

Committee Resumed.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Preamble:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That in line 21 after the word "reference" the words "unless prior thereto revoked under the power contained herein" be inserted.

These words were apparently inadvertently omitted when the Bill was drafted. What was resolved on was that the reference should be determined at any moment under Clause 3, and in any event was to come to an end on the expiration of five years after Australia had ceased to be engaged in hostilities. The amendment clarifies that by making it clear that if it is not some matter agreed on and not within the arrangement finally arrived at we shall have power to repeal.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 2nd March, 1943.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—SWAN VIEW TUNNEL.

As to Deviation of Line, Etc.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Has a survey for a duplication of the railway line ever been made around the Swan View tunnel? 2, What is the estimated cost of such a line? 3, In view of the shortage of manpower, has the Government considered having this work done by military engineers and personnel? 4, Has an estimate been made as to the saving in railway working costs if the bottleneck at the tunnel was done away with? 5, What is the estimated yearly saving? 6, What was the total cost to the Government incurred by the smash at Swan View last November?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, Yes. 2, £150,000. 3, Yes. This work would require the approval of the Allied War Council. At the present time there are works of probably greater defence value which cannot be carried out owing to lack of manpower. 4, No, but a rough estimate would be an annual saving in working of approximately £5,000. This would not cover interest on cost of the deviation, estimated at £6,000 per annum. 5, Nil, when interest is taken into consideration. 6, Approximately £8,500.

BILL—BUSINESS NAMES.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Council's amendments.

BILL—PUBLIC AUTHORITIES (RETIREMENT OF MEMBERS).

In Committee.

Hon. H. Seddon in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Retirement of certain councillors:

The HONORARY MINISTER: Four consequential amendments are required in Subclause (2) to rectify omissions from the Bill as amended in Committee in another place.

On motions by the Honorary Minister, clause amended by inserting in Subclause (2) the word "mayors" before the word "councillors" in line 5; by inserting the words "and auditors" after the word "councillors" in line 5; by inserting the word "mayors" before the word "councillors" in line 16, and by inserting the words "and auditors" after the word "councillors" in line 16.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—COAL MINE WORKERS (PENSIONS).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 24th February.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Metropolitan-Suburban) [2.27]: Originally I had no intention of speaking on this Bill, but after hearing some of the speeches delivered I felt

it would be wrong not to express my views on the subject. So far as my knowledge goes, the coalminers of Western Australia are as good workers as are to be found anywhere, and there is no question about their being as loyal as any other British subjects. I have nothing against the coalminers of Western Australia in any shape or form, and I do not think anyone else has. By virtue of some of the speeches that have been made, one would think that any member opposing the Bill was against the miners. I am not against the miners. In the mining industry the unions look after their people, and the companies look after their own interests, and the Industrial Arbitration Court looks after the public.

It is suggested that anyone opposing the Bill is conservative. If I come under that heading, it may be that I was at an impressionable age—about the year 1904, when abolition of pensions was one of Labour's main planks. Now I have changed, and no longer believe in the abolition of all pensions. On the contrary, I believe in everyone having the right to a pension; but I do not believe in class legislation. I believe in legislation for the whole. We have heard all sorts of stories concerning the dreadful conditions, the shocking conditions that pertain to coalmines. I venture to say that whatever the conditions are, they have never been minimised when they came before the Arbitration Court; so that I feel sure the Arbitration Court has given full weight to all conditions existing in the industry both above and below ground.

Moreover, coalminers need not be coalminers unless they like. They are not forced to be coalminers. I personally, if I had my life again, certainly would not be a coalminer; and I have not the slightest doubt that Mr. Moore, if he had his chance again, would not be a lawyer. It is clear, therefore, that we all have our own ideas, and that we all appreciate the unfortunate conditions that pertain in another industry. I for one think it is a dreadful life to sit on some farming machinery when harvesting is going on, with the wind in various directions. How those farm labourers exist in that dust, I do not know. I imagine that it is difficult to get all the dust that Mr. Moore spoke of in connection with coalmining when working up to one's knees in water.

Hon. T. Moore: Who said that?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: So far as the Bill is concerned, that is entirely by the way.

Hon. T. Moore: It was never said here.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I felt quite sure that the hon. member did not know what he was saying. However, it does not matter two straws what the conditions in coalmining are. We know from this Bill that the conditions are healthy, because the object of the measure is to stop men of 60 years of age who want to continue working in coal mines. Thus we know that it is quite feasible to work in this industry after reaching the age of 60 years. The passage of the Bill, however, would stop them from doing so. That circumstance in itself speaks for coalmining conditions far more ably than I can. But why take one lot of workers for this proposed indulgence?

Hon. C. B. Williams: Do you think any other class of work compares with coalmining?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If the hon. member will wait a little while, he will not want to interject after I have brought a few matters to his attention.

Hon. C. B. Williams: How about hotel-keepers in the North-West charging 3s. 6d. for a bottle of beer?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I thought Mr. Williams was fully aware that there are many occupations, such as discharging sulphur out of ships on the wharf.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is not to be compared with mining.

Hon. G. Fraser: It is only temporary work.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: This Bill is for men who work only 60 days a year. I call them casual workers. All the arguments so far, to my mind, are entirely misconceived, because they are based on the unfortunate conditions in which coalminers work. We are entitled to our respective opinions; but I am sure there are a great many other occupations besides coalmining in Western Australia that are worse or as bad—or as good, whichever way one likes to look at it.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Tell us one occupation to compare with mining!

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: All these conditions have already been pointed out in the Arbitration Court, and wages have been fixed accordingly. The Arbitration Court takes into consideration existing conditions of all trades, and works out, as far as humanly possible, an equal distribution of wealth in the way of wages. I cannot see why the coalminers should be

specially selected when there are other industries which are—let me put it this way—such as I would not care to work in.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Outside of coal-mining what are they?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. C. B. Williams: You ask him, Sir. I do not want to.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: There are many points about this Bill to which I would like to draw attention. One is that under this scheme miners will be paid £2 per week. We are told that the State is very hard up, yet the Government quietly comes along and asks us to pay £2 per week, and so save the Commonwealth Government from paying the old age pension.

Hon. C. B. Williams: There is something in that.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I cannot understand why that is being done. The City Council has a superannuation scheme so devised that a man gets the pension from the Commonwealth plus 10s. a week. In this Bill, for some unknown reason, the Government says, "We will save the Commonwealth the money and pay these men £2 per week." I think that is wrong. Again, at the present time it is quite unsound to say that no man shall work in a coalmine after he is 60 years of age. We need the manpower. Of course it is said this Bill will not be proclaimed until later on. Very well, let us bring the Bill in later on when we know what the new conditions will be. In the course of a few days we shall be asked to hand over this particular class of legislation to the Commonwealth. It certainly seems to me that the payment of pensions, whether it be from the Commonwealth or the State, should be by and large and not for one section of the community. Why should clerks be left out? Why should they not be under a pension scheme? They are essential, but they are specially eliminated.

Hon. L. Craig: Only temporarily.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: They are eliminated at the present time.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Surely they could work on after 60 years of age when miners would be unable to! Pushing a pen is not very hard work.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It may be that they can work at 60 or they cannot. What I am saying is: Why stop them if they want

to work? There are many excellent first-class workers who are 60 years of age.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Not in the mines.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: This Bill does not apply purely to underground workers, and that is where there seems to me to be some ground for misunderstanding. Arguments are put forward in respect of men working at the face. The others are only incidental.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Why penalise the men at the face for the surface men?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I do not want to penalise anybody. I want to bring in everybody.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is the way it should be.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: This is the most remarkable Bill I have ever seen. We are asked to grant pensions but we are not given any actuarial statement or report. We know of the number of schemes that have failed in Western Australia because they were not started on a proper basis, such as the Police Benefit Fund, which was a contributory benefit fund. There is no actuarial statement in regard to this Bill at all. If members study it they will see that it says the Government liability is limited to a certain amount and that the mines can put up the price of coal only 2d. per ton, which means that the railways will pay. That, in turn, means that the Government—that is to say, the people—will pay that 2d. per ton.

Hon. G. B. Wood: The farmers.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The farmers and the goldminers will all pay that 2d. a ton. But if a mine fails and goes into liquidation, what becomes of the unfortunate miner on a pension? He gets nothing at all. The provision is that at the beginning of each year the tribunal fixes the contributions, including a reserve. If the company goes into liquidation who will pay the contributions and the reserve? Who will find the money? Incidentally, the Government fixes what the amount of the reserve will be. Consequently the Government can send the company into liquidation with a flick of the fingers, because it can fix the reserve at such a figure that the company cannot continue. Again, the Bill provides that a mine-worker is a man who has worked for 60 days a year over five years. Let us put it another way: A man has only to work 300 days for a period of five years.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What does he have to work today under the Workers' Compensation Act to establish his claim under the Third Schedule?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. C. B. Williams: I am only asking a pertinent question.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I must ask the hon. member to keep order.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I am very sorry, Sir, but he must speak the truth.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member must keep order.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I assure you I will, Sir.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Bill provides that a mine-worker can be a person who works for 60 days a year over the preceding five years; that is to say, 300 days in five years. He might work the 300 days in the last year or in the first of those five years, and he is then entitled to a pension. A man is entitled to a pension of £2 a week if he works for 60 days in each of the five years previous. Let us assume that a man works nine weeks and that the basic wage is £5 a week. That means that he has only to earn £45 for each of the previous years and it entitles him to £104 a year for the rest of his life.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Under the Workers' Compensation Act how long has he to work to obtain benefits under the Third Schedule?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The hon. member—

Hon. C. B. Williams: I quite understand.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: — is again confused in his mind.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Not a bit.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: This has nothing to do with injuries. This is a pensions scheme, which is quite apart from workers' compensation.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Have it your own way!

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The extraordinary state of affairs is that a man has only to work for nine weeks each year at the basic wage to become entitled to a pension. Let us assume that a man receives more than a basic wage of £5 per week for working in a coalmine. If he does, it supports what I have been saying that the Arbitration Court has taken into consideration the conditions under which he works. Suppose he receives £7 per week. That is £63

a year for working nine weeks. But the pension is £2 a week for the rest of his life; that is to say, £104 per year. That is a most extraordinary state of affairs.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Under the Third Schedule he gets a sum of £750, plus annual payments.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am afraid the hon. member does not understand the difference between the two principles.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member must allow Mr. Parker to proceed.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It would be a feather in my cap if I could stop him.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member will have an opportunity to reply to what Mr. Parker has said, but not in the form of interjections.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am not being offensive to the hon. member, but would like him to appreciate that we are discussing a pensions scheme. It is not a scheme for the compensation of a widow as a result of the husband's death, nor is it a question of compensating a man who is under 60 years of age and has had to stop work. This is a case of men who are over 60 and are retired from work, and who will receive more money after reaching that age when they are not allowed to work than they received before—if they retired before the age of 60. Of course the State will have to pay for this. Who but the State will have to pay the pensions if the mines go into liquidation?

Hon. G. B. Wood: How do you make out that a man will get more after reaching 60 than he did before.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is a lawyer's interpretation.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: In view of what I have said, I am bound to vote against the Bill.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East): I had no intention of speaking to this measure because I have not yet had full opportunity to see what it contains. I have, however, listened to the speeches that have been made on the subject. A most peculiar situation arises. Some members have gone out 100 per cent. in favour of this scheme—for which I can see no warranty—to give one favoured section of the community pensions after retirement from the coalmining industry. That would create a precedent that will undoubtedly have a rebounding effect. Members have indulged in heroics over this question at a time when such a matter should

not have arisen. Goodness knows what we shall have to face in the future. This is no time to indulge in such matters. How do we know what the position will be at the end of the war? Let us hope the outlook will be brighter than it is at present. Our industrial laws are sympathetic towards our workers in industry. The Parliament of this State has been very good to its workers. Is there one member of Parliament or one member of the community who is sanguine enough to think we are going to continue on the present basis when the war is over? I certainly hope we can, but do not think we shall.

This is far too important a time to be indulging in discussions on a Bill of this nature. There are several questions connected with this measure that will have to be satisfactorily answered before I either accept it or vote for its rejection. Firstly, are the employees of the industry so adversely treated under existing industrial conditions and rates of pay as to be more deserving of special consideration in the shape of pensions when their position is compared with that of employees in other branches of private industry in the State? Secondly, would the granting of pensions to the coalminers result in increased production of coal, and in greater efficiency in the industry with respect to war production of coal? Thirdly, does appeasement ever pay, or does it merely whet the appetite for more?

Hon. C. B. Williams: It never paid in the case of the farmers.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: As to the first question, I would cite a few instances in connection with the coalmining industry. I have set out the rates of pay of various representative employers in the industry. It must be remembered that the number of hours of shifts in the industry are seven, and that on pay Saturdays the employees are paid seven hours' earnings for five hours' work. It must be remembered, also, that for most of the employees in the industry the shift of seven hours is a bank to bank shift, and that of the effective working period, after allowing the time required to get to the scene of the work, and crib time, only a period of 5½ hours is left of the seven hours' shift that is effectively used for the production of coal. The average earnings of a coalminer during the seven hours shift vary from 30s. to 34s. per shift. If a coalminer fails to earn sufficient on

piecework he is guaranteed a minimum of 23s. per shift. A shift-man used on odd jobs in the mines, and occasionally engaged in coal getting, is paid a fixed sum of 23s. 5d. per shift. The average earnings of a wheeler, who is usually a young man of 25 years of age, and is also paid under piecework conditions, are 23s. to 26s. per shift, and he is guaranteed a minimum of 21s. 4d.

The unclassified worker working underground is paid 21s. 10d. per shift, while the surface labourer receives 20s. 3d. per shift. All these workers receive in addition a war loading of 6s. per week. As compared with these workers, and the earning of workers under piecework conditions, in particular, I would refer to the amount paid to the deputy, who is the coalminers' superior, and whose hours of work are not limited by the seven-hour bank to bank principle. That deputy is paid £1 5s. 8d. per shift; whilst the under-manager, who is liable to be called on without overtime payment, and receives no war bonus of 6s. per week, is paid £8 8s. 1d. per week. Many of the miners earn more than do these superiors. Naturally it is becoming increasingly difficult in the industry to induce men to take an advanced staff position, seeing that they can earn more money per week without having to carry any responsibility.

Let me take the few other industries in which no war bonus is paid. There is the engineering trade in the South-West Division of this State. A fitter and turner, who is recognised as a key worker in the industry, receives £6 7s. 6d. per week. He works for an eight-hour effective day at less than 24s. per shift, compared with the miners' 5½-hour effective day. In the case of timber workers, a locomotive enginedriver works for eight hours a day and receives £1 2s. 6d. for hauling logs, whilst he receives only about £1 per shift if he is operating a stationary engine. A benchman, upon whom the output of timber mainly depends, receives £6 5s. 7d. per week, or about £1 per shift of eight hours. A faller employed on bush work averages, according to the bush in which he is working, from £6 5s. to £7 2s. per week, and a tailer-out receives only £5 5s. 7d. per week. None of these workers receives any war loading or additional industrial allowance. If the coalminers, who in many instances receive more than does their manager, are entitled to pensions, are not these other employees still more entitled

to such benefits, more especially as they receive no war loading of 6s. per week?

How is the pensions scheme going to lead to an increased production of coal? The figures I have cited are unanswerable. I am no stranger to Collie. I have always looked upon that town as having three industries. The first and most important is the public house industry. The second and almost equally important is the starting-price betting industry. One has only to go to Collie to see the magnitude of that industry in which enormous sums of money change hands. Surely that is a luxury! Think of the money that could be saved in that direction alone, and yet the miners are asking for pensions when they reach the age of 60. The third industry is that of coalmining, from which the men obtain their living.

I should like to supply a few figures, which Mr. Moore asked for, dealing with the question whether the men are hewing less coal today than they did before. The miner hews the coal. The question of whether too many other employees are used is a red herring when associated with the figures of what tonnage of coal per shift is produced by the miner. If more off-hand labour is employed for each miner, this should increase to some extent the production of the miner at the face. It could not under any conceivable circumstances reduce his production at the face. Let us see what has been the experience over the last two years. Differing periods have been taken for different mines and have been brought up to the end of December last. In fairness to the Co-operative mine, it must be explained that there is a stone band near the centre of the seam varying in thickness from 6 ins. to 1 ft. 3 ins. This stone has to be discarded before the skip is filled for transport of the coal to the surface. That to some extent explains the lower tonnage of coal from the face in that mine compared with what happens in other mines. In April, 1942, the employees at this mine were lowered to their work in mine conveyances, and did not have to walk either to or from the scene of their operations. Theoretically as from April last their output should have exceeded per shift their production prior to the change. In the tables I propose to give, members will see that it has not had this effect. Neither has it had this effect in another mine where the employees were lowered by the management—the Cardiff mine.

These figures were taken at various periods and the last two sets were those for the period subsequent to the employees being lowered to the scene of their work by the management and subsequently raised to the surface at the Co-operative and Cardiff mines. The last four are for the period ended December, 1940, when the Co-operative miners ceased hand-boring and had this work done by machinemen. The figures disclose that there has been, if anything, a lowering of the production per miner per shift in all the mines of Amalgamated Collieries, Ltd. Any increase in the total production is due to the employment of more men in the industry and not to the efforts of the individual miners. The tonnages produced per miner per shift for the 12 months ended January, 1934, were—

Co-operative	..	..	..	6.625
Proprietary	..	..	..	9.617
Cardiff	..	..	..	10.972
Stockton	..	..	..	10.797

August, 1935, period 12 months—

Co-operative	..	..	..	7.254
Proprietary	..	..	..	9.074
Cardiff	..	..	..	9.838
Stockton	..	..	..	9.836

I do not want members to think that I am taking figures for periods to suit my argument. That is not so. These checks and trials are taken out when there is reason for so doing; it was necessary to have these particular records, but they are not taken continuously.

May, 1937, period six months—

Co-operative	..	..	..	6.576
Proprietary	..	..	..	8.729
Cardiff	..	..	..	9.207
Stockton	..	..	..	8.444

March, 1940, period 12 months—

Co-operative	..	..	..	6.912
Proprietary	..	..	..	8.352
Cardiff	..	..	..	9.502
Stockton	..	..	..	8.993

September, 1941, period nine months; this was the time when hand-boring was discarded and machine-boring was introduced in the Co-operative mine—

Co-operative	..	..	..	7.076
Proprietary	..	..	..	7.809
Cardiff	..	..	..	9.100
Stockton	..	..	..	8.190

May, 1942, period three months—

Co-operative	..	..	..	6.495
Proprietary	..	..	..	8.179
Cardiff	..	..	..	8.948
Stockton	..	..	..	8.976

Now I come to the period when the miners were lowered in the Co-operative and Cardiff mines, the period being September, 1942, three months—

Co-operative	..	..	..	6.511
Proprietary	..	..	..	8.118
Cardiff	..	..	..	8.905
Stockton	..	..	..	8.814

December, 1942, period three months—

Co-operative	..	..	..	6.320
Proprietary	..	..	..	8.137
Cardiff	..	..	..	8.534
Stockton	..	..	..	8.855

If we analyse those figures, we will find that, although additional facilities have been provided, there has been no improvement in the output.

Hon. G. Fraser: Of course, all the time those figures were being taken, the condition of the seams remained exactly the same!

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: When machine-boring is substituted for hand-boring and provision is made for the miners to be lowered into the mine and brought back from the face, there should be an improvement. We have heard a good deal in this Chamber about the men having to walk to and from the face, but when these facilities were provided, the men must have worked somewhat longer periods, because they would get to the mine face in much shorter time. Let me now give a statement showing the percentage of miners absent from work, excluding men on holidays, and those receiving payment under the Workers' Compensation Act.

Absenteeism, of course, has an effect on output. I will take as the first period the three months preceeding the outbreak of war, and the second period that ended December, 1942. I shall discard the figures for the Co-operative mine for the moment as perhaps not being entirely symbolic of the industry as a whole. In connection with the figures for the Proprietary mine, prior to the war the number of shifts worked by the miners was greater than in some of the mines. For the three months ended September, 1939, the percentage of absenteeism was 4.188, and for the four weeks ended the 13th February last the percentage was 9.75. At the Cardiff mine in the same periods the percentage rose from 2.14 to 9.74. In the case of the Proprietary mine there was an increase of 200 per cent., and at the Cardiff mine, 300 per cent. I will give the percentage of absenteeism from all the mines, exclusive of men on holidays or receiving workers' com-

pensation. For the period of three months ended September, 1939, the figures were—

Co-operative	..	..	5.498 per cent.
Proprietary	..	..	4.188 " "
Cardiff	..	..	2.142 " "
Stockton	..	..	3.505 " "

For the three months ended September, 1940—

Co-operative	..	..	4.412 per cent.
Proprietary	..	..	5.174 " "
Cardiff	..	..	1.330 " "
Stockton	..	..	3.505 " "

For the three months ended September, 1941—

Co-operative	..	..	5.390 per cent.
Proprietary	..	..	7.332 " "
Cardiff	..	..	5.069 " "
Stockton	..	..	4.615 " "

For the four weeks ended the 13th February, 1942—

Co-operative	..	..	29.18 per cent.
Proprietary	..	..	9.75 " "
Cardiff	..	..	9.747 " "
Stockton	..	..	9.340 " "

Do not those figures disclose some influence at work other than what has been put forward in the past? Perhaps it is the same reason as that which prompted the workers at Hadfield's to refuse to work overtime. In that case the reason given was the increased taxation which the working of overtime would attract. Apparently the miners of Collie are influenced by the same consideration. Is it any encouragement to a miner to work his full number of shifts, or to work at full pressure, or for the full periods of the shifts on which he actually puts in an appearance, to find that the increased deduction from his fortnightly pay slip for taxation leaves him with only comparatively the price of a tram ticket for his extra effort? This, of course, is a disability that every member of the public is suffering under our present system of taxation. We have to put up with it.

Hon. A. Thomson: It does not give much encouragement to men to work.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No, but we must put up with it. Might not that be one of the reasons why the tonnage produced per miner per shift is less than in 1934? When I last visited Collie, I was driving to the mines and passed a large number of miners, bathed and dressed in their best clothes. These men had finished their work for the day, and it was then only 11 o'clock in the morning. Yet this is the body of men we are told are harshly treated.

Hon. W. R. Hall: We ought to get a job like that.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: It is a better job than ours. I wish members to bear in mind that there has been no increase in the production per miner per shift since the men have been lowered to the scene of their work in the employer's time. This brings me to another question: What justification is there for this legislation except as a measure of appeasement? Has a policy of appeasement ever paid at Collie? It does not pay anywhere. Every member knows that it did not pay at Munich, and it will not pay under this Bill, either. As to whether these miners are overpaid, I should like members to study the figures of production per shift. Complaint was made by Mr. Parker at the way the pensions scheme is being established. One would like to know whether the Government has been advised on it and, if so, who gave the advice and how was the scheme arrived at? We all know that a scheme of this nature, to be successful, must be endorsed by the best actuarial brains and experience.

Hon. L. Craig: Is it not copied from the New South Wales Act?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: If the hon. member looks at the marginal notes in the Bill, he will find no reference to the New South Wales Act.

Hon. W. J. Mann: The whole Bill is copied from the New South Wales Act.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: It is not.

Hon. W. J. Mann: I have a copy of the New South Wales Act which you can see if you wish.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The whole Bill is not copied from the New South Wales Act. I draw members' attention to Clause 19, Subclause (6), which is a very vital part of the clause, and does not appear in the New South Wales Act. That is a very important point. The clause sets out the allocations that are to be made, and they are to be effected on a very bad principle, not a commercial principle. Allocations are to be paid out of dividends. Why not paid out of profits? Profits must be made before dividends can be declared. It is this provision which led me to believe that the scheme was not prepared by an actuary; it appears to have been prepared merely by someone who had a brainwave. Prior to December, 1940, miners at the Co-operative mine did

their own boring preparatory to shooting the coal, and members will see that the production in tons of the miner for 12 months prior to March, 1940, then stood at 6.912 tons per shift. In December the boring was done for them, and the average for a period of nine months between the end of December, 1940, and the end of September, 1941, rose to 7.076 tons per shift, and this seemed to justify the policy of installing machine-boring at that mine.

But what did the subsequent figures disclose? For three months prior to May, 1942, and before the lowering of those miners to their work could materially affect the figure, the tonnage per miner was reduced to 6.495 tons per shift, only to be further reduced in the later period of three months, ended December, 1942, when it reached the all-time low of 6.320 tons per shift. Bear in mind that the boring and the lowering of miners and everything else had been reduced to a minimum. What a commentary on providing extra facilities! What a damning story as to the result of appeasement! It is what one always finds is the result of appeasement. In view of these records, surely the House can see what a favoured class are the coalminers of Western Australia. There has been much talk about the terrible ordeal the miners go through in performing their work. They have black faces, but they certainly have healthy bodies. I have seen a good deal of the people at Collie and they are very healthy. There is nothing particularly detrimental to their lives in the coal mines. They are particularly favoured in regard to working hours and certainly in regard to payment. I think they receive about 6s. per hour, which I am sure is very nice pay to receive.

We have had many debates in this House in regard to the coalminers and the coalmining industry. Time and time again it has been pointed out to us how that industry is exploiting the State. There is the famous agreement between the Amalgamated Collieries and the Government Railways, under which every increase in wages is added to the price of the coal. Every movement for the betterment of the conditions of the miners—I am not complaining about their getting better conditions—is paid for by the people of the State through the railways and the East Perth power house. The farmers and miners who use the railways also contribute, as does the poor unfortunate housewife. She

now is forced to use coal on account of the scarcity of firewood.

By this Bill, we are creating a very dangerous precedent. What would be the position if some other body of workers in another industry requested similar treatment? They might be more deserving than the coalminers. Are we to continue on and on? Are we to start in competition with the Commonwealth Government in these matters? To me it looks very like it. This is a commencement only, thank goodness; I hope it will be the end. With the gloomy outlook that faces us at present, I cannot see how members can support a measure of this kind, especially as the coalminers are in a unique position in that they are receiving glorious pay for their work. I cannot see the justice in providing a pensions scheme for them.

I ask the Government whether the coalminers are more entitled to a pensions scheme than are the railway employees who have been fighting for pensions for years and who had the benefit of an inquiry by a Select Committee appointed by a Labour Government. The Select Committee recommended that the railway employees should be paid pensions; but the recommendation has been ignored and the men pushed aside. When a Government appoints a Select Committee, it is usual for it to accept the recommendations of the Committee. That was so during my term of office. In the case of the railway employees, the Government got a surprise when the Select Committee, recognising the justice of the claim, recommended that pensions be paid to them. However, effect was not given to that recommendation. But now the coalminers, who work under far better conditions and receive much higher payment, are to have a pensions scheme! The railway employees remain in their present condition. I shall oppose the second reading of the Bill.

HON. W. R. HALL (North-East): In rising to support the Bill, I would like to say at the outset that I have had no experience of coalmining. I have, however, had experience of goldmining. After listening to Mr. Baxter's speech and his indictment of the coalminers, my only hope is that he has the pleasure, before he leaves this planet, of working in a coalmine or in a goldmine, so that he can ascertain for himself the conditions of labour that apply to the men and be better informed when next

he speaks on the subject in this Chamber. The coalminers have given their lives in the service of both the State and the Commonwealth.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: For your benefit, I may say that I have worked in a goldmine.

Hon. W. R. HALL: But not too long, not long enough for the hon. member to contract silicosis.

Hon. G. Fraser: He was glad enough to get out of it.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am pleased to learn that the hon. member has worked in a goldmine. I hope the time is not far distant when we shall be able to do something, whether it be in the way of post-war reconstruction or not, to help both our coalminers and our goldminers. That would be a step in the right direction. Most of the speakers this afternoon have expressed the opinion that the present is not opportune for the introduction of this type of legislation, but has time ever been opportune, according to some members of this Chamber, to do anything? I say no! They have not the initiative required to induce them to help the country. Instead, they are willing to sit back and leave the matter to the Commonwealth Government, which is riding us to death all the time. That is the reason we are in our present position.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: It sounds as though you will vote against the Commonwealth Powers Bill.

Hon. W. R. HALL: There is a big chance of that. I may have something to say on that matter before we finish, and so I advise the hon. member to keep quiet for the time being. To my mind, it never has been possible for a worker who has to rear a family to accumulate sufficient savings to enable him to live in reasonable comfort during his declining years. That is why I want to see this Bill become law. I am not one who wants legislation of this kind to be confined to one particular industry. My desire is that men in all industries, when they attain 60 or 65 years of age, shall be entitled to a pension. If there is any worker entitled to a pension, it is the goldminer. The coalminers come next. In my opinion, goldminers should be entitled to a pension on attaining the age of 60 or 65 years. Unfortunately, there is a feeling abroad that this House is always desirous of throwing a spanner in the works when the Labour Party desires to secure the passage of legislation which will be of benefit to the worker.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Not always.

Hon. W. R. HALL: In some instances. We have had an example in the speech of Mr. Baxter. I hope every member in this Chamber will consider this Bill on its merits and give the coalminers a fair go. As I have pointed out, they have rendered valuable service to the State, in the same way as have the goldminers. It is heart-breaking to see turned-down miners on the goldfields and elsewhere trying to exist on the miserable allowance which they receive from the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. It is not a pension; it is really compensation paid to them for diseases contracted in the course of their employment; and it must be borne in mind that the miners themselves contribute to the fund equally with the Government and the mining companies. Let hon. members think what a pension would mean to those poor, disabled men, who have given their services to the State. It is well-known also that miners suffering from occupational diseases are in need of extras to help them along, quite apart from the ordinary necessities of life. Men who go down into the bowels of the earth to work for several hours a day certainly have their span of life contracted in comparison with the men who work on the surface in the fresh air. So, irrespective of whether or not any members have the idea that coalminers contract industrial diseases, it is a fact that in carrying out their occupation in compressed air, as they have done for years, their lives are necessarily shortened.

Hon. L. Craig: You will agree that the surface man would not need the same treatment as the underground man?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am not conversant—

Hon. L. Craig: You have just said it.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The surface workers on the goldmines in some instances have to work in batteries and ball mills where they would probably experience more dust than the men underground.

Hon. L. Craig: We are discussing coalminers.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I am perfectly aware of that, but the hon. member mentioned surface workers when I was dealing with both coalminers and goldminers. I have the right to explain my point of view. One does not need to be a doctor, or have a bump of knowledge on the back of one's head to know that any man who, like a rabbit, goes un-

derground for eight hours a day will suffer with lung trouble in time to come. Of course he will; it is only natural. I do not want to see coalminers; or goldminers either, left with only the old age pension. It is not sufficient to live upon even though an increase has been given by the Commonwealth Government. When one sees people lining up every second Thursday to collect their pensions, and existing on 25s. a week, one should be ashamed of not taking part in an endeavour to get the pension raised to something which will enable these people to exist in reasonable comfort. It has also been stated in this House by one member that the Bill should be allowed to pass the second reading and then be mutilated in the Committee stage. I hope he will not mutilate the Bill; it would be a reflection on his mentality.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It would be better to vote against the second reading.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is Mr. Bolton's opinion. I do not see why the companies, the employees and the State should not inaugurate the fund suggested in this Bill, by contributing on an equal basis so that the men would be entitled to something after giving years of service to the industry. Personally I would not be inclined to say that a man is done at 60 years of age and should go on a pension. I have known men who, at 65 years of age, had a lot of work still left in them.

Hon. G. Fraser: Not miners, though.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Not goldminers. I do not know the occupational diseases associated with coalmining, but I am talking particularly about goldmining. In coalmining they may have many years of work ahead of them, whereas that is not generally the case with goldminers. During the Mitchell Government's regime an Act was passed entitling the widows of turned-down miners to a pension of £2 per week. When legislation is passed to give £2 per week to widows, I cannot for the life of me see why old age pensioners should not receive £2 a week. It seems to me to be inconsistent that £2 per week should be given to one person and 25s. to another. Let us be uniform with our pensions and make them of such an amount that people can live in reasonable comfort during their remaining years. The Mitchell Government did a wonderful job in passing the Miner's Phthisis Act which gave the

widows of turned-down miners £2 a week for life, providing they did not re-marry.

Hon. G. W. Miles: In reply to one of your earlier statements, this Council agreed to that legislation.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I have much pleasure in thinking that it did something of benefit to these widows. I have relations who are receiving that pension, and they can live on it. But the invalid and old age pensions, which these men will receive if some other pension scheme is not made available to them, are not sufficient for them to live on. Members cannot expect them to exist on 25s. a week. I propose to support this Bill, and I hope that, irrespective of whether the time is opportune or not—according to some members it is never opportune—we will get on with the business and make a start so that as these Bills come along, if they affect everyone, we can deal with them and do some good for the people concerned and the State in general.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East): It seems to me that much consideration has been given to the one system of mining in Collie carried out by Amalgamated Collieries, Ltd. The point has been taken that that company made such enormous profits that it can very well afford this extra payment. To my knowledge a great many people, in the early stages of the opening up of these mines at Collie, underwent a very sad experience indeed, and were left practically penniless. Certainly others who came along afterwards were able to get the benefit of the work done by those who opened up the mines, and it is claimed that the preferential shareholders were able to make remarkable profits. I understand that while these huge profits were made in the past the company has not of recent years been able to make anything like those profits.

I know many people who put their money into a mine not included in the amalgamated series. Their experience is certainly not conducive to encouraging others to attempt opening up coalmines. I think that is the experience also of a great many people who have put money into promising goldmines. That again is one of the objections I have to a measure such as this—it is piece-meal and deals only with the question of coalmines. If it is necessary to make the provision suggested here it should be made available to everybody so that workers could retire at 60 years of age and become lookers-on,

and see what sort of a fist the others are making of their work.

Hon. G. W. Miles: At 60 or 65 years of age?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It does not matter. If the country or industry can afford it the age could be 55. Why delay the time? It will give the worker longer in which to enjoy his remaining years. If the pension is made sufficiently large it will help to kill him off quicker than would be the case if he remained working in the industry. I have seen many instances where people have retired from their work and sat back. They seemed suddenly to have got rather red in the face and in the following year there is a doctor waiting on them and they have all sorts of pains, aches and troubles which they attribute to their early trials and difficulties. They often go off much quicker than they would have had they remained in their jobs. I do not know why the coalminers seem to be the special pets of this Government. It must be due to the members representing that district, or to the special member in the Legislative Assembly who represents it. Why the coalminers, of all people, should be singled out for this pensions scheme is beyond my comprehension.

Hon. T. Moore: Why were they singled out in the Eastern States?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: They are living in Collie in an ideal climate.

Hon. W. J. Mann: In the lap of luxury!

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes. They have all the vegetables and the fruit they require growing in their backyards. They have only to throw the seeds into the ground and they grow into wonderful plants. It is an ideal district, and the people there live under exceptionally good conditions. They have a river running nearby with swimming pools in which they can wash themselves if they prefer that to using the hot and cold water facilities provided by the coal companies to wash their black faces that have been mentioned. I wish such conditions prevailed in the farming areas that I represent. The groans and moans of those inland areas would not then be heard. Those people are working in the heat and dust for long hours. They do not knock off at 11 o'clock in the morning.

I am surprised to learn that the coalminers can make such good money that although they are working more shifts now they are

producing less coal. That is beyond my comprehension. I have been told that that is a fact. When I look at the list of wonderful wages they can earn each shift, I say that by passing this measure we shall certainly not encourage thrift. I do know that one of the difficulties of the mine management is that so many of these men fail to put in an appearance at their shift—because they are so affluent and do not need to work—that the working of the mine and output are interfered with. The management cannot put on another man in the place of one who drops out during the day. That is not allowed. Indeed, another matter that strikes me is the difficulty that new men have in securing employment on the mines. That is a close preserve, a real monopoly for the present mine workers. We hear a lot about monopolies, but we cannot take this particular monopoly from the miners at Collie.

Hon. T. Moore: Who told you that?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: My own experience.

Hon. T. Moore: Did you look for a job there?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I could not get one there.

Hon. T. Moore: No, they need good men.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I would not have a chance of getting a job there. The same conditions apply on the goldfields.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You must be short of your 25s.!

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: We hear a lot of talk about the dreadful conditions in the coalmines and on the goldfields too, but the men are mighty careful to keep the jobs there for themselves. It is well known on the goldfields that the work of cutting timber for the mines has to be done by the foreigners, and in the absence of them in these days the companies cannot get all the timber supplies that are required to keep the mines working. Foreigners are not allowed underground where the jobs are kept for our own men—despite what we hear about the conditions, especially silicosis and other industrial diseases. Fortunately we have the assurance of Dr. Hislop that the Collie miners do not suffer from silicosis. From my own experience I know that the Collie miners enjoy ideal working conditions and have nothing to fear from the health standpoint.

Hon. T. Moore: It is a wonder you did not send your sons into the mines if the conditions are so good.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: To think that the Government has such ample funds that it is able to subsidise a pensions scheme of this description is beyond my comprehension, particularly when I remember the appeals that have been made from one end of the country to the other for assistance in various directions, with all of which the Government has indicated its sympathy, but has explained its inability to assist by intimating that it has no money at its disposal. On the other hand, the Government has money for its special pets in the coalmining industry. It has no money for the betterment of social services in other directions. Take the position regarding our schools. They have suffered from lack of attention for years past and the education of our children has had to proceed under conditions not nearly as ideal as those enjoyed by the Collie miners. As I mentioned earlier, the Government proposes that the company will be able to pass on only twopence per ton to the public in respect of its liabilities for pensions, whereas in New South Wales the employers are able to pass on 5d. a ton. We have no right to ask the public to shoulder that additional impost, nor have we any right to force the preference shareholders to go without their dividends. I remind the House that those people are not the only pebbles on the beach. There is the Griffin Company as well, and it has only paid three dividends during the lifetime of the mine. Profits made have gone back into the development of the mine.

Hon. T. Moore: To the preference shareholders.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: There are no preference shareholders in the Griffin Company. More than that, despite the fact that only three dividends have been paid in all that time, those interested have been required to take 5s. per share from the shareholders themselves in order to pay those particular dividends. That is a pretty severe hardship. I do not think this House would be justified in passing a Bill that will deprive those people of any chance of a dividend in the future. The miners have had a very good innings from the inception and under the proposed scheme they will just about take the mines over. If that is the

intention of the Government, this may be the thin end of the wedge.

It is well known that the Collic miners want the Government to nationalise the coal-mines. The experience of Government control in the Eastern States should be quite sufficient, quite apart from the experience we have gained in Western Australia in that respect, to suggest that we should not allow coalmining operations to become a State activity here. I shall oppose the second reading of the Bill, particularly in view of the fact that the Commonwealth Government intends to impose taxation upon the community as a whole for the purpose of an Australia-wide scheme of social security. If that course should be followed, what a fine present the Government will have in the funds it will take out of the pockets of the shareholders of our local coal companies to pay pensions to miners when they have passed their 59th year!

Hon. G. W. Miles: When the miners reach 65 years of age the State will pay their pensions instead of the Commonwealth. It will make a present to the Commonwealth of that money.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes, it is doing that all the time.

Hon. T. Moore: The men will have died before that stage is reached and dead men do not get pensions.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Some of these men continue in the mines till the nineties! Many of them have orchards and their families are living under beautiful conditions.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East): I shall be brief in my remarks, but I do not intend to cast a silent vote in opposition to the Bill. My principal reason for adopting that course is that the legislation is definitely sectional and on that account I cannot have anything to do with it. If anything of that sort is to be attempted, why start with the highest paid workers in the State? As Mr. Parker mentioned, many other workers deserve pensions in preference to the Collic miners. Then again, the Commonwealth has in view a social security scheme which will cost Australia £25,000,000. We should wait and see what happens in that regard. I admit that the Collic miners work very hard, but they are well and truly paid for doing so. It has not been proved to me that those miners suffer in health and that they cannot continue working in the mines after 60 years of age. If that had been proved to

my satisfaction, I would support the Bill wholeheartedly. In that regard we must accept Dr. Hislop's expert opinion.

Hon. G. Fraser: One swallow does not make a summer.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: No, but it is a fact that the Collic miners do not suffer from silicosis. In my opinion the Bill should be referred to a Select Committee so that we could find out where we stand. The member for West Perth in another place made a very fine speech on the Bill.

Hon. T. Moore: And so did the member for Greenough, who is also a member of the Opposition.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: And so did the member for Collic. The member for West Perth said that although he had a lot of information in his possession he felt he was only on the fringe of the subject and did not know where he was in view of the technicalities involved. If a man like the member for West Perth can admit that he is merely on the outskirts of the subject, how can we expect to appreciate the full position? If I have an assurance from the Minister that the Bill will be referred to a Select Committee I shall vote for the second reading, otherwise I must oppose it.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central): I do not propose to take the responsibility of defeating the Bill at the second reading stage. I have been considerably perturbed by statements made by various members that the Bill in one of its aspects means repudiation. Because of that I want the Bill to be dealt with at the Committee stage so that we can have further information on that phase. As a representative of the Central Province I desire to draw attention to one point respecting which I trust I shall not be ruled out of order. The Bill contemplates the expenditure of public funds and in view of that I want to ask the Minister a pertinent question: Why has not the Government carried out a recommendation of the Royal Commission that investigated the coalmining industry in favour of the testing of the Irwin coalfields?

The Royal Commission reported that the Irwin coal seam was worthy of attention by the Government. I know this is a very ancient topic and shortly after I entered Parliament I called for the tabling of the file so that I might look through it. Various Governments have expended some money on the Irwin seam, and if the present Govern-

ment could do something along those lines it would be in the interests of the State. I wonder why the Government has not given effect to the Royal Commission's recommendation so that the worth of the Irwin coal seam could be proved or disproved. In these days it is essential to decentralise industry and the co-operation of the Commonwealth Government could have been sought in testing out the Irwin coalfield.

HON. G. FRASER (West): I intend briefly to outline my attitude. I have not had an opportunity to study the Bill to the extent I would desire and I have not had the privilege of listening to the full debate. The speeches I have heard today indicate that the debate has followed the usual course experienced when industrial measures have been introduced. In other words, members of this Chamber are running true to form. One could almost sum up beforehand the attitude of individual members and the excuses proffered for their disapproval of the Government's legislative proposals. The first point taken is that the time is not opportune and the second point is that the legislation is sectional.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That applies to our experience as well when we have introduced legislation.

Hon. G. FRASER: One can bet with almost certainty before industrial legislation reaches this House what points will be taken in opposition to it. For the moment I am not concerned with the details of the Bill, not having had an opportunity to study them. They, however, can be dealt with in Committee. What I am concerned with is the principle underlying the measure. It provides pensions for certain workers, and has been called sectional. Of course it is sectional; but have not some members who today raised that point, voted in previous years for sectional legislation in favour of superannuation or pensions for civil servants? Did not they sanction a Bill to institute a superannuation scheme for the employees of the Perth City Council? Were not those measures sectional? Of course they were. Any pensions scheme coming before this Council will be sectional; but if any one section happens to be dealt with in a particular Bill, that is no reason for my voting against a pensions measure. My attitude is not that if someone has not a certain thing, no-one shall have it.

My attitude is that if it is possible to give something to someone, I will give it, and shall be prepared to give it to others in order to lift them up too. Some members, however, instead of wishing to lift up one section want to keep all sections on a low level, since all workers are not included in a particular scheme. No matter what wage a wage-earner receives, he remains a wage-earner. One cannot give a wage-earner too much, because he never gets anywhere. Mr. Parker spoke of one section, the five-years section, working so many shifts, and based a great deal of opposition to the Bill on it. But in the case of another section the period of work in the mines is 20 years. There is just this one little thing Mr. Parker picked out and harped on. Is that justification for voting against the second reading of the Bill? It could be dealt with in Committee.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I did not say that was my reason.

Hon. T. Moore: You were leaning on straws!

Hon. G. FRASER: My attitude is to take the principle of the Bill, and if the principle is right to vote for the measure, reserving any necessary alterations for the Committee stage. If the object were to benefit the poultry-farmers, I would support it notwithstanding that it would be sectional.

Hon. G. B. Wood: But the poultry-farmers are not on the basic wage.

Hon. G. FRASER: We have done similar things for the onion-grower and others.

Hon. G. B. Wood: The onion-grower was not getting £8 a week.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am merely pointing out, in passing, that nearly all the legislation of this kind introduced here has been sectional. The hon. member has supported legislation just as sectional as is this Bill. Members should be consistent from that aspect. As for the time not being opportune, it never was in this Chamber; and I fear it never will be so long as some members remain here. But if everything considered to be inopportune were allowed to go by, nothing would ever be done. Doing things when the time did not seem ripe has brought Australia to its present standard of living. For what purpose are we in this war? To what end is it being fought? Is it to keep Australians in conditions which operated earlier, or to reduce Australians to lower conditions? Is not the object of the war to make living conditions

better for our people? In my opinion, at any rate, it is. Why wait for the war to end before making some improvement? I support the Bill and hope that the second reading will be carried. If amendments are needed, let them be made in Committee, without, however, mutilating the measure.

HON. C. R. CORNISH (North): Practically every previous speaker has been in favour of pensions and superannuation, but apparently does not think it right to introduce these benefits for one section. If a thing is right, then I hold it to be right for any section; later it can be extended to other sections of workers who are deserving of it as the Collie coalminers are. I have not been down coalmines, but have been down goldmines, and I know the conditions existing underground. A man who risks his life in a mine is deserving of compensation in his later years. The Collie miner himself will pay a third of the cost of pensions payable at the age of 60 years. When a man has worked down a mine for 20 or 30 years, the least we can do is to enable him to live the last ten years or so of his life in comfort if not in happiness. I can visualise such a man having a little property and cows and an orchard.

One member said that coalminers worked only 60 days per annum in a coal mine. I do not think a miner would work 60 days in a mine and then run away to some other occupation. I have seen it stated in print that the East Perth Power Station produces electricity at .76d., which is slightly lower than the cost of electricity in Sydney, .765d. Our cost, therefore, is the cheapest in the world—which shows that the Collie miners are doing their job. I am not in favour of State enterprise competing with private enterprise, but I consider that the Collie mines might well be taken over by the State, which uses 90 per cent. of the Collie coal. If that step were taken and the shareholders compensated, the Government would receive that 8 per cent. mentioned by previous speakers. I do hope the passing of the Bill will not necessitate the taking of men 60 years of age out of the mines at present. There are plenty of men 60 years old who could give a few years more of good service while the country is in its present parlous condition. Some other matters contained in the Bill can be adjusted in Committee. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. G. W. Miles, debate adjourned.

MOTION—YOUTHFUL DELINQUENTS, DETENTION CONDITIONS.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 24th February on the following motion by Hon. E. H. H. Hall:—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon—

- (a) What provision should be made by the State for the care and reform of youthful delinquents;
- (b) the conditions of Barton's Mill prison as a place of detention for male youthful delinquents, and of York for females, and whether improvements can be effected at such places for such purpose; and
- (c) the results that were achieved by the investigation which on or about the 23rd June, 1937 (according to a statement of the Minister controlling the Child Welfare Department), had been in progress for 12 months prior to a deputation to that Minister at that time.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [4.13]: I was indeed pleased to hear Mr. E. H. H. Hall state that he had not introduced this motion with the idea of indulging in any carping criticism of what the Government has done at Barton's Mill. I hope the hon. member will not mind my saying that the case put up by him hardly justifies the appointment of a Select Committee. Much of Mr. Hall's speech referred to Barton's Mill, and very little of it referred to the problem of youthful delinquency. I welcome the opportunity to say something to the House on both those subjects.

It must be remembered, of course, that Barton's Mill was never established as a place of detention for youthful delinquents. Barton's Mill was established because the necessity was forced upon the Government to find a substitute for the Fremantle gaol. The circumstances at the time this was forced upon the Government were very different from what they are today. Shortly after Japan came into the war, the Government was advised that it would be necessary to evacuate numerous institutions, including hospitals, schools, and also the Fremantle gaol. We were given 14 days in which to prepare our plans. I wish to state that I have been unable to find any precedent in the whole of the British Empire for a principal gaol having to be evacuated without

those concerned possessing another prison to which to evacuate the prisoners. It does not need much thought on the part of members to realise, and perhaps to appreciate, the very great difficulties that arise in a case of that kind.

The gaol at Fremantle is strongly built in every way. It is so arranged that the various prisoners can be segregated as the occasion arises. We can deal more or less satisfactorily with the men who have been sentenced for all the various crimes in the calendar, men who are serving life sentences, men who are serving very short sentences and so on. It does not require very much imagination to appreciate the difficulty with which the administration was faced. As it happens it was my responsibility as Minister in charge of gaol matters to be the deciding factor as to the steps that should be taken to meet the unusual circumstances with which we were faced.

In the course of his remarks Mr. Hall referred to the fact that we have a Controller General of Prisons to whom he gave some credit. He also referred to the fact that we have an Assistant Controller General of Prisons to whom he also gave some credit in regard to the work in which he has been engaged for many years. But he was a little doubtful whether that man was suitable to deal with a problem such as this turned out to be, basing his argument on the idea that the probabilities were that this particular public servant had not the opportunity of studying the question of prison reform. He then referred to the fact that I, too, was associated with this project and gave me some credit for what has been accomplished.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: A good deal of credit.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I may as well say straight away that when this transfer took place there was no question of social reform or prison reform involved. It was a question of meeting the unusual and serious circumstances with which we were faced. But I do claim that since the transfer has taken place the administration, including myself, has taken the opportunity to institute a medium of social reform of which I, at any rate, have nothing to be ashamed but quite a lot to be pleased with. I say without any hesitation at all that if and when Barton's Mill becomes a permanent institution—and that has not yet been decided—I will feel

that if it is the only thing I have done in my public career, I have something with which to be very well pleased. There has been a lot of criticism from certain quarters, most of it ill-informed, some of it aimed at the department with some ulterior motive. I am very pleased to be able to say that every responsible individual who has visited Barton's Mill—and they have all been given every opportunity of inspecting the place and gaining a knowledge of the policy of the department—has been pleased either to express at the time, or at a later stage to approach me with an expression of their appreciation of what is being accomplished at that place.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: I did, too.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have already said the hon. member accorded me a certain amount of credit for what has been accomplished. He himself visited Barton's Mill a few months ago when the institution was not in the condition it is in today, and he was so satisfied with what he saw and heard that he was good enough to write a letter to "The West Australian" which was published almost, although not quite, in full. He gave as one of the reasons why the Select Committee should be appointed the fact that he read in an editorial in "The Daily News" a paragraph or two which rather disturbed his mind. Consequently he interviewed the editor and because that editor assured him that he had a sworn declaration from somebody or other he considered there should be an inquiry.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Together with statements made by the magistrate.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member did not say who made the sworn statement. He did not inform this House as to the nature of that sworn statement. I am not aware that he knows who made the statement or what its subject-matter is. If he does, he certainly did not give it to this House. But I am informed that this statement was from an ex-prisoner at Barton's Mill. It is a fact that quite a number of very responsible people have visited this institution in recent months and have all expressed their satisfaction with what they have seen.

Let me elaborate on what had to be done and done quickly. In the first place we had to find a site. I put it to hon. members that if they had a few days in which to find a site for this particular purpose, it would be

quite a little while before they would be able to make up their minds as to which direction they should look. We lost no time in this matter and I personally spent many hours inspecting different sites in the vicinity of the metropolitan area. It must be remembered that an institution of this kind cannot be far removed from a large centre of population such as the metropolitan area and that there must be facilities to provide for from 200 to 300 men and women. Sites of that kind are not easily found. But we were somewhat fortunate in that an important mill site which had not been in use for several years, but which I understood was capable of being put into production at very short notice, was available within 30 miles of the metropolitan area. This particular mill site had supported a community of something like 200 people for many years and consequently there were quite a number of things there which were of the utmost value for the gaols administration in the dilemma with which it was faced.

For instance there was a good water supply—quite a valuable consideration. There were a number of buildings in the form of timber workers' houses. These consisted of four-roomed cottages which had been occupied by married people and a number of hutments which in times gone by had been occupied by single timber workers. There was a private railway line running from this site, which joined the Government railway at Pickering Brook. There was a hall, a manager's residence and one or two other conveniences of minor importance. The site lent itself as an expedient for the purpose we had in mind. Having obtained the co-operation of Millars' Timber & Trading Company, which held the timber concession there, we immediately set to work to make this site suitable for the detention of the prisoners evacuated from Fremantle. This necessitated entirely different arrangements from those one would normally have in a prison.

In the first place we had to be content with a very high barbed-wire compound. We sent an advance party of prisoners from Fremantle under the charge of several warders and in a comparatively short time that barbed-wire compound was erected, and eventually all the prisoners from Fremantle were transferred to Barton's Mill in one movement. We had the co-operation of the mili-

tary authorities in this regard. They provided the trucks. They really provided the organisation which enabled the transfer in one movement of all the prisoners and the staff from the Fremantle gaol. Unfortunately for the administration, the first night they were there, 13 men escaped. Personally that was one of the biggest disappointments I have ever had. I was satisfied in my own mind that those men could not have escaped as they did had there been proper supervision of the particular spot from which they escaped. An inquiry showed I was quite correct. We had guards inside and guards outside and we had floodlights along the fence. Certainly the floodlights were not as efficient as are the lights we have at the present time. The Minister cannot very well be blamed for the fact that 13 men escaped. The superintendent cannot be blamed, unless it can be shown that we did not take all the precautions that were available to us at the time.

As I have already said, the barbed-wire fence was the first instalment. It was followed immediately by the provision of a barbed-wire apron several feet wide and right around the compound. In this regard we were again assisted by the military authorities, who gave us all the co-operation we could desire in the circumstances. It would be impossible for any man to escape from the compound at Barton's Mill as it has existed for some months past unless there were connivance or collusion or some unusual circumstance. There have been a number of escapes since then. I want the House to remember that at Barton's Mill we were housing all kinds of wrong-doers, including criminals of the worst type and a number of lawbreakers whom we might not put in the criminal category. There were only a few weatherboard huts in the compound and for the balance of the prisoners we had to utilise tents, which of course is most unusual. However it was the only method whereby we could provide shelter for the men.

I wish to pay a tribute to some members of the staff and particularly to some of the inmates for the way in which they co-operated and improvised and showed regard for Barton's Mill as a future place of detention for themselves and others like them. One could give quite a lot of detail of what was done by those people, but at the moment I wish to refer only to the fact that one of the old and small cottages, which happened to be

within the area of the compound, was turned into a hospital almost overnight, a hot-water system provided and other odds and ends installed, mainly through the efforts of one or two inmates of the prison. Considering the type of building, I do not think that anyone could do other than congratulate those responsible for the provision of that part of the compound. Anyone going through the compound during recent months must have been struck by one other fact, namely, that the living conditions of those men are at least as good as, and I should say considerably better than the living conditions in the camps surrounding the metropolitan area. I do not mean the camps in operational areas; I refer to those around the metropolitan area. We were able to provide all the facilities necessary for the proper feeding of the prisoners and at the same time to use several other cottages outside the compound by improvising at least three of them to serve as workshops—a tailor's shop, a boot shop and a printer's shop.

From the point of view of present administration we can find employment for practically every man who is sent to Barton's Mill. This is something that could not be done at Fremantle, and it is one of the chief drawbacks in some of the principal gaols in the Commonwealth and elsewhere. It must be very heart-breaking to men who have to spend years in prison to realise that they are just doing work which is of no value to anybody but which is given to them merely to keep them occupied. At Barton's Mill, however, there is a great variety of work upon which we can usefully occupy almost every prisoner. There are a few, of course, that cannot be employed, sometimes on account of their physical condition—some are human wrecks—but even they can be found something to do, if only light work, such as cleaning up around the camp. There is ample evidence of what can be done in that direction at Barton's Mill.

It may be an interesting sidelight on the present administration to say that there are very few cases I know of—and I have read quite a lot on this matter—where a gaol is self-supporting. In fact, I do not know of one that can claim to be actually self-supporting, but I can truthfully say that if Barton's Mill becomes a permanent institution, I would not be surprised if within 12 months it became self-supporting. For the

information of members I will explain what is being done there, and I hope I may be excused for spending a little time in giving a description of this so-called awful place. We have been able to erect new workshops to take the place of the cottages which I referred to and which were improvised as workshops. The new workshops will compare with any of their kind in the metropolitan area used for similar purposes. Ours are only of weatherboard, corrugated iron and asbestos, but for the purposes for which they have been erected, they are as good as anything in the metropolitan area.

We have a boot shop, and the men engaged there are doing a remarkably good job. Only a few months ago we were faced with the impossibility of purchasing boots in sufficient numbers to supply the inmates of other institutions such as the Claremont Hospital for the Insane, the Old Men's Home, the Old Women's Home, and one or two smaller institutions. It was quite impossible to obtain the necessary supplies. Today the inmates of those institutions are being supplied from Barton's Mill.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Were the plant and machinery from Fremantle transferred there?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: And all the shops?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. We are now receiving from the military authorities all rejected boots—boots worn out by the troops and no longer of use for military purposes. Those boots are reconditioned, and I would not be ashamed to wear some of them. In years gone by I have often worn worse boots. We have some 6,000 pairs of boots being reconditioned. But for the work of the inmates of Barton's Mill, there would have been a sorry time for some inmates of other institutions. For this work we do not get any credit financially, but there is an added value to those boots of quite 10s. to 12s. 6d. per pair, and the administration is entitled to credit for that work.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Should not the amount be debited to other charitable departments?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In the return of the prison finances, no credit is shown, but we are entitled to claim something for that work. In the tailor's shop men are engaged in reconditioning discarded shirts and uniforms, and in making sheets and pillow-slips for other institutions. They,

too, are doing a good job. Then there is the printing shop which only recently has been put into full operation at Barton's Mill. There quite a number of lines such as school pads are made for the Education Department, and printing of various kinds is done. We have also a carpenter's shop and a storeroom—all new buildings, all fulfilling very good purposes. The point I wish to make is that before these new buildings were erected, it was necessary for the men engaged in the shops to be taken out of the compound in order to reach the improvised workshops in the cottages referred to. During the process of transferring 60 or 70 prisoners from the shops to the compound, a number of the inmates made their escape. That cannot happen now.

Again dealing with the question of employment, I am pleased to say that we were able, notwithstanding the conditions prevailing at the time, to supply several hundred tons of firewood during the shortage a few months ago. We were able to keep the Perth Hospital, the Northam Hospital, the King Edward Memorial Hospital and other smaller institutions supplied with firewood. We started burning charcoal at Barton's Mill and are in a position to supply some of the Government departments with that commodity. Thus development is taking place and each week the position is being improved.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Not another State trading concern?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, if the hon. member likes to describe it as one. The more we can supply, the better pleased I shall be.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And you are doing it without the union ticket?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: One has to have a particular ticket to get into Barton's Mill. However, this is not a subject that lends itself to joking; it is a very serious and important matter, more particularly in view of some of the propaganda circulated in recent times by our evening paper—a paper which could be of great use to this State if its policy were directed along right lines but which apparently lends itself in another way. The mover of the motion spoke about the remarks passed by the magistrate, whom he quoted as having said that he did not like to send delinquents to Barton's Mill. Another statement was that he believed the magistrate had never been

to Barton's Mill. That was true at the time he made the remark. The man who wrote the editorial in "The Daily News" had not been to Barton's Mill. This is what he wrote—

In this respect the prison conditions are a step back to the barbarity of something like a century ago. So far from being a reformatory agency, Barton's Mill is a likely source of further corruption. It is a reproach to the State and a disgrace to its Government that youthful delinquents have sometimes to be sent to such a place.

I repeat that this man had never been to Barton's Mill; neither had the magistrate of the Children's Court or the magistrates of other courts nor yet had others who made derogatory remarks visited the institution at the time they made those remarks. It is a thousand pities that those who have been presiding over our courts have not shown a little more regard for the difficulties of the administration in the early days of Barton's Mill. Had they done so, it would have saved a lot of trouble. Let me mention one case, which is well known to every member. A man who quite recently had been sentenced to imprisonment for life was one of the escapees from Barton's Mill. When he appeared before the court he told the magistrate what an awful place it was. Apparently the magistrate attached some credence to what was said, because he gave him a sentence of three months' imprisonment to be concurrent with the sentence he was serving. That was no penalty at all. If any man serving a long term of imprisonment feels that there is a chance of escaping and that if he does not get clear away he will not suffer additional punishment, he will probably try to escape. The remarkable thing is that that man had only been four hours in gaol at Barton's Mill before he escaped. Therefore, what did he know about the conditions there? He was sent to Fremantle.

I shall say a few words about the Fremantle gaol. At present, there are in that institution some of the worst characters that have ever been there in its history. One does not like to say these things, but there are men in the Fremantle gaol who have been returned from war theatres and with whom the Army authorities could not cope. Even if we wished to return all the prisoners to the Fremantle gaol tomorrow, we would be faced with the position that the military authorities would say, "We require the Fremantle gaol." When the man to whom I have

referred—Sutton, I need not hide his name—was sent back to Fremantle he was employed in the printing shop and was engaged in dismantling the printing machinery. He worked remarkably well while there; no man could have worked better. Apparently, he had some knowledge of that kind of work. When the machinery had been dismantled, he petitioned the prison authorities to be transferred back to Barton's Mill—this horrible place which he told the magistrate was not fit for anyone!

Because he had shown himself to be so adept at the work of dismantling the machinery, because he said that he had had enough of running about the country with the police chasing him and because he professed to be quite content and satisfied to be returned to Barton's Mill, the superintendent eventually granted his petition. If any error of judgment was committed by the administration, that is the error. Sutton was transferred to Barton's Mill with the idea that he would be particularly helpful in the re-erection of the machinery which he had dismantled. Of course, members know the rest of the story. It was not very long before, unfortunately, he found means of escaping again. Members know where he is now and where he is likely to stay for the rest of his life. I venture the assertion that had that man not been treated as leniently as he was when he first escaped, it is doubtful whether he would be in his present position.

That brings me to what the magistrate of the Children's Court has said about Barton's Mill. He has been outspoken on numerous occasions. He said he did not like to send youths to this awful place at Barton's Mill! He made many similar remarks. Up to that time he had not been to Barton's Mill, although he had been requested to visit it. He has since visited it and will be quite satisfied if we provide a separate compound there for the particular boys to whom he referred. I have already told the House that Barton's Mill was never established as a place of detention for youthful delinquents. Unfortunately, in recent times there has been a wave of so-called youthful delinquency among a number of boys, who apparently cannot be confined in any institution in this State, unless under lock and key. A request was preferred to me, as Minister controlling prisons, to provide ways and means by which these particular boys might be satisfactorily detained.

Today there is a number of them at Fremantle and about half a dozen at Barton's Mill. I saw two of those youths the other day. One is working in the printing shop and, as far as I could see, was quite happy in his work; he certainly was doing a good job. I do not know whether that was staged for my benefit or not, but I give my impression. The other boy was working in the boot shop and the instructor said that if he remained there long enough he would make something of him. I am sure there would be no hope of doing anything else for those two boys except under those conditions. I do not consider them to be youthful delinquents at all. It will be noticed that Mr. Hall did not give a definition of what he meant by youthful delinquents. These boys have gone a long way past the stage of youthful delinquency. In some cases they could teach many of the inmates of Barton's Mill. They take pride in what they have done and are particularly proud of the publicity which they have obtained. They are little heroes in their own circle.

For that reason, I say the type of publicity given to these cases recently has done far more harm than good. After all is said and done, the number of these youths is small. I have been supplied with information by the Child Welfare Department—which of course is not my department—showing that the number involved at present is about 21. I propose to give the House some information on those particular matters, but would like first to complete my remarks with regard to Barton's Mill. As I have already said, progressive improvements have been effected there. At first, not one tradesman was available to us on account of the shortage of skilled manpower, so members will recognise that our difficulties were indeed very much added to by that fact. The position has been eased of recent times. We have been able to secure one or two tradesmen and, through arrangements made with the Director General of Manpower when he was in the State only a few weeks ago, I am not anticipating any real difficulty in the future so far as that particular work is concerned. Nevertheless, it was a real difficulty at the time.

We have erected other buildings, including a new bakehouse and a number of cottages for the staff, whilst improvements have been made to some of the older cottages also occupied by members of the staff. We are

not without our troubles; there are plenty of them. We are shorthanded. We have not as many on the staff as we should have. I believe the difficulty will be overcome in the next week or two. The type of man required for this work is not available; he is in the Forces. The residue of labour which might be considered suitable is not fitted for this work. Supervising a prison is not ordinary work. We cannot employ men who have been used to bending their elbow, or men who have been associated with some of the inmates of the prison. Members can imagine that the scope of selection is somewhat limited. We have employed many temporary men, but hardly any stayed more than 24 or 48 hours.

There is another aspect that I would like to submit to members. It was referred to by Mr. Hall. Barton's Mill has been termed a bivouac gaol and consequently the conditions there are entirely different from the conditions of a regulation prison. In a regulation prison men are sheltered all the time; I refer to warders and the staff generally. These men do not have to face the elements like the men at Barton's Mill and the nature of the work which they perform is different. The supervision at Fremantle is what might be termed of a mechanical nature, in that the men see that certain doors and bars, which they themselves have locked, do not fly open. Of course, they have other work to attend to, and similar work is done at Barton's Mill. It is easy to understand that a proportion of the staff would not be suitable for the work at Barton's Mill. That, in conjunction with the fact that we are shorthanded and cannot secure the services of suitable men, has naturally created some difficulties. The conditions under which the staff at Barton's Mill had to live were not all that we could have desired, but that difficulty has to a great extent been overcome. Old buildings have been reconditioned and we have erected new cottages. Our policy is progressive. The time is not far distant when everything will have been so improved as to make me sincerely think that the staff will be satisfied.

There are many items to which I could refer in regard to the work that was done in the early days. Mr. Hall mentioned the acquiring of a school site. There was an old schoolhouse at Barton's Mill. It was not in good condition and not altogether suitable for a school. It is close to the compound

and we have improvised a school in the hall, which is also used as a mess-room for the officers who have not got their families at Barton's Mill. We have also planned for the building of another school very close to the cottages. By the way, none of the children has to go through the bush to get to the school, as was suggested by Mr. Hall. Our plan envisages a self-contained prison settlement, one which—if I am allowed to have my way—will be an entire credit to the present administration and to the State.

Hon. G. B. Wood: How many acres are available for the Barton's Mill institution?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is no limit. We are on a timber concession, and that is a matter which will eventually have to be decided. At present we have no more than is necessary. I have heard prisoners say that they would be delighted to have the opportunity to learn an occupation which they can follow when they leave the settlement and without going into the city. So that there are many advantages attached to an institution such as Barton's Mill. I visualise, if the war lasts for many more years, that the development there will be such that we shall be able to cater in a satisfactory way for the great majority of the prisoners. There will, of course, always be a percentage for whom Barton's Mill will be no place at all. Unfortunately it will be necessary for us to have the stone walls, locks and keys, bolts and bars, and so on.

Hon. G. Fraser: Even with all those, you cannot always keep them in.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Our record at Barton's Mill is just as good as at Fremantle where they had the locks and keys, walls, doors, etc. Although this has been forced upon us, I feel that I should say that the administration, with myself as its head, has utilised the opportunity to endeavour to bring into force a quota, even though only a small quota, of reform that is well worth while. Perhaps I have said sufficient about Barton's Mill as a prison. I would suggest to any member who has been at all interested in what has been said by Mr. E. H. H. Hall, or what he has read in the Press about Barton's Mill, that he take the opportunity at some time to visit this "awful" place.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What about taking a party there?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I would not mind doing that, but, from a prison point of view, we do not care about taking parties

over a prison. It is not a sight-seeing place and, consequently, it is not easy to get a permit.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Why have not the Fremantle justices who served for so many years been invited to go there?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is nothing to stop them.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Why have you not, as the Minister in charge, suggested that they should visit Barton's Mill?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There are many things I might have suggested. If the hon. member wants to visit there, he knows he has the right to go.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I think the whole board would like to go.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is no objection to its going, and I am surprised that it has not already done so, even though its members are appointed for Fremantle. We have others appointed for Barton's Mill. I have no objection to any representative persons visiting Barton's Mill, and I venture the assertion that when they have done so they will agree with a good deal, if not all, of what I have said. Mr. Craig, the Fremantle magistrate, has been appointed to visit Barton's Mill as visiting magistrate. He paid a visit some time ago, but I do not know when he was last there.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Has he been gazetted as such?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. Let me for a moment or two deal with another phase mentioned by Mr. Hall. He talked about an experience he had when travelling in the train at one time with a magistrate and a Roman Catholic priest. He said, I think, that the magistrate was silent on the question of youthful delinquency, whilst the parson, being an Irishman, was voluble. At any rate, he was quite prepared to express his views, and he referred to the fact that the main reason for youthful delinquency was that the right kind of religious instruction was not given in our schools; that, insofar as his particular denomination was concerned, it dealt with this phase of education, but that it was lacking in the State schools. I do not agree with him at all.

We have religious instruction in our State schools, just as they have in the denominational schools. Also attached to our gaols, and particularly at Barton's Mill, we have clergymen of different denominations in the same way as they were appointed at Fre-

mantle. I had the pleasure of meeting one of them a week or two ago. He had spent a few days there immediately prior to Christmas Eve. His description was encouraging; he was most eulogistic in his remarks. In addition to that, he was most critical of the type of publicity that had appeared in the evening Press, and his only regret was that he had not had an opportunity to put his views to the public in the same way. Naturally, one has to make different arrangements for a place 30 miles outside the metropolitan area from those made for the city of Fremantle. Still, those arrangements have been made and are being carried out.

I shall now deal with the question of youthful delinquency, which Mr. Hall claims is the reason for his bringing forward this motion. The first part of the motion reads—

What provision should be made by the State for the care and reform of youthful delinquents.

This is a very important subject, but it is doubtful whether it is of sufficient importance to warrant some of the remarks that have been made. As I pointed out, Mr. Hall has not stated what he considers to be youthful delinquency, although he dealt with the boys who have been committed to Barton's Mill. My reply to him in regard to these boys is that they are not youthful delinquents; that they have passed that stage.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: I indicated that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have the records of quite a number of these boys, and some of them have a large number of convictions. It might be interesting to point out that during the last 25 years a number of industrial schools have been established for the purpose of dealing with youthful delinquents. They are not all in operation today, but some are. For boys we have the Anglican institution at Red Hill, which is not very far from the Swan Boys' Orphanage; the Roman Catholic institution at Glendalough; and the Salvation Army institution at Collie, which later was transferred to Gosnells. For girls, we have the Salvation Army institution at Collie, which was transferred later to Gosnells; the Roman Catholic Home of the Good Shepherd at Leederville; and the Methodist Home at Mt. Lawley. These industrial schools have all been established during the last 25 years. But in 1921, because of the smallness of the numbers, the Anglican and Roman Catholic boys' homes were closed by the church authorities and

for the same reason in 1924 the Methodist Church closed its girls' home. From then onwards the Salvation Army has been the only church or religious denomination conducting a school for delinquent boys and has been, I believe, very successful in its reformation work.

It is worthy of note that the committing of serious offences by youths takes place only occasionally, and, of course, when they do take place what I would describe as undue publicity is given to their misdeeds. As I have already pointed out, the glaring publicity given to these cases is, in my opinion, one reason why these boys continue to go on in that way. They believe that they are little heroes; that they are somebody worth while in that they can create so much attention by their actions. We have knowledge that they have boasted of what has happened to them on account of what they have done, and what they are going to do next. I have the records of some of these boys, and one of them has twice been turned out of the Army. That shows that no matter what sort of industrial school we have, they have passed the stage at which anything can be done for them in that way. On the other hand, the boys who have not reached that stage should have something done for them.

The main idea of the Government when dealing with a wave of juvenile delinquency has been to protect the community, and that is the first duty of the Government and the department. I am also inclined to suggest that if that had been the main idea in regard to some of the cases dealt with in recent years, we would not have had, in the past few months, some of these so-called youthful delinquents. Some of them would have been locked in some section of the Fremantle prison, or Barton's Mill, as the case might be, long before now. There are at the present time 21 lads who have been more or less a menace to the community in recent times. Members may be interested to know that they are distributed as follows:—

Fremantle Gaol	1
Barton's Mill prison	6
Bindoon (Clontarf has been transferred there)	2
Seaforth	2
Military camp	1
With relatives (under supervision) ..	9

So, after all is said and done, and notwithstanding all the publicity, the number con-

cerned at the present time is very small. But that does not mean that some action should not be taken, and I will point out what is being done. May I deal first of all with the boys sent to Barton's Mill? I saw at least two of them working there. Naturally, they are receiving special attention. They are not allowed to mix more than is necessary with the other inmates, although that cannot altogether be prevented because of the work they are doing. But they are under supervision and at night-time are locked in separate cells that are quite suitable for the purpose, although perhaps not of the kind that would have been erected had they been built for youthful delinquents. It is a fact, too, that one of these boys, when interviewed in the compound, said that his one complaint about the place was that he was locked up at night. I do not know what he expected, I am sure! I would remind members that a prison is not a boarding-house, although we might have to adopt some boarding-house practices in regard to the feeding of the inmates, etc., in the initial stages, but they are there for a particular purpose. It is necessary at least that we should have discipline there and that we should see that work to be done is in fact done.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: It is a pity they had not always been locked up.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member should realise from my remarks how impossible that has been so far. Because of war conditions members are aware that the Clontarf Home for Boys was transferred to Bindoon where the institution is now known as St. Joseph's Farm School for Delinquent Boys. Brother Kearney, who is very well known to many people in this State and who has done such wonderful work at Clontarf, is in charge of the institution at Bindoon. Two of the boys who have been referred to are at that school, which can accommodate about 20 lads and there are only 14 there at present. Unfortunately the school is not capable of holding difficult cases such as I have referred to. Although the school is doing a wonderful work, there are a few of these boys that Brother Kearney refuses to have in his institution as he could not keep them there.

As to delinquent girls there is at present one industrial school for them—the Home of the Good Shepherd at Leederville—which has been able to accommodate all the girls

that have been committed for delinquency. It is exceptionally well conducted and has proved a great help to this type of girl. So we are faced with the position that we have at present institutions that are not fully occupied by the particular type of people for whom those institutions have been established. On the other hand we have a handful of boys—this does not apply to girls because they are fully catered for—for whom something else has to be done. So far as I am personally concerned my opinion on the question of delinquency as applied to some of the boys is that it is really a matter of re-education. It would be very nice if we could have an institution conducted along the lines of one in the Eastern States that is under the control of the Education Department. It is supervised by men who have been accustomed to handling boys all their lifetime and understand the psychology of boys. They have been the means of doing the lads quite a lot of good. Members must appreciate the fact, however, that in this State the number of boys concerned is so small, the accommodation required so comparatively large and the expense involved very great. That does not mean that we should not attempt to do something in the matter although we have not been able to do anything much up to the present. The next paragraph of the motion reads—

The conditions of Barton's Mill prison as a place of detention for male youthful delinquents and of York for females, and whether improvements can be effected at such places for such purpose.

I think I have dealt fairly fully with Barton's Mill. I do not look forward to that place being availed of for youthful delinquents, but so long as the necessity arises for finding accommodation for one or two delinquent boys, I do not mind the Prisons Department doing the best it can in the circumstances and I think that will prove better than the experience we have had recently.

As regards females I have pointed out that they are catered for at the Home of the Good Shepherd. The question of accommodation in that respect has not really arisen. Mr. E. H. H. Hall refers to the position at York for females and I wondered when I read his motion just what he had in mind. Was he referring when he mentioned it as a place of detention for females, to youthful female delinquents or to female prisoners generally. In point of fact in neither case is the York prison suitable. In the original

evacuation from Fremantle we were forced to take the female prisoners to the York gaol, which is the only prison apart from Fremantle gaol that can accommodate a number of prisoners. However, the York building is most unsuitable. It is very old and is situated on the main street. The accommodation is not of the best even as a gaol but it filled its purpose temporarily. When the numbers rose to a greater extent than the York gaol could accommodate—incidentally, there is no accommodation there for the staff at all—we were forced to transfer the women back to the female section of the Fremantle prison, and that is where they are today.

Hon. G. B. Wood: How many women were accommodated in the York gaol?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We had 17 there and the place was grossly overcrowded. The women were then transferred to Fremantle where the number of prisoners is much larger. That arises out of activities of a certain section of the Police Force. As the result of experience, particularly that of the medical profession, the Fremantle gaol is the only place that I know of where we can keep in detention at least some of the people concerned. The last paragraph in Mr. Hall's motion reads—

The results that were achieved by the investigation which on or about the 23rd June, 1937 (according to a statement of the Minister controlling the Child Welfare Department), had been in progress for 12 months prior to a deputation to that Minister at that time.

I have been provided with some information on this subject from which it appears that early in 1937 detailed information was obtained regarding a farm then being operated at Wokalup by the Ugly Men's Association. That organisation was not able to carry on its operations there and offered to sell the property to the Government. It was inspected by departmental experts and, after mature consideration, was purchased by the Government. In consequence of extreme pressure for accommodation for mental defectives it was decided to transfer them to Wokalup and it was also determined at that time that the Whitby Falls property should be developed as an industrial institution for delinquent youths. Unfortunately before it was possible to give effect to those decisions war broke out, and no explanation is required from me to account for the fact the Government has not been able to do anything in the matter. Members know how the Government was situated at that particular time.

Government officers, particularly those associated with the Public Works Department, were occupied solely on defence work for the Commonwealth and it was not possible to get anything done for the State at that juncture. In consequence these matters were hung up.

It may interest members to know that these were not the only proposals dealt with by the Government during that time. For instance, consideration was given to the establishment of an industrial institution as part of the establishment at Pardelup, which is near Mt. Barker, to which good conduct prisoners are sent from time to time. The results achieved there have been gratifying and must be particularly so to Mr. Drew who had the honour of establishing Pardelup a good many years ago. That institution, however, is just a little too far away for that particular purpose and it is considered that any school for delinquent youths should be removed as far as possible from a prison. In the circumstances that proposal was not considered advisable and was not proceeded with.

Another suggestion was to establish an industrial institution on the property owned by Mr. Albany Bell at Roelands, which was used for some time under the Chandler Boys' Scheme for the training of unemployed lads in farming operations. Nothing came of that proposal. Members will therefore see that the matter has not been lost sight of. The Government has already gone to the extent of securing estimates and having plans prepared regarding the two institutions I have referred to—the farm school at Wokalup which will be used to relieve the position of our mental hospitals, and the Whitby Falls property which will be taken over for the purpose of accommodating delinquent youths. The buildings at Whitby falls are very old and not entirely suitable for the purpose. They will have to be modified and some new buildings will have to be erected.

Hon. L. Craig: Wokalup would be more suitable for the boys.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The point is that the number of boys to be dealt with is so small compared with the mental cases for which accommodation has to be found, that what I have suggested is regarded as the better course. From the files I understand that it is possible to provide accommodation at Whitby Falls for 100 youths if that should become necessary. The question

arises whether at this juncture when so many matters more vital to the war effort have to be undertaken, we would be justified in withdrawing labour and materials—if the Government was allowed to do so—in order to carry out the work I have indicated. The files deal with these subjects and they will be made available to any member who desires to acquaint himself with the particulars.

Before concluding my remarks I would like to give members particulars regarding a few of the cases that have been dealt with recently by the Child Welfare Department. I shall not give particulars of all the cases that could be mentioned but only a few. I can assure the House that they are all very similar. Naturally I am not allowed to quote the names of the boys who have been convicted, because that is prohibited under the Act governing this situation. The first instance I shall quote refers to a lad who, I am advised by the Probation Officer who is known to most members, is 17 years of age. Until six months ago the lad had given little trouble. He was working fairly regularly and had quite a good reputation as a worker. He came to Perth and unfortunately came in contact with another youth and started his escapades which involved breaking, entering and stealing. In this instance the lad has had no parental control. His father went to the 1914-18 war. Since his return he has been practically a sick man all the time and has not been able to exercise necessary parental supervision over the boy, while the mother is not of the type to exercise those powers. The lad's downfall is attributed to his association with the other youth, and he has now 16 charges against his name.

Another boy 17 years old is definitely sub-normal. His parents are excellent citizens, and his home conditions everything that could be desired. Despite all that could be done for him, he has decided to live a life of crime and vice; and the cunning he applies is remarkable. He has absconded from institutions, and will not, or cannot, conform to law and order. He has 14 charges against him. I would not call that boy a youthful delinquent at the stage he has reached. Another case is that of a boy who first came under notice on the 19th October, 1942. He was a Fairbridge Farm School boy, and put up a very serious record in a very short while. He has absconded from both Seaforth and Bindoon Industrial Schools, and gives every indication of embarking upon a

life of crime. He has three charges against him. At present he is at Barton's Mill. Another boy, aged 16 years seven months, first came under the notice of the department in 1934, when he was charged with being uncontrollable. Since that time, and especially since January of 1942, he has given very considerable trouble by breaking, entering and stealing, and by absconding from institutions. His conduct was such that at last he had to be sent to prison, from which he was released on the 25th August, 1942. His mother and step-father are good citizens, and his home is of the average standard. He has 21 charges against him. He is at present at Barton's Mill.

The next case mentioned is that of a boy aged 15 years and four months, who has 21 charges against him. Another boy, aged 16 years, has 38 charges against him. A boy aged 16 years eight months has given very serious trouble right from a very early age. He has been in institutions, from which he has absconded at will. He has indulged in serious crime, and shows no evidence of reform. In fact, at the present time he is in Fremantle Prison, being too bad even for Barton's Mill. His home conditions are poor; parental control is weak owing to lack of co-operation between mother and father. This boy is likely to become a menace to society for a long time in the future. He has 15 charges against him. That is another case of being long past the stage of delinquency. Another boy aged 16 years eight months is now in the Imperial Forces. His crime history has not been great up to the present, but while it lasted it was pretty willing. He is motherless, and his lapses may be attributable to the fact that his father has not given him the right attention. The boy has seven charges against him. A further case is that of a youth of 17½. He had excellent parents, and the home conditions were good. He will almost certainly, unless war conditions alter him, develop into a gentleman crook. He was charged on the 7th September, 1942, with breaking, entering and stealing, and was sent to prison for six months. He has 12 charges against him.

As regards another boy, aged 15 years, the record is that the first charge against him was on the 22nd April, 1942, "being disorderly"; but since that time he has gone from bad to worse, and is at present in Barton's Mill. He is absolutely defiant, and gives evidence of lapsing into a criminal life.

He has 26 charges against him. In each case the figures are taken as from the 1st January, 1942. There is only one other case I would care to refer to, though, as I have said, the files are available to members who wish to see them. The boy, 17 years of age, has been in prison, and has been kicked out of the Army twice. At present he is simply defying his mother wholesale, and breaking up her home. He was in Seaforth formerly, but it is useless to put him in any institution from which he can escape. He has not been in trouble in the court of late, but he certainly should be receiving some protection, supervision and control. He goes out every night, and comes home in the early hours of the morning, refusing to say where he has been and how he gets his money.

Those are the types of boys for whom we must do something. The subject has not been lost sight of by the Government, and especially not by the Minister in charge. I trust that the information I have supplied will be an indication to members of some of the difficulties with which the Government has been faced because of war conditions. That is my reason for occasionally remarking that we must not forget there is a war on. I notice that our evening paper, in referring to Mr. Hall's speech, was good enough to observe that, so far as I was concerned, all I could say to Mr. Hall was that he must not forget there is a war on. That remark was published in such a way as to make it appear that it was all I had to say on the matter. Mr. Hall did come to me when he first proposed to raise the question as one of urgency and move the adjournment of the House in order to do so. While the hon. member was in my office, I took the opportunity to explain to him, in the limited time available, a good deal of the matter that I have detailed here.

I have not told the whole story by a long way. It takes time to relate, and all the cases I have quoted are incidental to the transfer from Fremantle to Barton's Mill. Mr. Hall assured me that he had no wish to be a captious critic, but was only anxious that there should be some light thrown publicly on the circumstances now existing. It may be asked why there has not been more publicity in regard to this matter from the Minister's viewpoint. There have been very good reasons for that. One reason, which was absolutely definite in the initial stages,

was that no publicity at all must be given to the fact that we had to deal with so large a number of prisoners under the conditions with which we were faced. There was necessity for the utmost secrecy in a movement of this kind.

Again, the gaol was required for, and had been occupied for some time by, the military; and at present Fremantle gaol has a much larger prison population than it ever had before. There are matters which the Censor cannot allow to be published. For that reason it has not been—shall I say—advisable to give the matter the publicity that I would welcome. If we could have had a few months' notice of the transfer of the Fremantle prisoners to some other place, the story would have been very different. We would have been able to prepare for the transfer in a more orthodox manner. However, because we were not able to prepare in an orthodox manner, we have improvised in a way which I say will be a credit to the department and to the Government and will give satisfaction to any person who is interested in the question of social reform, and particularly prison reform. With these remarks I have to state that I cannot see any justification for the appointment of a Select Committee, and fail to see in the statement of Mr. Hall anything that would justify the House in carrying the motion.

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

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.42 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 2nd March, 1943.

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The **SPEAKER** took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it insisted on its amendments Nos. 1, 2, and 3, to which the Assembly had disagreed.

BILL—COMMONWEALTH POWERS.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 25th February. Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Preamble:

The **CHAIRMAN:** Progress was reported on the Preamble, to which Hon. N. Keenan had moved an amendment as follows:—

That after the word "reference" in line 21 the words "unless prior thereto revoked under the power contained herein" be inserted.

The **PREMIER:** I have no objection to the amendment, which follows on what we have agreed to in Clauses 3 and 4.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. **WATTS:** I move an amendment—

That in line 29 the words "in this form" be struck out and the words "in the form in which the Bill for this Act was approved at the said Convention" inserted in lieu.

This amendment was recommended by the Select Committee. The Preamble sets out that the Premiers of the several States have agreed to do their utmost to secure the passage through their respective Parliaments, as early as possible, of a Bill "in this form." The Bill, however, has been amended to comply with certain legal requirements and will no longer be "in this form," but will be in the form in which the Bill was approved at the Convention.

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

Postponed Clause 2—Reference of matters to Parliament of Commonwealth:

As to Procedure.

The **CHAIRMAN:** Standing Order 155 provides that the several rules for maintaining order in debate in the House shall be observed in Committee of the whole House. Standing Order 176 permits the House to order a complicated question to be divided. Standing Order 279, however, places upon me the obligation to put the question "That the clause stand as printed." I am inclined to observe that Standing Order but, when one looks at Clause 2 of the Bill, one may argue that it is particularly complicated and would