

Mr. HARRISON: There are other things upon which I intended to speak to-night, but they can be dealt with when they come up under their various headings. My principal object in speaking to-night was to place before the House the wants of that particular centre, so that justice may be done to it. The people concerned have been waiting long enough. If I did not do something, they would not know that they have a member. I speak more particularly as to railway facilities. In regard to roads, the Minister for Works has only recently made a grant for repairs. The granting of facilities of that kind represents money wisely spent.

The Minister for Works: There are 50 members of the House of the same opinion.

Mr. HARRISON: But there are many other things that my electors need. At present I am mentioning only immediate essentials. So far as this Parliament is concerned, essentials alone should be dealt with.

*[The Speaker resumed the chair.]*

Progress reported.

#### SELECT COMMITTEE, RETIREMENT OF C. F. GALE.

*Further Message from Council.*

Message from the Council received stating that a reply had not yet been received to the Council's Message dated the 7th September, requesting the Assembly to authorise the Hon. R. H. Underwood to give evidence before the select committee on the retirement of Mr. C. F. Gale.

*House adjourned at 10.55 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Thursday, 30th September, 1915.*

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

#### MOTION—POWER HOUSE, RETURN OF PAPERS.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [3.2]: I ask the permission of the House to submit a motion without notice. Yesterday when the leader of the House laid on the Table 127 files and six contracts in connection with the Perth power house, he intimated that amongst these files was a large number dealing specifically with arrangements and agreements in process made between the Commissioner of Railways and local authorities and private people, that these particular files were in daily use, and that if they were retained it would cause much inconvenience to the Commissioner. I have spent several hours in going through the files specified as being in daily use. My motive in rising is to ask the permission of the House to move, without notice, that the files in question should be returned to the Commissioner for Railways. They may be in daily use by him, but they are, I believe of not much use to us.

Leave given.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [3.5]: I have a list of the files here, some 59 altogether, and I do not suppose that hon. members desire that I should read it out. I therefore move—

*That fifty-nine files in connection with the new power house, which were laid on the Table of the Legislative Council on the 29th September, 1915, be returned to the Commissioner of Railways forthwith.*

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (East): I second the motion.

Question put and passed.

## SELECT COMMITTEE, RETIREMENT OF C. F. GALE.

*Extension of time.*

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [3.8] I move—

*That the time for bringing up the report of the committee be extended to Thursday, 7th October.*

The committee have completed the taking of evidence with the exception of that of the Honorary Minister (Hon. R. H. Underwood); we are awaiting a reply from another place in order to ascertain whether that hon. gentleman's evidence will be forthcoming or not. We hope to have the report available by Thursday next, and will make an effort to have the evidence completed by that time.

Question put and passed.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. R. J. Lynn (West) on the ground of urgent private business.

## BILL—WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

Read a third time and returned to the Legislative Assembly with amendments.

## BILL—COTTESLOE BEACH RATES VALIDATION.

*In Committee.*

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; The Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Rates validated:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I take this opportunity of thanking the leader of the House for his courtesy in not pushing this Bill through after the second reading. It is possible that members will thank me for having sounded a note

of warning. I have made further inquiries into the matter, and have received particulars from two parties who were capable of forming an opinion, to the effect that the statement of the Minister that this involves £700 worth of outstanding rates is not correct. I do not suggest that the Minister is intentionally misleading the House, but apparently there is a difference of opinion as to what the Bill is going to do. It would be a mistake for hon. members to push this through Committee and close the discussion. I am not in a position even now, owing to want of time, to give a clear and full statement of the exact position of affairs. On the question of validating these books, if it is the case that the Cottesloe Beach Roads Board has made this mistake in regard to the rates, surely it would be advisable for us to consider whether we should not apply this to all the roads boards and insert a clause in the Bill enabling the Minister to validate all roads board rates. I give the Minister my assurance that there is no intention to block the Bill or the recovery of the £700 of outstanding rates. Naturally, I am bound to assist, so far as I can, the Cottesloe Beach roads board, whose district is within my Province; but there are the rights of individuals also to be considered. I trust that by the reporting of progress a further opportunity of discussion will be afforded.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I did make an error in stating that the amount of outstanding rates affected by this Bill is £700. The correct amount is £651 18s. 3d. If the measure is not passed, it will be impossible for the roads board to collect any of that amount; that is to say, unless the rate-payers pay voluntarily. Last session a Bill was passed to validate rates levied by the Cottesloe municipal council, which body made a similar error. Other roads boards are receiving consideration through a Bill recently passed by Parliament. I have here a detailed list of rates owing, verified by the Cottesloe Beach roads board auditor, but I do not wish to read it out.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Let me put a concrete case. Assume that the Cottesloe Beach roads board have sued a ratepayer for the collection of a few pounds, or a few shillings, that the case has been brought before the court, and that it has been decided in favour of the ratepayer. Is it a reasonable thing that we should pass an Act of Parliament to enable the roads board to collect say 30s., after the case has been fought and decided?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Cottesloe Beach Roads Board did sue a number of ratepayers.

Hon. A. Sanderson: How many?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: One case only went into court, and that case went against the roads board, who had to pay costs and did pay them. If this Bill passes, the successful defendant will have to pay the rates he owes. As a property owner in the municipality, that defendant derives benefit from the board's expenditure; and why should he be excluded from the operation of this Bill? The only means of excluding him would be to insert a proviso specially exempting him.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The Committee will appreciate that we are getting a little information now. Without hearing the Minister's statement, hon. members would not have seen the full effect of this apparently innocent little measure. I have not to-day all the information I require. After the Minister's statement regarding a specific case, is it a proper procedure to rush the Bill through?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I think the Committee would be wise in reporting progress. An element of doubt has been created in my mind as to the justice, or otherwise, of the Bill. If the defendant in the case referred to has obtained a verdict on a technicality, he is not entitled to hold that verdict. We are here, not to allow the collective body of ratepayers to be victimised, but to see that justice is done. Mr. Sanderson has intimated that he has a prospect of information which would assist the Committee, but which he is not prepared to lay on the Table to-day. I shall move that progress be re-

ported in order that we may secure that information.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member, having spoken, cannot move that progress be reported.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: It is pleasing to observe that members take such a keen interest in a matter involving the collection of rates amounting to about £2. A much more important measure affecting municipalities was recently put through without such careful discussion. It seems that hon. members occasionally strain at a gnat and then swallow a camel. The mistake here involved is simply that the chairman of the roads board signed only one side of the ratebook instead of both. That defective signing has been exposed by the case which has been tried. The Committee are asked to validate, not rates amounting to £2, but the whole of the outstanding rates affected by the error. Once ratepayers know that by reason of a technical error a public body cannot claim rates in a court of law, how many ratepayers—human nature being what it is—would avail themselves of that knowledge and attempt to evade the payment of rates justly due? No one will be affected by this measure other than those who legally owe rates.

The CHAIRMAN: I would call attention to the fact that the question before the Committee is that Clause 2 stand part of the Bill.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: In view of the question before us, I was wondering how far I could go. I do not wish to move that the clause be struck out, nor do I desire to hinder the roads board from getting what they should get. I am placed in a difficult position by reason of not having available to-day the information I desire to lay before the Committee.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH: After what we have been told by the Colonial Secretary and Mr. Allen it seems very necessary that the Cottesloe Beach roads board should be enabled to collect rates that are justly due. A similar position may arise in connection with other roads board. I hope the Committee will pass the clause.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

## BILL—MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. F. CONNOR (North) [3.30]: I do not propose to say very much in connection with this Bill, but may I preface my remarks by saying that it will surprise some hon. members to learn that I was one of the first representatives of gold miners in the State Parliament 24 years ago. At that time mining was thought very little of, or at any rate members of Parliament did not know much about it. The first direct representative was Mr. W. L. Baker. Unfortunately, however, in the second session of the first Parliament Mr. Baker died, and then I came along. My experience of politics, extending over the period of 24 years, convinces me that it is a good thing to leave alone. However, that is only by the way. As far as the provisions of the Bill before us are concerned, I have only one strong objection to them. The intention of the Bill I am in accord with. I believe it was introduced with the object of improving the conditions of the working miners, and any measure which can be brought before Parliament, having that object in view, should receive the support of everyone. The mining industry has been of great benefit to this State. It has been the means of opening up many mining centres and assisting other industries as well. In the course of my experience there has not been a measure submitted to Parliament, the object of which has been to assist the mining industry and those engaged in it, which has not received my support. Even now I do not think the Government have gone quite far enough in the direction of helping and encouraging that industry, because we know that there are 1,200 miles of auriferous country scarcely touched. In giving our support to any measure which may be introduced, having for its object encouragement and assistance to mining,

we are helping those who are engaged in the industry. In the early days there was no such thing as deep sinking. It was just a question of the prospector going out into the wilderness and finding alluvial gold, or getting it at a shallow depth and bringing it to the surface to dolly it. In those days there was no necessity for regulations. Those were days, too, when mining was mining, and when men were men. The miners had to go out and make their own living, and there was no such thing as help from the Government or undue coddling. But those days are past. We have come to a time now when it is necessary that there should be regulations for the protection of those who have to work at a depth. I want to enter my protest against one thing in this Bill, and that is that an unqualified, irresponsible, and perhaps ignorant man should be put into the position of inspector, not appointed by the Government, but by a union, a position which will enable him to dictate to an intelligent and trained man like a mine manager. That embraces my objection to the Bill. Will hon. members tell me that a man who happens to be a good talker, or we might say, a professional agitator, or even a professional politician, and who is able to work up the influence of a body of men such as the miners' union, or perhaps the Trades Hall, should be appointed to—we will say—indicate, to a mine manager, a trained and professional man, what should be done in regard to a mine. I am prepared to be told that the Bill does not allow that, but in my opinion it does. A representative of the men will be put in a position which will enable him to go to a mine manager and say, "You must do so and so." We are told that such a man must have at least five years' experience. But even with such a protection there is danger. A man may be able to talk himself into the position, and we have had experience of men having done so.

Hon. H. Millington: More power to them. How did you get here?

The PRESIDENT: I must call on the hon. member not to interject. If the in-

terjections are repeated I shall take action under the Standing Orders. Under Standing Order 399 interruptions are disorderly, and if they continue I shall proceed under Standing Order 416.

Hon. F. CONNOR: I was enjoying the hon. gentleman's interjection. It did not affect me. I was saying that my objection to the Bill is that an irresponsible and ignorant man might be appointed to the position of check inspector. I would like to read a comment which has been made on this question by the Chamber of Mines. The Chamber states—

The Chamber appreciates this opportunity of expressing its views on a matter of such vital importance to all concerned in the industry, but if the Chamber be correct in its assumption that it is the intention of the Minister to appoint inspectors of mines without requiring the candidates to pass a thorough examination by a board of examiners, the Chamber protests against any such method of appointment and is firmly of the opinion that the present staff of inspectors should certainly not be lowered.

The appointment of a man by a trades union, or by a miners' association, without that man having passed any examination whatever, is not right. A man occupying such a position should have some knowledge of hydraulics, the power of explosives, the hauling of material from mines, and many other subjects. We were speaking the other night about interference with private enterprise; here is an instance. First of all the Government started with the meat ring. Where is it now! This will be another result of what is purely and simply interference with legitimate trading. It is to the interest of the people who own the mines to see that perfect conditions exist. It is to their interest that the working miner should be well attended to, and I think he is. But here we are to have a working man who is coming in to say "This business does not belong to you, it belongs to me, and I will work it as I like." It is becoming so strong that I think the country will not for long tolerate it. This

report of the Chamber of Mines goes on to say—

The position of an inspector of mines is one of great power and responsibility and should be filled by a man of the highest qualifications and integrity. It is believed that the Minister will be at one with the Chamber when it expresses the following views on the qualifications desirable in candidates for such office:—An inspector of mines should possess such experience as renders him perfectly familiar with underground operations in all their many details; he should be thoroughly conversant with methods of development, systems of stoping and timbering best adapted to various classes of ground; he should understand principles and approved practice in haulage, ventilation and sanitation; also it is desirable that he has at least some elementary knowledge of such machinery as is used underground. The foregoing qualifications in turn necessitate some technical training on the lines provided by the Government School of Mines.

The gentleman who will be appointed by the Trades Hall does not require to know anything about that. He is simply nominated and he dictates to the mine management. The report continues—

The duties of an inspector also demand that he be competent to conduct inquiries, prosecutions, and the ordinary clerical routine of his office.

What qualifications would the ordinary miner appointed under the clause have for conducting inquiries? We do not know even that he will be able to sign his name or read it. If he has been five years in a mine he can be appointed to the position. I think it is wrong, and I will oppose it. The report continues—

Lastly, it is most essential that his personality should be such as will command the respect of both employers and employees. In conclusion, it would again emphasise its opinion that men holding such positions must be thoroughly qualified to perform the responsible duties appertaining to the office and further that the selection of

such officers is best secured by a careful examination of their qualifications, practical, technical, and personal, conducted by a board of experts.

If the Government are prepared to agree to a proposition such as that, I will support the Bill in its entirety, but until they agree that there is a necessity for some qualifications which under the Bill are not demanded, I am opposed to it. It seems reasonable that there should be a careful examination of the qualifications of these men, practical, technical and personal. I would also make it quite clear that anybody to be appointed must be able to read and write. I will support any measure brought in to improve the comfort and health of the working miner, provided it does not go too far. On this occasion, however, it does go too far. For the purpose of getting it on record, let me read the reply received to the report from which I have quoted, a reply apparently sent from the Minister, as follows:—

I have the honour by direction to acknowledge your letter of the 22nd inst. on the above subject and to say that the Minister cordially agrees with the views expressed by your Chamber as to the qualifications desirable in candidates for the office of inspector of mines, and is at one with your Chamber's opinion "That the present status of the inspectors should certainly not be lowered, but on the other hand should, if practicable, be raised."

This is all I have to say, except to emphasise the facts that if the conditions as suggested in the Bill are carried out it will be to the detriment of the mining interests and thus will detrimentally affect the whole of the country. It will tend to take the control of the mining industry out of the hands of owners and managers of mines. It will tend to curtail employment, because I myself know of mines which would shut down were the proposed conditions brought into effect. Will not the Government take into consideration the fact that it is better to have than to stop? Their policy up to the present has been one of undue interference with private enterprise. I do not desire that

private enterprises shall have undue advantages; but when we go too far we will retard the progress of the country and stop development which, if private enterprise were allowed fair play, would be carried out. The Bill has that tendency.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (North-East) [4.52]: I desire to support the second reading. I was pleased to note the attitude taken up by Mr. McKenzie, because I admit I was previously of opinion that he would object to the measure. The fact that he recognises it is reasonable shows that no reasonable opposition can be offered to the principle. He desires certain minor amendments, but after quoting largely from statistics—showing that he was well in touch with the mining interest for a great number of years—he candidly admitted that anything which will tend to the betterment of the inspection of the working of mines is desirable and that he would be prepared to support it. In regard to Mr. McKenzie's proposed amendments, we can deal with those in Committee. Personally, I am going to support the Bill as it stands. But although supporting this small amendment, I am by no means satisfied with it. There are many other amendments required to the Mines Regulation Act which, I think, will eventually be placed on the statute-book. I for one am going to agitate until we get a greater measure of betterment in the working conditions of our mines than we have to-day. However, the Bill being a step in the right direction, it has my support, although I would rather have seen other important amendments included. What we have now to consider is this amendment to the Act passed in 1906, nine years ago. In order to show that the amendment is justified I propose briefly to touch upon alterations in the system of mining, which necessitate a more effective system of inspection. Mr. Connor, although he does not agree with the measure, mentioned the conditions obtaining many years ago, presumably in the early nineties, in this State.

Hon. F. Connor: In the eighties.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I have had experience myself as far back as 1894, over 20 years ago. At that time on the

Eastern goldfields it was remarked what a fine body of men the miners were. Most of them were working on the surface, and in shows which were only at a shallow depth. There were no evil effects following the occupation of those in the industry. The whole of the community were comparatively healthy, and such sickness as was prevalent was due, not to the conditions of employment, but to bad sanitary conditions and to natural and unavoidable causes, climatic and otherwise. The opening up of the various reef and lode formations during the last 20 odd years has been responsible for entirely altered conditions. The men working on the goldfields to-day form part of a great modern system, and the man who was noted in the early days for initiative and enterprise now finds himself a very small part of a great modern industrial system. Those who were in the mines in the first place were the pick of the young manhood of all the States of Australia, and many were from other parts of the world. The great majority came from country districts and were physically fine men, but had no experience of mining. At that time they enjoyed the best of health. Others had mining experience, but they had been engaged in wet mines and were not familiar with the conditions obtaining in the dry mines in this State. Although there was dry mining at Broken Hill it was not so general as in this State. During recent years, and especially since the present Mines Regulation Act was enacted, it is a regrettable fact that the working conditions of the miner have been continually getting worse. In addition to the dry working underground, dry treatment plants have been installed on the surface, with the result that those working in the mines, both underground and on the surface, are particularly prone to contract miners' complaint or fibrosis, due to dust on the lungs. Some men are probably pre-disposed to this, and are affected after working only a few months, whereas others enjoy an immunity for a longer period. At the same time I wish to emphasise that no matter how fine a man may be physically, in the long run he contracts this disease and becomes af-

fected. As an instance of this I would inform the House that only a few days ago a young man named Nicholls, who was working on one of the mines in Kalgoorlie, and whose age was 29, met with a fatal accident, and the post mortem examination disclosed the fact that both his lungs were badly affected by fibrosis, one lung in particular. When we find men at this early age being so badly affected—of course many of them are affected who would not be subject to examination and are affected perhaps without their own knowledge, although the disease is at work all the time—I say that it shows that these conditions are due entirely to the surroundings in which these men have to work. The trouble is also that, not only does this disease in time render a man unfit for his occupation and hurry him to an early grave, but it predisposes him to other lung complaints, such as phthisis and pneumonia. It will be agreed, I think, that a man, even in the prime of life, has not too much chance of withstanding these diseases, and a man whose lungs are affected as a result of working in this industry and has fibrosis to a greater or lesser extent, is suffering under a severe handicap when combatting such diseases as I have mentioned. It is not only the disease itself, but there are other diseases which he is liable to, and when he is suffering from these he has not nearly the same chance of fighting the more serious complaints. Members have had statistics quoted to them by the Hon. R. D. McKenzie and Hon. J. Cornell, but in my opinion these do not clearly show the whole of the effects which are seen in those who are working in the mining industry. The conditions are daily becoming more unfavourable owing to the great depth of some of the mines on the Golden Mile. The Ivanhoe mine is now down to a depth of 3,450 feet. In order to get an idea of the depth of that mine, which is a matter of over 1,100 yards, one has only to go down to some rifle range where one will find that there is no distance which will give one the correct idea of the depth of the main shaft of that mine. The ranges do not exceed 1,000 yards in length, and in order to get a true

idea of the depth one would have to extend the range another 100 yards. When a mine has reached this depth—and of course it is only of recent date that this has been brought about—and considering the marvellous output of our mines, it is not surprising that the conditions have been altered entirely, and the Mines Regulation Act which provided for conditions existing, say, nine years ago, must necessarily, to a great extent, be out of date in the year 1915. Therefore, there is no need to apologise after nine years of trial for coming along with a suggestion for such slight amendments as these. I can understand that even those who are opposed entirely to Labour legislation must recognise the reasonableness of this proposal. In connection with the working of the big mines there has been the introduction of machines for boring purposes. I do not mean to say that these have come into use since the Act was put into force, but at that time I do not think the evil effects of these from the health point of view were realised. It is very apparent to-day, however, that miners working with machines and under these conditions are far worse off than under the old conditions of hand labour. In mines worked by hand the boring of the holes for blasting purposes would only probably be to a depth of from 2ft. 6ins. to 3ft. Perhaps one or two holes would be bored and lightly charged and the explosion would not be very great, but under the modern system of machine drilling the whole face is bored out and an enormous quantity of dynamite is used. The explosion which ensues displaces, not only the ground, but shakes the whole of the workings in the immediate vicinity. It is this fact which renders the workings so dangerous at the present time. In addition to the dust and fumes, there is always a danger of the ground becoming loose and falling unexpectedly. Perhaps it does not fall at the time, and the miners have to be careful to test all the ground anywhere near the shaft to see if it is likely to fall or not. Even if the ground has been tested and an attempt has been made to break it down, some portion of the ground which was thought

to be safe and could not, it was thought, break down, probably within a few hours has fallen of its own volition. A recent accident occurred resulting in the death in Kalgoorlie I have just referred to. The men tried with two bars to lever the ground down and failed, and yet within a few hours that ground fell and an accident occurred, one man being killed and the other seriously injured. In addition to the depth of some of the mines, it will also be realised that very up-to-date machinery has to be installed to work them. To make mining pay on its present low-grade depends very much on the efficiency of the plant and the machinery, and also upon those who are attending it. Where work is carried on in a factory or a mine at high pressure it is more dangerous than it was when they used to proceed in the old quiet way. With the rush and bustle of the present mining system in the big centres, the danger is increasing, although the methods are becoming more up-to-date. I have pointed out the conditions briefly which obtained years ago, and also the conditions which obtain to-day. I maintain that it is on account of these altered conditions that the inspection of mines has become more necessary and, I wish to impress this point upon the House, is becoming more difficult. When the workings were at a comparatively shallow depth and before the mining industry had reached its present magnitude, the inspection of mines was not such a serious proposition as it is to-day, but it has been pointed out by many mine managers of the Eastern gold-fields that it is a most difficult thing to supervise work underground. It is an easy thing to supervise 100 men who are working on the surface, but it is a very different proposition when one has to supervise the same number of men working in many different places at the same time. Therefore, it follows that as these complications come about, just as it is difficult to supervise the working of a mine itself so is it equally difficult to supervise it from the inspector's point of view. Another difficulty which faces the inspector also is the fact that the ground which would be safe at one hour of the



day might be a veritable death trap in an hour's time. A man might be satisfied that a mine or a particular part of the workings was perfectly safe and good, but in a short time he might hear that an accident had occurred there. In connection with the working of mines, there are certain parts of many mines which are extremely dangerous. With regard to some mines, it is quite a simple matter to make the ground secure. In other instances, however, it is almost an impossibility to secure the ground, even by timber. Therefore, we can see the necessity, not only of workmen themselves being continually on the alert, but that on account of the high pressure at which they are working, they require also the best supervision possible in order to make their workings safe. Now I come to the question of inspection. I am not one of those who would in any way attempt to belittle the work which has been done by mining inspectors, those whom I know on the goldfields. As has been pointed out they are men of the very highest qualifications. They are men who have had to pass examinations as prescribed by the Civil Service Act and regulations. They have to possess a knowledge of mining engineering, metallurgy, geology, and the various other matters connected with mining, also they have to possess a knowledge of surveying. For a thoroughly qualified inspector of mines this is absolutely necessary. I am not speaking here to advocate that the standard of mining inspectors should be lowered. That is not the intention of this measure at all. The intention of the Bill is not to lower the standard of mining inspectors, but to appoint another grade of inspectors, who will assist the district inspector. I know there are those who wish the regulations governing the appointment of inspectors to be altered so that the examination would not be so stringent. Whatever may be the merits of that class it does not enter into this, because under this measure the inspectors are on the same footing as heretofore, and this proposal is merely that they shall have additional assistance in the shape of workmen's inspectors. In regard to workmen's in-

spectors and their qualifications, I must take exception to what Mr. Connor said when he told us that they were unqualified, ignorant and irresponsible. He even inferred that they probably would not be able to read or write. There may be ignorant and irresponsible persons who are members of unions, but I wish to assure the hon. member that irresponsible persons are soon "tumbled to" by members of the unions; and, although there are ignorant and irresponsible persons amongst the working classes, after the statement we have had to-day I should say they are not confined to the working classes. Those who speak of the working classes in that tone must be careful themselves when they refer to their fellow men in such terms. I take strong exception to such reflections on the working men of this State. In regard to the manner in which they transact their business, I maintain that there is no body of men known to history who have conducted their affairs, from an industrial point of view, better than the unions on the Eastern goldfields. One has only to look at their record to realise that what I say is absolutely correct. During the course of a period of 20 years there has scarcely been any industrial trouble on the Eastern goldfields and what trouble there has been has been settled in a legitimate manner. I was one of a committee two years ago which for seven months carried on negotiations with the Chamber of Mines, and although at times feeling ran high we carried on these negotiations over this period of seven months in such a way that we eventually settled the difficulty. The fact that our demands were, to a certain extent, justified is shown when I say that, although we were not in a position to put any pressure on the Chamber of Mines, they, of their own accord, agreed to give the additional wages asked for and slightly better conditions. I do not know whether men who conducted negotiations for that length of time should be called ignorant and irresponsible but, whether or not, the fact remains they have never involved this community in any industrial trouble, and I wish to take this opportunity to defend

them against such a charge which is absolutely baseless and which, I maintain, has been made by irresponsible individuals. In connection with the powers of workmen's inspectors, this is a matter which seems to be troubling some hon. members. I have had a talk with the Minister for Mines and have referred to him the objection which some members have to giving the workmen's inspectors power to initiate proceedings. He pointed out that even to-day an inspector of mines cannot on his own initiative take proceedings but must first refer the matter to the Minister. Is not it reasonable to suppose that when this measure provides that workmen's inspectors shall be under district inspectors, they shall refer any matter involving prosecution to a district inspector? Is not it unreasonable to suppose that a workmen's inspector would, independently of the district inspector, take proceedings, where a district inspector, under the present Act, would not have the power to do so? Those who have fears on this score should realise that there is no ground for them. I wish it to be definitely understood, however, that it is not proposed to appoint workmen's inspectors to carry out certain works and then not to give them the power to do it. It would be useless to appoint them to carry out the regulations of the Mining Act unless they had some authority behind them. I have had a little experience of mining matters and if there is one man who is in a most unenviable position it is the man who is in a position to give orders but not to enforce them. We know perfectly well what view is taken of a man who goes round issuing instructions without having the power to enforce them. He is considered a joke, and rightly so. Therefore, in appointing these workmen's inspectors, it is absolutely necessary that they should have power to enable them to take the necessary action when the Act is being infringed. That action might consist of reporting to the district inspector, or writing a report in the book kept at the mine, but it must be understood that when the workmen's inspector

has cause to lay a complaint, regard must be paid to what he says. If we do not give them the power specified in the Bill, the appointment of workmen's inspectors will be useless. With regard to the question of harassing mine managers, for a number of years inspectors of mines have been appointed to interpret and enforce the Mines Regulation Act. In administering that Act, a measure of common sense has to be exercised, and I have heard of very few instances of complaint on the part of managers about the inspectors having been unduly harsh. Allowances must be made on both sides and it is only reasonable to suppose that if, in future, this policy is given effect to, the same good relations will continue as the same inspectors will be in charge. Reference has been made to the qualifications of these workmen's inspectors. The present inspectors of mines require special qualifications and have to pass an examination, which I maintain is necessary. Although this is a difficult examination from a technical point of view, they also have to have a practical knowledge of mining, so that the workmen's inspector will have a two-fold task, namely, one of a technical nature and at the same time involving a practical knowledge of mining. On the Eastern Goldfields there are four inspectors engaged and they are working at pretty high pressure. It is maintained that additional inspection is required, and I have not heard anything to the contrary. It may be asked, "Why not appoint additional inspectors?" but I contend a better method would be to appoint another grade of inspectors. Although certain technical knowledge is required by the district inspector for some of his work, it is not required for all the work and this is where the workmen's inspectors would come in. We can find many men in any mining district who have a thorough practical knowledge of mining; in fact there are working men who from a practical point of view are better miners than some of the inspectors of mines. I will not say all of them, because some of our inspectors are well qualified from a practical point of view,

but on the other hand some are not. We can find practical men who are just as good judges whether ground is safe or requires timbering, and who have just as much knowledge of the Mines Regulation Act, because many men study it, as the inspectors have. It does not need a man with a University education to be able to understand and administer the Mines Regulation Act. Therefore, the second grade of inspectors, such as it is proposed should be appointed, will be of very material assistance to the present inspectors. I was of this opinion and I spoke to some of our inspectors on the point. I will not mention names but I asked them whether, independently of any political bearing, the workmen's inspectors, from their point of view, would be of assistance, and in each instance the reply was that undoubtedly such would be the case. There is very much work which could be done by the workmen's inspectors and which would be of great assistance to the present inspectors and of great benefit to those engaged in the industry. Considering the reception which the Bill has so far received, I do not think it is necessary to say much more. Mr. McKenzie and Mr. Cornell have quoted statistics showing the increased number of serious accidents. This was necessary to fully state the case, though such figures make dry talking and dry reading. It is not necessary for me to repeat them, but I feel confident that after listening to those figures it must be borne home to all hon. members that something should be done to better the conditions of mining underground. It would be useless and in fact criminal to recognise the position and not to make some attempt to alleviate it. It might be claimed that the appointment of these inspectors would be to a certain extent an experiment. I know that members have a very great objection to any new idea; but this is not exactly a new idea and, considering the amount of thought which has been given to it and the fact that all the workers on the mines are of opinion that this will prove beneficial, members will be justified in supporting the measure. I

have been pleased at the manner in which the Bill has been received. I think members realise that, having the power to alter the existing conditions, that power entails a responsibility on them as legislators that they should recognise, and if possible institute legislation which has for its object the betterment of the health of any body of men engaged in any industry. I believe members will take this view. The workers have waited a long time, and I hope the House on this occasion will be willing to give them a measure of alleviation by the appointment of workmen's inspectors. It is not necessary to refer to the amendments forecasted by Mr. McKenzie because they can be dealt with in Committee, but I hope members will realise the seriousness of the position and will whole-heartedly co-operate with those who are endeavouring to bring about a betterment in the conditions of mining. As has been hinted, not only the agitators, or those who like myself are here to represent the Eastern Goldfields community, but many men have for a number of years, in fact almost from the inception of the goldfields, agitated continuously for better working conditions in the mines. These men have urged their advocacy in an honorary capacity and without any hope of reward and, if members at times do not take seriously those matters we advocate, it is due to those who have so consistently and insistently advocated better conditions for their fellow workmen, that justice should be done. I sincerely hope the Bill will be agreed to and that no amendment will be passed which will have for its object the taking away of the necessary power provided for the workmen's inspectors.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITFENOOM (North) [4.29]: I had intended to speak for at least a couple of hours on this Bill, but, after listening to the reasonable, fair-minded, and I might also say convincing speeches of hon members from the goldfields, Mr. Cornell and Mr. Millington, I have made up my mind to support the second reading of the Bill, with the proviso that I shall support a few necessary amendments in Committee. I need hardly

say that I have the fullest sympathy with the aspirations of those who have introduced this Bill with a desire to get better working conditions for the men employed in the mines. Everybody in the State, and certainly no one more than myself, recognises what Western Australia owes to mining, recognises what the State owes to the men associated with mines. Therefore I feel certain that any thing that can reasonably be done to mitigate or improve the working conditions of the miners will not be refused. I listened last night with a great deal of interest to the statistics and particulars which Mr. Cornell submitted in regard to accidents. Instead of being appalled, as one might be, I think that, considering the vast number of workers engaged in the mining industry, in which there is always an element of danger, the percentage of accidents is very small indeed. It was borne in on me when listening to those statistics that either the inspection of the mines must have been most capably carried out, or else that the management was of such a competent nature that every possible precaution almost was taken against accident, and hence the comparatively small percentage of accidents. While recognising that the percentage is a small one, still everyone must regret that there should be any deaths or accidents or cases of maiming. It behoves us, therefore, to take every precaution. I wish, however, to remind those speakers that in nearly all occupations and industries a certain amount of accident and loss of life must occur. Let us take the pearling industry. That is an industry fraught with danger. The diver takes on the element of risk every time he goes down. Again, take the timber industry. Everyone knows there is always danger from circular saws, split wood, and falling trees. Take even that much debated and popular pastime, horse-racing. When I see a jockey going out to ride a hurdle race I look upon him as taking almost as much risk as if he were going on the battle-field. For that reason I hate the sight of a hurdle race. When I have seen one of these unfortunate jockeys mounting a hurdle

racer, I have thought the man may come back with a broken back or a broken neck. I certainly think the element of danger in that calling is quite as great as in the mining industry. I am mentioning these matters merely to show that it is impossible to eliminate danger altogether from any industry. Take such a peaceful calling as that of the pastoralist. A venturesome young man mounts a buckjumper and gets thrown off, and breaks his neck, or perhaps his arm. Or he may get into a sulky and be run away with and smashed up. When the number of men engaged in mining is considered, I think we may congratulate ourselves that hitherto the losses and accidents have not been greater. With regard to certain remarks of Mr. Millington on the subject of inspectors, I understood the hon. member to say that he intended to support the Bill as it has been introduced. If he does that, then I think he will put the two classes of inspectors in a position where they would conflict. Whilst we are quite agreed that the workmen should have inspectors, we consider that the workmen's inspectors should not be placed in such a position as to conflict with the district inspectors, or with the mine managers. It must always be remembered that the manager of the mine is the direct representative of the party finding all the money. The workman finds the industry, but the owner of the mine finds the money, and he has to pay wages whether he makes profits or not. Therefore, the money being his, he ought to have something to say as to the way in which the mine shall be worked. On the other hand, it is to be presumed that all conditions must be of such a nature as to afford safe working to the miners. Although Clause 9 of the Bill provides that workmen's inspectors shall be under the authority and control of the district inspectors, I do not think that position is maintained by the succeeding clause. Clause 10 provides that these "inspectors shall have power to do all or any of the following things." The clause does not discriminate between the powers of workmen's inspectors and those of district inspectors. If I am wrong, perhaps the

Colonial Secretary will correct me, but it seems to me that the powers of one class of inspectors would be exactly the same as those of another class. Some of the powers provided may be described as extreme. The inspector may inspect the mine at any time, he may initiate and conduct prosecutions, obtain written statements from witnesses, and generally exercise whatever powers are necessary in order to carry the measure into effect. If the workmen's inspector is to exercise all these powers, he will be conflicting largely with the district inspector. My principle in this matter is that the Government are the right people to appoint inspectors. The inspectors should be appointed by a disinterested party, who would see that they have acquired the proper qualifications and have passed proper examinations. If it is found that there are not enough inspectors at present, the Government should appoint more. The Government, however, are the people absolutely responsible for seeing that there is sufficient and proper inspection and supervision. The Government are disinterested and able to view every side of the question without any party feeling. At the same time, as I said before, I sympathise with the aspirations and desires of the workers that they should have some direct representatives, and therefore I am quite in accord with the appointment of workmen's inspectors, provided they are not clothed with all the powers set forth in Clause 10. However, I will not enter into that matter now, because it can be dealt with in Committee. I am only too pleased to have listened to the debate, and I consider that the House is to be congratulated on the admirable manner in which the case has been placed from both sides. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS (Metropolitan) [4.40]: I did not intend to speak to-day, but I understand the Colonial Secretary wishes to conclude the debate, and I have no desire to impede the progress of the Bill. I may say at once that I intend to support the second reading.

I quite agree with hon. members who have spoken that the altered conditions of mining now prevailing on the eastern goldfields call for some alteration in the mining regulations. I am of opinion, also, that the system of workmen's inspectors is worth a trial. I have read with much interest the discussions at a congress of mining representatives held in England, at which the system of workmen's inspectors was strongly advocated. There is only one objection I have to raise on this point, and that is as to the method of appointment of workmen's inspectors. I am rather out of touch at present with what the proportion of unionists to non-unionists working in the mines may be, but I know that a very few years ago the proportions were nearly equal. If anything like the same position obtains at the present time, it would certainly not be right that the unions should have the sole power of appointing workmen's inspectors. Should there be a large number of non-unionists working on the mines, then certainly an amendment is required to give them a vote as to who shall be appointed. I should be glad if the leader of the House, in replying, would endeavour to furnish the statistics, which must be available, as to the relative proportions of unionists and non-unionists at present employed on the mines. Something has been said about the powers of workmen's inspectors. It is quite evident that it would not be right to give the workmen's inspector the same powers as the district inspector, because the former is not asked to be nearly as expert as the latter, and has not been called upon to pass the examinations which are essential in the case of a Government inspector. Although the underground experience gained by the workmen's inspector as a working miner will be of great value towards enabling him to protect the lives of the men, still he will not have that highly technical knowledge which a district inspector must possess. That being so, I think a good deal of complication and a good deal of strife might result from giving

the workmen's inspector the same powers as are conferred on a district inspector. It would be a very simple matter to provide an amendment ensuring that the workmen's inspectors shall be, as regards the carrying out of their duties, more completely under the control of the district inspectors. Everybody will agree—I think even those hon. members who have spoken strongly in favour of the appointment of workmen's inspectors from the workers' standpoint will agree—that it is absolutely impossible to carry on the working of a mine if there are to be two classes of inspectors both endeavouring to exercise the same authority. What the district inspector allows the mine manager to do, the workmen's inspector may refuse to allow the manager to do. Such a state of affairs cannot possibly be permitted to exist, and I would ask the leader of the House to see that some amendment is made in the Bill to prevent the clashing of the two sets of powers. With those two reservations, I heartily support the second reading. Anything that this House can do to lessen the number of fatal accidents, and otherwise to protect the men engaged in what is evidently a very dangerous industry at the present time, owing, as I say, to the altered conditions of working, I think every member of the House will only be too glad to do.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [4.44]: I am very pleased indeed at the nature of the reception given to this Bill by hon. members. It has been suggested that some amendments are necessary, but these can be dealt with in Committee, and it is not necessary for me to refer to them now. When I see them on the Notice Paper, I shall consult with the Minister for Mines on the subject. The information for which Mr. Jenkins has asked I will endeavour to obtain by Tuesday.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## BILL—SALE OF LIQUOR REGULATION.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 28th September.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.45]: In supporting the second reading of the Bill I ask myself is there any necessity for the measure? The necessity for it does not depend, as some seem to think, on the question of whether or not there is more drinking at the present time than in normal times. Very likely at present there is less drinking than in normal times, owing no doubt to the large number of young men who have left for the war, and also to the diminished spending power of those who remain behind. There may not be more drinking at present, although I certainly think that some six months ago, when I returned from England, there was more drinking than under normal conditions; but I am happy to say that during the winter months there has been, so far as I have been able to observe, a considerable diminution in the amount of drunkenness. But the necessity for the Bill does not depend on our showing that there is a greater amount of drinking now than formerly; the necessity depends on the need of husbanding the resources of the Empire and conserving our energies. We hear a good deal in these times about economic fallacies. I ask is there a greater economic fallacy than the liquor trade? It is true the liquor trade gives rise to a certain amount of employment; it uses up a certain amount of barley, hops and malt, and employs a certain amount of labour in the distribution of alcohol in its various forms. But I maintain that the utility of a trade or industry does not depend on the number of men employed in it, but upon the usefulness of the product. Judged by that standard, what is the measure of the utility of the liquor trade? The moderate consumption of alcohol is not, I believe, injurious. Speaking as one whose family includes four nonagenarians, all moderate drinkers, I can claim that the moderate consumption of alcohol is not

injurious, at any rate not to any extent. When we approach the question of excessive consumption of alcohol it assumes a different phase. The excessive consumption of alcohol occasionally produces over night a certain sense of exhilaration, and in the morning usually a severe headache. But a long continued excessive consumption of alcohol has other products. It produces the diseased, the lunatic and the pauper, and its by-products are vice and misery. Having dealt with the necessity, the question arises, is there any demand for this legislation. I think no one who has watched the success of the S to S movement can doubt there is a legitimate and widespread demand on the part of the thinking members of the community. And the S to S agitation was not confined by any means to the extreme temperance wing. Many people, including myself, who had never before been on a temperance platform, who did not claim to be teetotalers, supported the movement. We supported it because we realised the momentous crisis through which the Empire was passing. If hon. members wish for any further confirmation of the demand, I may point. I think, to my presence in this House. I took part in that S to S agitation at a time when I had absolutely no idea whatever of contesting a seat in this Chamber. But when the unfortunate vacancy occurred through the death of the late Mr. Gawler, and I determined to seek the suffrages of the electors, I found I was opposed tooth and nail by the liquor trade because of the attitude I had taken up on the S to S question, and during my campaign I emphasised this S to S question on every platform from which I spoke. Because I advocated that particular question and because the people recognised that my convictions were honest and sincere and determined—I believe it is because of that I have the honour of addressing you this afternoon. I do not think I can claim any special virtue in any other respect. Certainly I was an unknown factor to the electors, and perhaps that was one of the reasons why they returned me.

I must give a word of praise to the gentlemen who control the liquor interest, because, as I say, they opposed me tooth and nail. They gave me the opportunity of emphasising this question on every platform. And they did more; they sent numerous motor cars to carry the supporters of my rival candidates. They sent so many cars that they could not fill them with their own supporters, and they brought up mine; and it was owing to the numerous motor cars supplied by the other side that I had the honour of securing such a magnificent majority. Consequently I owe a debt of gratitude to the liquor trade, and I can assure them I bear them no malice. I agree with the principle of the curtailment of the hours of trade of hotels during the war, and I am sorry the Government did not boldly bring down a measure to curtail those hours, without any question of a referendum to the people. Thereby we would have avoided a considerable amount of delay in carrying out the necessary legislation. It seems to me the Government have abdicated, and no longer seek to control the ship of State. It reminds me of a scene I witnessed many years ago when, in my student days, I spent one of my vacations in the ancient town of Deal. There had been a tremendous storm overnight, and when we went out on the front in the morning, we saw a ship on the Goodwin Sands. The distressed-mariners, having given up all idea of bringing the ship into port, were clinging to the rigging expecting every minute that each successive wave would engulf them. The noble boatmen of Deal put out their lifeboat and saved those men. That, I fancy, is the service the Government expects us to do for them. At the beginning of this session the Government outlined three measures of social reform, non-party measures each. They were highly contentious, still they were non-party. The first was the question of the control of horse-racing. That they shelved to a select committee of both Houses. That committee for the last six weeks seems to have been wandering and getting lost in a maze. When we have caught an occasional glimpse of them, they

were carrying in their arms what has been variously described by some as a mouse and by others as a half-starved kitten. Then there is the Health Bill, another of the non-party but highly contentious measures. Here they have adopted another plan. They have taken their courage in both hands and committed the Bill to a Captain Courageous; and he appears armed, not as one would expect with a lancet or a hypodermic syringe, but he carries a bludgeon and waves a banner on which is inscribed "The valour of Ignorance." I was going to say that the words are by Homer Lea. But the word Homer has a classical sound, and the Honorary Minister, I understand, has a great contempt for classics. Then we come to the measure now before us. The Government seem to have adopted on this an attitude different from that taken up on the other Bills. They have neither given it to a select committee, nor to a Captain Courageous, but have taken shelter behind the hedge of a referendum. I fancy this proposition must have come from the Attorney General, and I can almost imagine I hear him declaiming "Trust the people. Have a referendum. Let the people express their opinion on this." You know that style of his, a style that has been expressed by a certain gentleman as "flamboyant flapdoodle." I do not know whether the language is strictly Parliamentary. I hardly know what it means, but somehow it expresses the style of oratory to which we are accustomed. As regards the measure before us, I begin to imagine I am in the same position as my colleague Mr. Sander-son, that I am on the horns of a dilemma, and I think of appealing to hon. members to get me out of a difficulty and advise me on which side to come down. I took part in the 8 to 8 movement, and on that occasion I made a mild suggestion that perhaps 9 o'clock would be a good hour for the closing of hotels. Consequently I must agree with Mr. Colebatch in his suggested 9 o'clock. Then again I am in this position: In another place this Bill has been passed, and it has been passed having reference to a referendum of the

people. Now, if I support the proposals of Mr. Colebatch and advocate 9 to 9, and this Bill should be passed in that form here, throwing out the principle of the referendum; and if it goes back to another place in that form and that other place insists on the principle of the referendum, then I can imagine a very pretty game of battledore and shuttle-cock between this House and another place. And I am quite sure what the motive power will be that will be driving that ball hither and thither. The voice may be the voice of Jacob, the hand may be the hand of Esau, but the guiding hand will be the liquor trade. And, if presently the official time-keeper may call time, just when the game is most interesting, when the score is vantage all, and instead of the Bill passing in any shape we may find that it is dropped. If Mr. Colebatch—who I am sorry to say is not here—can give me an assurance that if this House adopts the 9 o'clock to 9 o'clock suggestion, which seems to me a very reasonable compromise, if he can give an assurance that the 9 o'clock to 9 o'clock, if passed by this House, will become law and that the little game of battledore and shuttle-cock will not be played, I feel inclined to support him. But, if on the other hand he can give me no assurance of that kind, I shall support the Bill as it comes to us with minor alterations which I hope will be carried, particularly that one by the hon. Mr. Cullen, to have the lowest hour put as 8—to strike out the hours of 6 and 7 and put 8 o'clock as the lowest hour on which the people shall take a referendum. If Mr. Colebatch cannot give me that assurance I shall support the referendum with amendments. This Bill has succeeded in getting through another place in the form which it comes to us, and as one who has laboured pretty earnestly, and certainly with conviction, in the earlier reduction of hours during the war, having seen the Bill has escaped the dangers of Scylla in another place, I do not wish to see it shipwrecked on the rocks of Charybdis in this Chamber.

On motion by Hon. V. Hamersley, debate adjourned.



## BILL—MARRIAGE ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

Hon. W. PATRICK (Central) [5.4] in moving the second reading said: This is a small Bill to remedy a condition of things which I think every member of this Chamber will agree is unjust. We all know under the present law it is legal to marry a deceased wife's sister. The object of this Bill is to so amend the law that a woman and a deceased husband's brother may be allowed to marry. There have been several cases in Western Australia where a man has desired to marry the widow of his deceased brother. They have wished to enter into the holy condition of marriage but have found that although it is quite legal to marry a deceased wife's sister, it is illegal to enter into this other relationship which practically is the same thing. Two persons so related can get over the difficulty by going to New Zealand, and in a couple of cases the parties have gone to New Zealand and have married, and when they have come back to Western Australia their marriage is acknowledged as legal. To go to New Zealand costs something like £80, which is a great hardship and in many cases a couple are not able to raise this sum of money. I do not think it is necessary for me to say anything further on the question. The whole thing is so simple and it is such a plain act of justice that I have no hesitation in moving the second reading. The Bill was carried on the motion of Mr. Thomson in another place without any debate. There are three clauses in the Bill. The first is—

This Act may be cited as the Marriage Act Amendment Act, 1915.

Clause 2 says—

The following section is hereby inserted in the Marriage Act, 1894 (hereinafter called the principal Act), after section thirty-two thereof, that is to say:—32A. No marriage heretofore or hereafter contracted between a woman and her deceased husband's brother shall be deemed to have been or shall

be void or voidable by reason only of such affinity: Provided that (a) if any such marriage shall have been heretofore annulled by lawful decree or if either party thereto shall heretofore (after the marriage and during the life of the other) have lawfully married another, then such marriage shall be deemed to have become and to be void upon and after the date of the decree or the subsequent marriage.

The meaning of the proviso is, that supposing any man and woman had been married under the impression that the marriage would be legal and afterwards found that it was illegal and entered into a new marriage which would have been legal under the law here, then in that case the second marriage would be declared legal under this Bill. The clause goes on to say—

(b) this section shall not deprive or be held to have deprived any person of any property or right heretofore lawfully vested in him; (c) no will shall be deemed to be or to have been revoked by reason of any marriage heretofore contracted as aforesaid being validated by this section.

Clause 3 is as follows:—

Section thirty-three of the principal Act is hereby amended by the insertion, after the words "deceased wife," of the words "or between a widow and the brother of her deceased husband."

I move—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

On motion by the Colonial Secretary debate adjourned.

## BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [5.9] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to amend the Industries Assistance Act passed last year providing the necessary legislation to enable the Government to assist settlers and other persons affected by drought or other adverse conditions

by supplying seed wheat, fertilisers, implements, machinery, live stock, and in some cases the necessaries of life. Some four or five months prior to the passing of the Act, owing to the serious condition of settlers on account of the crop failure, the Government were called upon to provide stores and implements in preparation for the present harvest. I have a few particulars in regard to the work done by the board and the money expended by the Government and I intend to give them for the information of members. The approximate expenditure in assistance is £720,000; seed wheat supplied amounts to 387,300 bushels; 14,000 tons of fertilisers have been distributed, which on the basis of 56lbs. to the acre, represents 550,000 acres under crop as a result of the assistance granted by the board. Fodder supplied totals an approximate value of £252,000; stores, £85,000; machinery, £6,700 for the putting in of crop.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Who are the members of the board?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Camm, Mr. Oliphant, and originally Mr. Sutton. I think Mr. Morris has been substituted for Mr. Sutton. The board is guaranteeing payment for oils, twine and corn sacks and the first instalment on machinery on the 1st February next. This will account for approximately £150,000; but it is hoped that much of the money will be in the hands of the board before they have to meet those guarantees, which are a preferential charge on the crops. During the year advances have been made to cover maternity cases, medical expenses, insurance premiums, veterinary fees and dental charges. There was no provision in the original Act enabling the Government to render aid in these directions but they came to the conclusion that such was needed. It is proposed to amend the principal Act in a few directions. In Clause 2, the first amendment is made to Section 9 of the principal Act, and its effect is to add to the objects in respect of which advances may be made, as I have already stated, veterinary charges,

wages of farm hands, insurance premiums and medical, surgical and dental expenses. The clause also provides an amendment extending the operation of the principal Act for one year by the substitution of 1917 for 1916 in the proviso at the end of Section 9. The amendment in Clause 3 is consequential on the amendment I have already referred to and provides merely for the insertion in Section 12 of the same words as are proposed by the previous clause to be inserted in Section 9. Clause 4 provides that in cases where advances have been made only for the purpose of enabling an applicant to pay land rents or make other payments due under statute to the Government, the Colonial Treasurer shall have discretionary power in all such cases to exempt from the operation of his security the crops and chattels of the applicant; in other words, to restrict the lien to the property itself leaving out the goods and chattels and anything in that line. In the same clause an important amendment is suggested relative to the nature of the lien taken by the Colonial Secretary. Under Section 15 of the principal Act, if a mortgagee objected to a preferential lien to the Government, the Treasurer was authorised to accept alternatively a second mortgage over the property or a bill of sale over the crop, for the next ensuing and the succeeding year. Under this amendment, it is proposed that the lien shall be in the form of a second mortgage over the property, and a first charge on the crops of the next three succeeding years. Clause 5 deals with the provision in the principal Act for the disposal of any surplus, and provides that the Treasurer may, in the discretion accorded him, exclude considerations of any assignment or encumbrance on a crop, except assignments for the benefit of creditors which were made before the Treasurer had made an advance under the Act. It is also proposed in the same clause that the Treasurer shall be entitled to retain a commission at the rate of  $1\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. to recoup him for service rendered in the disposition of the

surplus. Under Clause 6 it is sought to define the status of a purchaser and sub-purchaser under Section 23 of the principal Act—which provides for relief to farmers—so as to include every person subsequently dealing in the wheat in respect of which the claim for relief is made. A further amendment is suggested by the insertion after the word "Section," in line 6 of Section 23 of the principal Act, of the words "And such relief may be claimed notwithstanding that the relief granted under Section 4 may have been granted after the date appointed for the performance of the contract of sale made by them." This is one of the amendments which experience has proved to be necessary in order to safeguard the rights of parties to the transaction. A further amendment under Clause 6 entitles an agent who contracts on behalf of a principal to release similarly with the principal in the transaction. Clause 7 provides that a caveat lodged under this measure shall have the effect of a registered acknowledgment and contract. Clause 8 represents a consequential amendment of the First Schedule, substituting the 1914-15 season for the 1913-14. By Clause 9 the Treasurer is empowered to insure against loss or damage by fire any crops in respect of which advances are made under the Act, and the clause also provides that applicants shall effect insurance of workers under the Workers' Compensation and Employers' Liability Acts, and at common law. In the event of default to do so by the applicant, the Treasurer may himself effect the insurance. Under Clause 10, the purchase money from sales of crops is to be paid to the Treasurer. The owner of a crop may sell it, but the proceeds must be handed to the Treasurer. Clause 11 proposes that as from the 15th April of this year every conditional lessee in arrears with rent shall pay interest thereon at the rate of six per cent. If, however, an application shall have been made by a lessee to the board for an advance with which to pay arrears of rent, and if such application has been refused, then the liability of the lessee to pay interest under this clause will cease. These,

briefly, are the provisions of the measure, and I move—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter debate adjourned

## BILL — VERMIN BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [5.19] in moving the second reading said: Last year a Bill to amend the Vermin Boards Act came up for consideration in this House, but it was so altered by the Council that the Government were unable to accept the measure as amended, and consequently it was dropped. The amendment made by this Chamber was in the direction of an interference with the power of rating, as set forth in the principal Act. Under that Act power was given to rate up to the extent of 2s. per hundred acres. An amendment moved and carried in this Chamber altered the figure "2" to "1," so reducing the power of rating by 50 per cent. After thoroughly considering the matter, the Government found themselves unable to accept the amendment, and the Bill went by the board. It will be necessary for me to go over some of the ground I traversed when introducing the previous Bill, although this measure is not comprehensive. This is to a large extent simply a validating Bill. In 1908 a deputation of Gascoyne pastoralists waited upon the then Premier, Sir Newton Moore, and pointed out that there was great danger of a rabbit invasion in their district, and that they required some assistance from the Government to enable them to erect a fence with a view of stemming the invasion. Sir Newton Moore promised that action would be taken, and in accordance with his pledge a Bill was introduced during 1909, making provision for the establishment of vermin boards throughout the State. When the measure had become law, the Gascoyne vermin board were constituted under its provisions. The board approached the Government for a loan. A

loan was granted, and the board obtained advances of approximately £66,000. With that money they erected a fence 327 miles in length. Of the principal they have repaid £3,989, and they have contributed £9,869 in interest. That, however, was in the early stages. They agreed to pay 5 per cent. interest and to repay the principal in half-yearly instalments extending over 20 years. Misfortune came upon the Gascoyne pastoralists. There were several years of drought, and many of the pastoralists were unable to pay their rates. Owing to the pastoralists' inability to pay rates, the board in their turn were unable to meet their liabilities to the Government; and now there is approximately £10,000 owing in the shape of arrears. The board have been in existence for about six years, and, in view of the disastrous drought which has prevailed in the district, it is not at all surprising that they were unable to finance a large transaction of this kind. Last year Mr. Bath, who was then Minister for Lands, was approached by the board with a request for some consideration, and eventually Mr. Bath decided to extend the time for repayment of the principal from 20 years to 30 years. That concession, however, had very little result of a desirable character. The pastoralists continued to fall into arrears, and the board got into very serious financial difficulties, which it is not necessary for me to detail. They had no money to carry on, and ultimately the fence was abandoned. In the principal Act, as I have stated, power was given to strike a rate at a figure not exceeding 2s. per 100 acres. The board, who were appointed by the pastoralists themselves, decided to avail themselves of the maximum rate of 2s. It was the board who decided that that should be the rate for the Gascoyne vermin district. When the Bill was before the Council last session, there was an attempt, as I have said, to reduce the maximum rate to 1s. per 100 acres. The Government refusing to accept the amendment, the Bill was dropped; and the effect of it all is that the country stands to lose something like £70,000 unless this validating measure is agreed to. Since last year's Bill

was before the House, the board has been abolished by the Government. The Crown Law Department discovered that the Executive Council minute framed in connection with the creation of the Gascoyne vermin district was not in accordance with the Act. Under the Act power was given to declare any roads district a vermin district. It so happens that the boundaries of the Gascoyne vermin district include more than one roads board district, and consequently there was no power to do what the Government of the day attempted to do by Executive Council minute. In consequence of this difficulty, it is impossible, we are advised, for the Government to collect rates until legislative sanction is secured to a validating measure of this kind.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Do you mean that it is impossible to sue for rates?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes. Besides, during the administration of the vermin board, the Act was not fully complied with. But all these technical irregularities are rectified by the Bill. I hope the House will pass the measure. The money was lent to the board by the Government and it is honestly due by the Gascoyne pastoralists.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Since the Government abolished the board, has a new rate been struck?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It would be useless to strike a new rate.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I only wanted to know whether it had been done or not.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know whether it has been attempted, but to do it would be impossible. Hon. members will realise, I think, that the country should not be the loser of this large sum of money. The pastoralists themselves say that they are willing to pay. They do not repudiate their liabilities, but at the same time we have no guarantee that the whole of the pastoralists will meet their liabilities. There may be some who would raise objection, and it would be unfair if a number of the pastoralists come in and pay the rates

while others endeavour to stand out and evade their obligations. I move—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

On motion by Hon. Sir E. H. Witenoom, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 5.28 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Thursday, 30th September, 1915.*

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

### PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Mines: Return showing the position of the audit of the accounts of the State trading concerns under the Government Trading Concerns Act as on the 25th inst.

### QUESTION—POLICE DEPARTMENT MOTOR CARS.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Premier: 1, How many motor cars (if any) were used solely by the Police Department prior to the present Commissioner taking office? 2, The number in use since the present Commissioner was appointed? 3, The approximate cost per annum for the upkeep of such cars? 4, Are such cars used for other than official business?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Premier) replied: 1, One "Ford" car, obsolete pattern, unsuitable for heavy work or for roads outside of the metropolitan area. 2, One up to 14/9/14, after which a new car was purchased and the old one laid up for several months. 3, For a period of five years commencing 14/9/10, the average cost of the "Ford" was £153 17s. 7d. per annum, or 4.2d. per mile. Total mileage run during five years 44,000. The cost of the new "Talbot" car for the 12 months ending 14/9/15 is £186 17s. 11d., or an average of 2.9d. per mile (15,500 miles). As a set off against the above, there are stores, spare parts, and tools on hand to the value of about £80. 4, The "Talbot" car was let on two occasions for a patriotic purpose—once to convey workmen to Blackboy Hill to assist in completing the Y.M.C.A. buildings, and on another occasion to take out wounded soldiers.

### QUESTIONS (2)—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE BOARD.

#### *Insurance of Crops.*

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is it true that whilst the Industries Assistance Board insists on all crop in which it is interested being insured against fire, it refuses to give assistance for similar protection against hail? 2, Is he aware that during the past four years in the Great Southern districts the losses from hail storms have been somewhat severe, whilst losses from fire have been comparatively light? 3, Will he instruct the board to grant assistance for insurance against hail in those cases where the settlers from their local knowledge consider such insurance necessary in the mutual interests of the settler and the board. If not, why not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, It is left to the absolute discretion of the farmer to do his own insurance, but he must exercise this right by the 15th October. If he elects to insure against fire and hail the Industries Assistance Board will guarantee premiums, but it is impossible for the board to in-