever, but immediately on the demise of an individual, where a doctor has been in attendance up to the time of death, the certificate should be issued at once.

It is provided in the Act that the District Registrar shall on the first of the month clear his office of registrations of births, marriages and deaths. In other words, registrations have to be forwarded to the Registrar General on the first of or early in each month. In one or two instances I have had to wait for a period of

five or six weeks before I could obtain a copy of the death certificate of a worker who had been fatally injured, because the District Registrar would not give me a copy or an extract of the certificate. So if a person is fatally injured on a mine early in any given month, it is not likely that one will secure a copy of the death certificate until the middle of the succeeding month, and all this time one will be waiting to lodge an application for compensation, which cannot be done until one has a copy of such certificate. If the Minister encourages medical practitioners to take any time up to 10 days to issue a certificate, it will mean further delay.

I want to know from the Minister whether he is sure an undertaker will bury a body without a certificate from the medical practitioner. I do not think he will; and it is not likely, if this Bill be agreed to, that any person, particularly if the body is in the morgue or an institution, will hold it for 10 days until a medical practitioner's certificate is obtained. Having regard to all the circumstances, I consider that the word "forthwith" should be inserted, and that a certificate should be issued immediately. There should be no limit of 10 days. The Minister would be well advised to change his attitude in regard to that provision.

The next clause upon which I wish to comment is that dealing with a new section to be inserted in the parent Act with regard to the superintendent or person in charge of a cemetery or crematorium. It is provided that such person shall, on the fifteenth day of the month, forward to the Registrar General a statement setting out the names of persons buried or cremated during that month. I want the Minister to understand that this is another provision in respect of which the draftsman has not looked beyond the Darling Range because in all the isolated parts of this State, so far as I am aware, road boards or municipalities control cemeteries under some arrangement with the Public Works Department and, I think, the Lands Department. In my electorate, the secretaries of the road boards are definitely overworked, because they cannot get efficient labour and because they have to carry out a number of responsibilities imposed upon them by Commonwealth regulations, and also by regulations of the Public Works Department and other ministerial departments.

These local authorities do a colossal amount of voluntary work which involves a great deal of time and labour. Now the Minister suggests that on the fifteenth of every month they shall take on the further responsibility of sending to the Registrar General the names and all the particulars of every person buried or cremated in the cemeteries over which they have some control. I do not want that provision and I will vote against it. After all, no-one is likely to steal a body. Registration takes place and the Registrar General knows the person who has died, his age, where he died, how he died, and what he died from according to medical testimony. What further information does the Registrar General want beyond statistics to make sure that every body has been either burnt or buried—just a confirmation involving unnecessary work by local authorities who are already overworked?

The next provision to which I am not favourably disposed is one in regard to which I think the Minister will agree that his efforts are by no means comprehensive. While amending the Act he might just as well go the whole distance and complete the job instead of going about the matter in this piece-meal fashion. The provision is one with which we were dealing to some extent in the measure that has just been considered. The two Bills interlock. This one gives the Registrar General power to register a minister of religion in order that he may perform marriage ceremonies. The Minister proposes to go one step further. I do not altogether object to the provision so far as it goes, but I do not think that it goes far enough.

I do not believe that my colleague on my right gripped the situation as I see it. By this provision the Minister proposes that where the Registrar General considers it expedient this step shall be taken. That is all—only if it is expedient to do so, or if the marriage is one of expediency; only under that condition. When the Minister was introducing the Bill, he led us to believe it catered for people outback. Actually it caters only for marriages of expediency.

The Minister for Housing: I do not agree with that interpretation.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not know about my interpretation. We will probably be able to discuss that aspect in Committee. From memory I understand the provision sets out

that where the Registrar General considers a marriage to be one of expediency and he is requested by a minister of religion to do so, he can register a layman to perform a marriage.

The Minister for Housing: I think you will get into trouble with the church by suggesting that interpretation.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am interpreting the provision as it appears to me. The word "such" is in the provision; the word "expedient" is in it and the word "requested" is in it. That is the provision. The Registrar General can, if he considers it expedient, at the request of a minister of religion, register a layman to perform that marriage only. So it will not help much outback. I do not agree with those who think this measure will cause squabbles between the contracting parties, because they must decide that they wish to be married in a certain church before approaching a minister of religion who in turn will request the Registrar General to exercise his authority under this provision. What about the individuals who have no desire for a minister of religion to intervene on their behalf.

The Minister for Housing: You may have something there.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is the position, as I see it. If the Minister wished to do something for the people of the outback to save them a great deal of expense—at this juncture in the history of the State there are many people far-removed from the city who are assisting in the development of industry in the North-West and the hinterland generally, and who find it expensive to come to the city for such a ceremony, and in some cases their employers cannot afford to lose their services for any period of time—he should give consideration to this aspect. Provision should be made for such people. I do not know whether the House would agree to a justice of the peace or the local police constable being registered to perform marriages at the request of the contracting parties, but I feel it should be made possible for them to be married easily and cheaply. The marriage of expediency should be provided for, but so should other marriages, and I would like the Minister to give further consideration to that provision.

I agree with the Minister that there are many stickybeaks who might wish to search

the register to gain information to which they are not entitled, in order to satisfy their curiosity. I would like the provision covering adopted children to cover also illegitimate children. When any person wishes to gain certain information, even when the individual about whom information is desired has been born out of wedlock, the Registrar General should be given some discretionary power. No-one would object to information being made available for legitimate purposes, but not merely to satisfy the appetite for scandal. I support the second reading, as the provisions of the measure are necessary and urgent for the purposes of the parent Act.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth—in reply) [10.18]: I will consider the matters raised by the member for Murchison, and will deal with them when the Bill is in Committee.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 10.20 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 30th September, 1948.

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