

mind. I take it the Minister knows that the machinery for both works will be available at the same time, as well as the general equipment.

The Minister for Works: I did not say both schemes would be carried out at the same time.

Mr. McLARTY: No; but the Minister said that one scheme would not delay the other at all. I hope that the South-West power scheme will soon be put into operation as a post-war work.

The Minister for Mines: Has the departmental committee reported yet?

Mr. McLARTY: No; but the Minister expects a report early in the new year, and from what he said I thought he was optimistic in regard to what the report would be. The Minister also told us that a few local governing bodies had not yet submitted their programmes of post-war works. I do not know the names of those local governing bodies, but I do submit to the Minister that the people of those districts should not be penalised because post-war programmes have not been submitted to the Government. And at this stage I would suggest to the Minister that those particular local governing bodies should be asked, if they have a post-war programme, to submit it immediately. I certainly think it is a very lax local governing body which up to this stage has done nothing at all in regard to its post-war programme. The last thing I want to touch on is our roads. I think the Minister said the Main Roads Board has a reserve of £1,600,000.

The Minister for Works: No. I said it had £1,600,000 approximately to spend in the two years after the war.

Mr. McLARTY: The local governing bodies have also reserves amounting to a great sum of money. Construction of roads will give employment, and there again I think a priority should be drawn up. Personally I think the more, within reason, this country is crossed by roads, the better. There is a tremendous amount of road work required throughout the settled portions of the State. Anyhow, I just repeat in conclusion that I think there should be a priority drawn up in regard to roads, so that we may know where new roads are going to be constructed and what is going

to be done with our main and feeder roads generally.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.54 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 30th November, 1944.

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

QUESTION—SERVICE PERSONNEL.

As to Legislation for Preference.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT asked the Chief Secretary: As legislation regarding preference in employment for returned service personnel is already in force in Victoria and New South Wales, and has been introduced in the Queensland Parliament, does the Government intend this session to bring down a measure for preference in employment for returned service personnel in Western Australia?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: The whole matter is under consideration.

BILL—LOTTERIES (CONTROL) ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Introduced by the Chief Secretary and read a first time.

BILL—METROPOLITAN MILK ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [4.37]: I propose to support the second reading of the Bill, but there are a few remarks I would like to make regarding the whole milk industry and I take it that this is an opportune time to do so. When the organisation and control of the

whole milk industry was mooted some years ago, I took a very keen interest in the movement, because before 1932 the most appalling set of conditions applied to the industry in this State. I recollect going into some districts not very far removed from Perth and seeing men and women working from daylight until long past dark in a desperate effort to make a living at dairying. At that time they were receiving as low as 7d. per gallon, officially, for whole milk; in actual fact, there were some who undercut to such an extent that they were supplying milk at 6d. a gallon, and even then they were not being paid in cash, but in kind by the people who purchased it. If ever there was a scandalous state of affairs, that was.

That position has been largely remedied by the operations of the Metropolitan Milk Board. On a number of occasions small organisations were brought into being in different localities with the object of improving the position but as a rule, as is the way of small bodies, they were enthusiastic for a few weeks and then petered out. Then came the Milk Board and it was confronted with many difficulties. It was, however, able to carry on steadily so that it ultimately gained the confidence of many producers and brought them to its way of thinking. But there are still some people who are critical of the position as it exists today notwithstanding the fact that there is no shadow of doubt about the tremendous improvement that has been effected. We South-West members are definitely interested in this matter because the official figures indicate that two-thirds of the milk consumed in the metropolitan area come from the northern end of the province we represent. In fact, the whole of the milk required for the metropolitan area could very easily be supplied from this district—that is, as far south as Brunswick—if manpower were available.

Because of the foolish attitude of the authorities in the early days of the war, when they set out to bleed the dairying industry white of manpower, the conditions have not been conducive to higher production although we are proud to be able to point to the fact that production has been kept up so that the position is better here than in any other State of the Commonwealth. Because little is said of the efforts of the people engaged in dairying

here, there is a tendency on the part of the public generally not to recognise the great work they are doing. Reference has been made in the debate to the delivery of unclean milk. I am not going to controvert that, but I do say that it would be surprising if there were not occasional instances of this nature. There are always people who are unclean, even in their personal habits and life. No matter what industry we select we will find people who do the wrong thing.

We often hear of persons who have fruit shops, meat shops and other food vending establishments being prosecuted because they neglect to conform to the health regulations. The same thing occurs in connection with milk, but I refuse to believe that such a complaint can be levelled at the bulk of the people producing milk. I go further and say that on the South-West farms where 98 per cent. of the whole milk is produced hygienic conditions are observed. Again I do not say that they are perfect but they bear comparison with other countries. In the country that I am referring to the pastures are broad, the area is well watered, the feed is good and the stock are in perfect condition as far as can be seen. The milk producers have to observe these conditions because they would otherwise soon lose their licenses from the Milk Board. They would lose their quotas which are valued at about £10 per gallon and represent a very acceptable asset. No wholemilk producer is going to be fool enough to allow his premises to get into such a condition that the board will say, "We are going to revoke your license because your premises are unclean and you are producing milk under conditions that are unwholesome and unhealthy."

The great majority of the herds are machine-milked and are housed, in most instances, in modern milking sheds with concrete floors and plenty of running water, if it is available. Those of us who have seen other dairying countries are in some small way able to make comparisons. On one occasion I was fortunate enough to be able to do that and I can assure members that in many countries I saw conditions that would not be tolerated in Western Australia. In some I saw conditions, as the result of many years of control, that were almost ideal. But the fact

that conditions here are not 100 per cent. perfect does not say that we are any worse than other countries. Statements have been made in connection with the quality of our milk.

Capital has been made of the fact that some Americans have said they would not drink the milk produced here. That is not unusual. I went to New Zealand on one occasion and for a month I could not eat the beef there. It was not that the beef was wrong, but that the flavour was different from ours on account of the pastures. It had a sweetish taste to me and I could not eat it. But I did not condemn it. All I said was, "I am sorry, I cannot eat this." I have it from official sources that the American attitude towards our milk is not peculiar to Western Australia. What really happened with regard to milk for the United States Forces was that early in the war an order was issued from Washington which laid down that no contracts should be completed for the purchase of wholemilk for the American Forces in any country unless it came from certified herds that had been subjected to the tuberculin test. That was all. It was a world-wide order. Here it was pointed out that some of the herds had been tested, but the reply was that a contract could not be signed unless the milk came from tested herds. As my colleague rightly stated yesterday, 800 cows were subsequently tested in the Harvey area and of those only 5.6 per cent. reacted to the test and some of those very slightly.

I have looked up the authorities and have found that in spite of the fact that Western Australia is new in the milk-producing business as compared with New South Wales, which State prides itself on its control of foodstuffs and milk, the reaction in that State was 5.8 per cent. We have every reason to feel not satisfied—because we could not be satisfied with less than 100 per cent.—but we have no reason to feel ashamed of what has been achieved in the industry. Once it is made possible for all herds to be tested, as the owners desire shall be done, it will not be very long before we are producing the highest quality of milk. In the United States, quite a quantity of the milk is below 100 per cent. I understand that the municipal authorities take charge there and that any centre with a population of over 1,000 may call upon the

authority to test the herds and ensure that the best possible quality of milk is supplied. Consequently, the statement that the Americans will not drink our milk because it is unclean has to be accepted very guardedly.

In the last few hours I have made inquiries from one person who is able to speak of half-a-dozen households because she goes there to work and from members of my own family in three instances, all in the metropolis, and have been assured that they get clean milk free from dust, dirt or sediment, and of a high cream content. I do not deny that in some instances unclean milk has been supplied, but those cases should be brought under the notice of the authorities. There is a big difference between producing milk here and in New South Wales, Victoria or other places. Here we have a long dry summer and sandy conditions, which make the position more difficult than it is in countries that are well-pastured and well-watered. There is undoubtedly room for improvement in the methods of production and distribution and I will gladly support any move in that direction. The Minister in another place, when moving the second reading of the Bill, envisaged the introduction next year of a new and comprehensive measure. From his remarks I take it that he proposes to divorce the hygienic side from that of production and distribution. Of course, we do not know what is in the Minister's mind, but I think it would be unwise to remove from the board power and authority to deal with the production of wholesome and hygienic milk. I do not believe that dual control would be advisable. In my opinion, one body, given the power, would be able to attend both phases well.

I am not acquainted with the activities of the Milk Board, but I understand that an average of 30 samples is taken each week, and where the milk is below the standard, prosecutions follow. Where prosecutions are not instituted, a good explanation is required. Here again the manpower position has had an effect. Before the war four inspectors were regularly employed, whereas now there are only two. It is practically impossible for the board to get men possessing the qualifications of milk inspectors to undertake this work at present. I urge the Government to do everything possible to make the

milk supply as nearly perfect as human ingenuity can make it. The Government should encourage and assist the producers in every way, not only to put their premises into proper condition, but also to receive education in the latest methods. If this is done, the Government can be sure that the areas I represent will gladly co-operate.

On motion by Hon. J. G. Hislop, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Act Amendment.

2, Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act Amendment.

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—LOAN, £975,000.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [5.2] in moving the second reading said: This is the usual Loan Bill, which is submitted each year and upon which opportunity is taken to deal with the Loan Estimates submitted in another place. The Bill seeks authority for the raising of the sum of £975,000 by loan for the construction of certain public works and other services, these being set out in the schedule. The items in the schedule are those on which previous authorisations have either become exhausted or are insufficient to meet the expenditure proposed in the Loan Estimates, and it will be noted by the schedule that, in addition, there is a new item dealing with war housing, for which £500,000 is provided. The amounts set out against each item will be sufficient with previous authorisations to enable the works to be carried on during the year and, where necessary, for six months after the close of the financial year. This is the usual practice and permits the continuance of works until further Parliamentary authority can be obtained. During the year ended the 30th June last, the proceeds of loans amounted to £457,750, made up of £67,750 from sales of securities to various trust funds controlled by the Treasury, and a loan of £390,000 from the Commonwealth Savings Bank.

Under the Savings Bank Transfer Agreement, the State is entitled to borrow from the Commonwealth Savings Bank 70 per cent. of the increases in depositors' bal-

ances, and this right has been fully exercised up to the 30th June, 1942, the total amount of loans to that date amounting to £2,675,000. During the year 1942-43 the increase in deposits was greatly in excess of that of previous years, but owing to the cash requirements of the Commonwealth for war purposes, and seeing that our loan expenditure had decreased considerably, we waived our right to take the whole of the 70 per cent. to which we were entitled, and we drew only the sum of £390,000.

Last year an arrangement was made with the Commonwealth Bank whereby, for the duration of the war and a period of five years thereafter, the State will not draw by way of loans from the bank more than £390,000 in any year. In accordance with this arrangement, which is approved by the Commonwealth Treasury, we again drew £390,000 last year, and, as the rate of increase is still being maintained, we are assured of being able to borrow that amount from the bank for several years to come. The rate of interest on these loans is fixed by the Savings Bank Transfer Agreement at 1 per cent. above the rate allowed to depositors. That rate for some years has been 2 per cent so that we are paying 3 per cent. on the money obtained from this source and, as no flotation expenses are involved, it is comparatively cheap money.

In addition to the loan proceeds of £457,750, there were loan repayments amounting to £256,153, and a further credit to the Loan Fund of £38,021, being the revenue surplus for the year, which was returned as part repayment of advances made from loans to cover deficits incurred in earlier years. The public debt on the 30th June last stood at £96,478,295, and as the total contributions to the Sinking Fund by the State and Commonwealth and earnings from investments will amount in all to well over £900,000 during the current year, the borrowing of the amount for which authority is sought in this Bill will make very little difference to our indebtedness.

Dealing with the Loan Estimates for this year, I point out that they cover an amount of £1,560,000, which represents a much higher rate of expenditure than we incurred in the year which has just closed. To obtain a proper comparison of the Estimates for this year with the expenditure last year, it is necessary to adjust the figures in

the Estimates by deducting the amount of Loan Suspense expenditure. As members are aware, expenditure under the heading of Loan Suspense is expenditure incurred during a year for which no provision was made when the Estimates were submitted. The amount of Loan Suspense expenditure included in this year's estimates is £4,040; therefore the actual estimated expenditure this year is £1,556,000. After adjusting last year's expenditure on account of Loan Suspense items, the amount was £362,000. Therefore the Estimates anticipate an expenditure of, roughly, £1,200,000 greater this year than was expended last year.

Dealing with the Loan Bill last year, I emphasised the difficulty experienced in carrying out necessary loan works owing to the lack of the requisite manpower and materials to carry out the undertakings. This was particularly evident last year when out of a total estimated expenditure of £786,000, less than half the amount was expended. This year's Estimates include amounts covering the cost of material which has been on order for some time and which it is anticipated will arrive during the financial year. In addition, a fairly substantial sum has been provided for activities of the Workers' Homes Board in operating the Commonwealth War Housing Scheme—matters to which I will refer later.

The Estimates with which we are now dealing do not relate to the Government's post-war works programme, which is of much greater magnitude and includes items which cannot be carried out during the war period. Some of the works included in this year's programme, however, are necessary before a commencement can be made with our larger post-war programme. Turning now to a review of the Estimates, the amount proposed to be spent this year on Railways and Tramways is £404,000.

Hon. L. Craig: Have you the manpower for that?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We are hoping that the manpower position will be easier than it was last year. The amount I have mentioned is £349,000 more than it was last year when £51,000 was spent. So far as the Railways are concerned, provision is being made for an expenditure of £214,000 on additions and improvements to opened railways. Among other items this covers the completion of the steel furnaces at the Midland Junction Workshops. The reconstruction of

the subway at Claremont near the Royal Agricultural Society's showgrounds is also anticipated this year, and provision has been made for it though only a small amount was spent last year. The sum of £10,000 has been provided for new machinery for the Midland Junction Workshops and we are hopeful that most of the machinery will be available this year. Money is also being provided for additional rollingstock to the extent of £22,500.

Provision has been made for a new dam at Mount Barker, at an estimated cost of £16,250, and a small amount is set aside to provide additional accommodation for the staff of the Accounts and Audit Office. The staff is at present very inadequately housed in the old "Sunday Times" building and, though this matter has been under review for some time, nothing has been done because the erection of an entirely new building to house the whole of the Railway clerical staff was under consideration. The overcrowded conditions of the Accounts Office have now become so bad that we have included an amount for a temporary building to take the overflow. An amount of £5,000 has been set aside for improvements to the platform at the Perth railway station, whilst £92,530 is included in the Estimates for work in connection with a deviation of the line to avoid the use of the Swan View tunnel. This work was commenced last year and it is hoped that sufficient manpower and material will be available to make a substantial contribution towards its completion this year.

The sum of £30,000 has been set aside for a water tank for the storage of Collie coal. This is work of an experimental nature in an endeavour to see whether it is possible to hold Collie coal for fairly lengthy periods. One of the difficulties associated with Collie coal is that it is inclined to disintegrate when exposed to the air. It is hoped that by storing the coal in an underwater storage tank quantities of coal may be held for long periods.

Hon. H. Seddon: Where will that be situated?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: At Collie. Provision has also been made for the continuation of the programme for the building of locomotives. In connection with electricity supplies, amounts are being provided for the extension of electricity to various districts, but of course this will

have to be governed by the availability of manpower and materials. The linking up of Cottesloe and Fremantle with the 20,000-volt system will, it is hoped, be finished this year and an amount of £36,000 has been provided for this purpose.

A small amount has been included in the Estimates as preliminary expenses for the new power station for South Fremantle. This is mainly concerned with drawings prior to the calling of tenders. It is not anticipated that material will arrive this financial year in time to incur any substantial expenditure on this account. Work in this connection was contemplated some time ago, but it was held up while advice was secured as to whether or not the new power station should operate at 50 or 40 cycle frequency. The Government secured from the New South Wales Government the services of Mr. V. J. F. Braine, the Electrical Engineer from that State who visited Western Australia for the purpose of making investigations. Mr. Braine was emphatic in his report that the new power station should operate at a 50 cycle frequency, one of the reasons being that this cycle is almost predominant throughout the Australian States and, in fact, the British Empire, and all equipment is made to this standard.

If the station were enlarged at the existing frequency of 40 cycles, a disability would be perpetuated in that electricity users in Perth would be forced to meet the added cost of converting standard types of motor equipment to operate on the 40 cycle frequency. It is acknowledged that the cost of making existing equipment suitable to connect with a station operating on a 50 cycle frequency will be substantial, and representations were made for Commonwealth assistance towards meeting this cost. After a long investigation, the Commonwealth Government agreed to meet half the cost. When the new station has been established it will therefore be possible to make a start with the conversion of equipment in Perth in order that it may be connected with the new station. This conversion work, of course, will be spread over an extended period. An amount of £61,000 has been included in the Estimates for additional high tension switch gear for the East Perth Power House. This is new work which is urgently required.

In connection with the activities of the Workers' Homes Board an amount of £490,000 has been provided for that board's purposes. This sum covers the erection of houses under the War Housing Scheme and the acquisition of land and provision of services for land which will be acquired for the post-war programme. In the discussions which took place between the Commonwealth and the States on housing schemes it was contemplated in the initial stages that the money would be found by the Commonwealth and loaned to the States, but legal opinion suggested that this was not constitutional and that the States would have to borrow money in the ordinary way—hence the provision in our Loan Estimates.

A start has already been made on the War Housing programme. Dwellings are being erected and in some cases are almost complete and ready for occupation at Collie, Boyup Brook, and in the metropolitan area. Fifteen houses are being erected at Collie, 10 at Boyup Brook, 50 in the metropolitan area, 25 at Claremont and 25 at North Perth. The houses are all being erected under contract and though the prices are much higher than the pre-war prices, every endeavour was made to keep the cost down to a reasonable minimum. The type of house being built has to be approved by the Commonwealth Government which has insisted on this condition because it has undertaken to meet three-fifths of any loss arising from the operations of the War Housing Scheme.

The houses will all be for letting and the rents will be based on a proportion of the family income of the tenant. Where this rent is lower than the full economic rental the difference will be included in the loss to be shared between the Commonwealth and the State. Those now being erected constitute the first quota of houses approved by the Commonwealth Government for erection during the war. Since then the Government has been advised of two further quotas totalling 190 houses, but on account of extreme shortage of manpower and labour it has not yet been possible to proceed with these quotas. It is proposed to build houses at Bunbury and Merredin as well as in the metropolitan area out of the second quota, and investigations are now being made to ascertain in which country centres houses out of the third quota should be built. A preliminary housing survey was carried out

through the help of the local authorities who were asked to submit particulars of the housing position in their centres. A great number of applications have been received. These are being classified and from the resulting information it will be determined in which centres dwellings will be erected. The housing position is extremely difficult but every endeavour is being made to speed up the building programme.

In regard to the acquisition of land, arrangements have been made for the Town Planning Commissioner to make a survey of suitable areas. Already some large parcels of land have been investigated in the metropolitan area and in some of the country towns. Negotiations will be opened up with the owners for the purchase of the blocks, but if satisfactory arrangements cannot be made the land will have to be resumed. Valuable assistance has been received from some local authorities—particularly in country districts—in the selection of good building sites and it is hoped that this co-operation will be extended to all districts.

In connection with the provision of water supplies for towns, amounts have been included for improvements at Albany for the purpose of increasing the water supply for shipping, and also for improvements to be carried out to the service at Bridgetown. In regard to metropolitan sewerage, provision has been made to continue the work of sewerage house connections by way of loans to householders who are unable to arrange finance for these connections. An amount of £5,000 is being provided for the proper ventilation of the main sewer. In the Metropolitan Water Supply Department Estimates, the largest item is the amount of £16,000 for the cost of a 42-inch steel main from Cannington to Perth to increase the capacity of the water from the Canning Dam. Other works contemplated are an increase in the water main in Coode-street, South Perth, and also at Dalkeith and in the centre of the city.

An amount of £10,000 is included in the Estimates for the continuance of the work of cement-lining the existing pipe installations. A small amount of £34,000 has been provided to instal a rising main from the King's Park bore to Mount Eliza. This work in conjunction with the provision of the 42-inch steel main from Cannington to Perth should augment the water supply this and next summer, and if possible obviate

the need of water restrictions. It is unfortunate that just as the Canning Dam was completed the war situation rendered it impossible to secure the necessary material to provide the pipes of sufficient dimension to bring a larger volume of water from Canning Dam to the city.

Under the heading of Goldfields Water Supply, provision has been made for a continuance of the renovation of the main conduit. Amounts have been provided for the improvement of the pipes which supply several of the agricultural areas with water. Extensions have also been included in the amount provided in the Estimates. An amount of £2,300 has been included to cover the cost of raising the 30-inch main over the Avon River at Northam. Provision has been made also for the improvement of the water supply at Port Hedland and at Derby and for the completion of the last section of the Herdsman's Lake channel relining, whilst an amount has been provided to cover the cost of the first section of the work relating to the raising of the wall at the Wellington Dam, a most necessary work to provide for additional supplies to those centres obtaining their water from this dam.

Turning now to the Public Works Department, provision has been made for a continuance of the work of the extension of Victoria Quay and the North Wharf, and for dredging of the harbour, whilst provision has also been made with respect to bulk handling facilities at the North Wharf. The Australian Wheat Board has erected a wheat hospital for the treatment of weevil-infested wheat. As this is suitable for the commencement of a proper bulk handling silo and as the need to ship wheat quickly is urgent, a commencement has been made with the work of connecting the hospital with a gallery which will run wheat from the hospital to the ship.

At Fremantle the Government is sharing with the Commonwealth the cost of providing an amenities building for waterside workers. Some time ago the Commonwealth sent to this State a welfare officer whose function was to advise the various harbour authorities on what were deemed to be the immediate requirements for amenities at the wharf. The officer recommended that a building be erected at Fremantle at which the waterside workers could obtain meals, and which would be used as a rest and change room. After some communication with the

Commonwealth, this was agreed to on the basis that the Commonwealth and the State would share equally in the cost, which is estimated at £12,000. The Commonwealth will, in addition, provide all the equipment for the kitchen.

Dealing with mining and mineral development, provision has been made for investigations to be carried out to ascertain the quality of the coal deposits at Eradu. If payable quantities of good quality coal could be found to the north of the railway system a considerable saving to the Railway Department would be effected in the cost of the coal which at present comes from Collie. An amount of £50,000 has been provided for the continuance of the work of the erection of a charcoal iron blast furnace at Wundowie. This activity is proceeding steadily and the tenders received for the erection of the plant up to date are well within the estimates.

Members know that the work at Wundowie is more or less in the nature of providing a pilot plant, and if the experiment proves to be successful it should open the way for the erection of a much larger plant elsewhere. The production of charcoal iron is associated with the distillation of wood, and the Government has arranged to send an officer of the Department of Industrial Development to America where he will study the latest methods of wood distillation and will gain experience for the erection at Wundowie of the plant which is being constructed in America. There is no need for me to emphasise the great economic benefit to a State like Western Australia—which has such large timber reserves—that the establishment of a plant for the utilisation of wood products would confer.

Another item of importance under this heading is the completion of the first section of the work at Lake Chandler for the production of potash from alunite. Approximately £200,000 has been spent already on this work, and though some initial troubles were experienced with the plant which was erected under very great difficulty during the war, I am advised that these difficulties have now been overcome and the plant is producing potash in quantities up to those originally estimated. The next stage will be the enlargement of the work to triplicate the output when cost of production will be reduced substantially and sufficient potash

produced to meet the whole of Australia's requirements.

Closely associated with the work at Campion is the experimental work being carried out in Perth for the production of alumina from the alunite. If the experiments now being carried out are successful, and alumina can be produced from the residue after the extraction of the potash, a great economic benefit should accrue to the State. Experimental work in Perth is being carried out by the Department of Industrial Development in collaboration with the University, and though the work is necessarily slow, the expectations are good, and we are hopeful that before long the officers will have perfected a process for the successful production of alumina.

Turning now to that section of the Estimates dealing with the development of agriculture, provision has been made for additional plant and buildings at Midland Junction Abattoirs, also for the improvement of the sale yards. Provision has also been made for improvement of the buildings and sale yards at Kalgoorlie Abattoirs. An amount of £15,000 has been provided for the erection of a veterinary laboratory at Herdsman's Lake. A sum of £5,000 has been provided for the Ord River irrigation scheme. Already experiments have been made there with the growing of certain types of grasses under irrigation conditions during the dry period, and the success which has attended these efforts justifies further experimental work. Officers of the Departments of Works and Agriculture are working in close collaboration but no heavy expenditure will be incurred unless these experiments are successful and it has been demonstrated that the project is economically sound. In this regard it is hoped that the Commonwealth Government will co-operate in the development of this area. Dealing with public buildings, an amount of £70,000 has been provided for such purposes. This sum covers the completion of buildings already in course of construction, and provision for new buildings as may be necessary. The new buildings contemplated include the following:—

Provision of a metallurgical laboratory at the Perth Technical School.

Erection of a new Trades and Science block at the Mount Lawley School.

Erection of a laboratory and class rooms at the Leederville Technical School.

Erection of the first section of the Denmark Agricultural College.

Additions to the Northam High School.

Additions to the Albany High School.

Additions and improvements to the Bruce Rock School.

Erection of a new block for T.B. patients at the Claremont Mental Hospital.

Erection of a remand house for children for the use of the Child Welfare Department.

The total cost of these buildings will, of course, exceed the provision in the Estimates of £70,000, but naturally the completion of the buildings cannot be effected during this financial year. Under the heading of Sundries, an amount of £64,000 has been included for additions at the West Australian Meat Export Works at South Fremantle. These additions are being erected at the request of the Commonwealth Government under an arrangement whereby the State will find the capital cost of the building and the Commonwealth will pay storage charges for the use of the building. When the war is over a valuation will be made to ascertain the post-war value the meat works and any difference between this value and the cost of the building, less the usual allowance for depreciation, will be met by the Commonwealth Government.

That, I think, covers the main items concerned in the Estimates. Members are well aware of the difficulties of securing the necessary manpower and materials for works entailed in the Estimates, and that if manpower and materials were available much could be done in the way of provision of water supplies, schools, hospitals, and other public buildings. An example of our difficulties is the situation with respect to the Perth Hospital. In that connection the stage has been reached where the main structure of the building has been erected but a great deal of work still remains to be done in providing equipment for the various services which a modern hospital requires.

Tenders are being called for part of the equipment, but even if the Government is successful in securing satisfactory tenders it will be at least 18 months to two years before the building could be ready for occupation. No time has been wasted, however, in an effort to speed up the completion of the hospital. The conditions that apply to the Perth Hospital also apply to a number of other very important projects. While the Government is prepared to provide money for other necessary buildings,

it is to be regretted that circumstances are such that it is not possible to carry on that work to any appreciable extent. It is hopeful that the manpower and material position will be much improved during the coming year and that in consequence greater progress will be made in these directions in the future. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER [5.40] in moving the second reading said: The Bill which I now introduce is one which has received the careful consideration of the Government, and represents an endeavour to rectify certain anomalies and weaknesses with respect to workers' compensation legislation in this State, and to bring it into line with similar legislation in other States. The original Act was passed in 1912, but it was not until 1925 that any substantial steps were taken to give to workers employed in industry that measure of reasonable protection that is rightly theirs against injury arising out of their employment—protection without which no worker, or workers, could be expected to carry out their daily avocations.

The Act of 1925 embodied many amendments, all designed to improve the lot and security of the worker against accident in his work. Since then the Act has been amended from time to time, and it has worked in a manner satisfactory to employer and employee alike, but whereas in 1925 this State held a forward position with respect to its workers' compensation legislation, we find today that in many aspects Western Australia is behind its sister States and other countries to a degree which does not redound to its credit. In these circumstances the Government has submitted this Bill, and I trust that the explanation already given in the "Hansard" proof made available to members by the Minister for Works some days ago, and the supporting explanation which I will now submit, will be the means of influencing members to give their approval to it.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Some of it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Turning now to the Bill, its proposals may be summarised as follows:—

(a) To increase the maximum weekly payment to injured workers from £3 10s. to £4 10s.

(b) To provide that weekly payments made to a worker suffering an injury coming under the Second Schedule of the Act shall not be deducted from the amount of compensation payable for the particular injury.

(c) To bring tributers into line with other workers now covered by the Act, thereby rectifying an omission in the amendment to the Workers' Compensation Act passed in 1941.

(d) To give dependants of a deceased worker the right to make application to an employer for a redemption, by way of a lump sum settlement, of the weekly payment that otherwise would be payable to a deceased worker.

(e) To provide for allowances in respect of workers travelling for medical attention or massage treatment upon the direction of any medical practitioner.

(f) To make provision for a worker to receive the cost of repair or replacement in respect to artificial limbs, eyes, teeth and spectacles, where such have been damaged or destroyed as the result of an accident at his work.

(g) To increase payments allowed to hospitals for the care of injured workers.

With respect to the first proposal in the Bill—to increase the maximum weekly payment to injured workers from £3 10s. to £4 10s.—it is pointed out that the present amount payable, namely, £3 10s., was fixed in 1925, when the basic wage in the metropolitan area was £1 3s. 4d. per week. The basic wage today is £4 19s. 11d.—an increase of approximately 17s. per week. It will thus be seen that the proposal in the Bill to make an increase in the amount of weekly compensation payable to an injured worker is about the equivalent of the amount of increase in the basic wage. Members are aware, of course, that the present maximum of £3 10s. per week includes 50 per cent. of the weekly earnings of a worker immediately prior to his injury, plus 7s. 6d. per week for each child under 16 years of age, but the amount of £3 10s. per week is the maximum amount which can be paid to a worker, irrespective of the number of children dependent upon him.

That is a very heavy disability for a worker with a large family. Many cases exist where 50 per cent. of a worker's earnings prior to his injury, plus the 7s. 6d. per week for each of his children, amount to

more than the £3 10s. allowed for compensation under the Act, so it is considered only reasonable and just that the small amount now payable to an injured worker as compensation under the Act, should be increased to the amount provided for by the Bill.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Will child endowment payments affect the position?

The HONORARY MINISTER: They will have nothing to do with it; this is apart from such considerations. An examination of the position in respect to the other Australian States discloses that an injured worker in Queensland and New South Wales receives two-thirds of his average weekly earnings, plus an allowance of 8s. for each dependant child, whilst the maximum amount which can be paid is £5 per week. In South Australia the maximum weekly payment is also £5. In Victoria, the maximum is £3 7s. 3d. per week, whilst I understand Tasmania is well below the maximum allowed in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. It is recognised, of course, that little progress has been made in Victoria and Tasmania towards providing reasonable compensation for workers employed in industry, and that many hardships are incurred by workers in those two States through the lack of sufficient monetary compensation in the event of their being injured in the course of their employment. Thus, in three States of the Commonwealth we find that there is already in operation legislation providing for the payment of a maximum of £5 per week to a worker during any period of incapacity; and it is considered that there is every justification for this State to increase its payments by way of compensation to the maximum of £4 10s. per week. In any event the amount proposed is small indeed, in times like these, for an incapacitated or injured worker to support himself and his family.

In recent years industry has begun to recognise its responsibilities so far as injured workers are concerned, and I think it is appreciated that this recognition of responsibility should continue. When a worker becomes incapacitated he is entirely dependent upon compensation for his own and his family's existence. His income is reduced during the period of incapacity; and, because of his inability to make ends meet, we find that in many in-

stances the worker develops a condition of mind detrimental to his recovery, which causes him to remain incapacitated for a longer period than would otherwise obtain if he were not worried over financial matters associated with the meeting of his accounts for foodstuffs and the like for his wife and family.

Whatever point of view members may have in connection with this matter, it cannot be strongly argued that an amount of £3 10s. per week, as provided under the existing law, is sufficient to compensate a worker for the loss of his usual weekly earnings arising out of injury in his employment. Indeed, I think it will be realised that the increase provided by the Bill will be to the advantage of industry generally and a forward move in workers' compensation legislation in this State. Dealing with the proposal in the Bill to provide that weekly payments made to a worker suffering with an injury shall not be deducted from the compensation payable for that injury, it is pointed out that the Second Schedule to the Act specifies the amounts to be paid for injuries that result in a worker losing a limb or an eye, or some part of the body.

The schedule shows that the amounts to be paid range downwards from a maximum of £750. Members are no doubt aware that workers suffering an injury such as I have mentioned are likely to be on weekly payments for many weeks, and that every amount of such payment is finally deducted from the specified total amount set out in the schedule for the injury received. For instance, a worker receives an injury to an eye and loses the sight of it, and he is off from his work for many weeks. The compensation for such severe injury is £375. For the loss of a foot the compensation payable under the schedule is £525.

Whilst a worker is absent from his employment, he receives weekly payments, and these are eventually deducted from the amount specified in the schedule. It may so happen that a worker could be on weekly payments for a period which would permit of his being paid, in a lump sum, only half the amount specified under the existing law. In such circumstances it is considered that he should be compensated for the loss of his wages because of his incapacity, and should in addition be given the specified compensation payment for the

disability suffered by him. Members are no doubt aware of cases coming within the category I have mentioned, and also are aware of the hardships that the provisions of the Act impose upon workers and their families in such circumstances; and I feel sure they will agree that provision should be made to deal with these cases in the manner proposed.

The provision in the Bill to bring tributers into line with other workers arises out of an omission from the 1941 amendment to the Act, under which the definition of "worker" was amended to include workers whose maximum annual remuneration did not exceed £500. Prior to the passing of that amendment, workers whose remuneration exceeded £400 did not come within the scope of the Workers' Compensation Act. In amending the definition in 1941 to include workers receiving up to £500 per annum, tributers were inadvertently omitted by not making the necessary consequential amendment in the Bill; and the proposal now is to rectify that omission. I may add that tributers receiving between £400 and £500 have not been penalised, as the State Insurance Office has granted the necessary cover for the men and has met claims made.

An important proposal in the Bill is that which seeks to give dependants of a deceased worker the right to make application to an employer for a redemption of the weekly payment that would have been payable to the deceased worker. Under the Act an injured worker who has been in receipt of weekly payments for at least six months may apply for redemption of his weekly payments by receiving a lump-sum settlement, and this settlement may be arranged by agreement between the worker and his employer. If no agreement can be reached, then approach may be made to the local court by either party. It is thereupon competent for the magistrate concerned to give a decision; and if that decision is that a lump-sum settlement shall be made, he can specify the amount to be paid to the injured worker.

This provision has worked satisfactorily; but there have been cases where workers, through ignorance of the law, have not made application within the specified time for the redemption of the employer's future liability. In certain of these cases, the worker concerned has died from some cause not associated with the accident for which he was receiving compensation, and because he

did not exercise his legal right to apply for a redemption, his dependants had no legal authority to proceed for the purpose of obtaining it. Cases of this kind occur on the Goldfields amongst miners afflicted with a compensable disease. It will thus be seen that under the existing Act, liability to pay compensation in respect of an injured worker who dies in certain circumstances ceases to exist upon his death, and thus the worker's dependants are left with nothing at all.

It is considered that this is a state of affairs which should be remedied, that dependants should receive fair and equitable treatment, and that the employer through his insurance company should not be relieved of a liability in respect of a particular worker who suffered an accident in the course of his work on behalf of his employer. The Bill therefore proposes to make the necessary provision to enable a dependant to receive the compensation which the deceased worker would have received had he lived. In the event of the employer and the dependant concerned failing to agree on the amount of redemption, then the same procedure would apply, in the form I have already mentioned, with respect to an application to the court for a decision; and there would be no more difficulty with the treatment of such an application than there would have been had the worker himself exercised his ordinary legal right as provided for under the Act.

A further proposal in the Bill deals with artificial aids used by an employee in the course of his work. Under the Act, if a worker suffering injuries has to obtain an artificial limb, eye, teeth or spectacles, he is entitled to receive the cost from his employer. If a worker subsequent to his return to work has any such artificial aid damaged or destroyed, he is entitled to have it repaired or replaced, the cost being met from the £100 provided under the Act to meet medical and hospital expenses. However, if a worker suffers damage to an artificial aid, or if an aid is destroyed which was not provided in the first place by the employer under the provisions of the Act, he is not entitled to reimbursement of the cost of repair or replacement. The Bill seeks to rectify this, so that a worker may be reimbursed the cost of repair or replacement where the aid is damaged or destroyed as a result of an accident at his work.

Dealing with the proposal in the Bill to provide for allowances in respect of a worker travelling for medical or hospital attention or massage treatment, members are aware that many injured workers are obliged to travel from their homes to receive such attention or treatment, and that the question of travelling allowances is one which is dealt with under the First Schedule of the Act. According to the existing law, an injured worker can receive the travelling allowance only if, in the first instance, he has been in hospital. Many injured workers do not enter hospital, but are called upon to visit their doctors; in some cases they even visit hospitals for treatment, but do not remain there. Indeed, cases exist where it is not possible for certain patients to enter into hospital because of lack of sufficient accommodation. That, of course, is highly prevalent in existing circumstances.

Because of the existing limitation which is imposed by the Act, these injured workers have been treated rather harshly with respect to travelling allowances; and action is now being taken under the Bill to remove the restrictions imposed and to permit allowances to be paid in respect of them. I think there is every justification for this proposal, and trust that members will agree to it. Turning now to the remaining amendment in the Bill, namely, the increase in payments allowed to hospitals for the care of injured workers, it is pointed out that the First Schedule to the Act sets out the amounts in this connection, and that these differ in various parts of the State. Ten shillings and sixpence per day is allowed within a radius of 15 miles of the G.P.O., whilst in the South-West Land Division, outside the 15-mile radius of the G.P.O., the payment is 12s. 6d. per day. In any other part of the State it is 15s. per day. The increases are—

	Per Day.
Within a radius of 15 miles of the G.P.O., Perth ..	10s. 6d. to 12s.
South-West Land Division outside 15-mile radius of the G.P.O.	12s. 6d. to 15s.
In any other part of the State	15s. to 16s. 6d.

Under the Act these payments to hospitals must not continue longer than 30 days, and it is not proposed to alter this provision by the Bill. It is, however, proposed to alter the flat rate payment to be made after the first 30 days, which rate applies in all parts

of the State, from 10s. 6d. per day to 12s. per day.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Have you any estimate of what the increased cost of these amendments will be?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I should imagine it would be impossible to make an accurate estimate, but the increase will be very small. It has been found necessary to increase the payments to the hospitals in order to improve the position of an injured worker, who has now to obtain hospital accommodation at charges greater than those provided for in the Act. I think that this explanation covers the main proposals in the Bill. No doubt there will be matters requiring clarification when the Bill is in Committee, and I shall then be only too pleased to supply any further information desired. I feel sure that I am expressing the view of every member of this Chamber when I say that the Bill will receive fair and just consideration in this Chamber; and I hope that it will be accorded the same support as it received from all parties in another place. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. L. B. Bolton, debate adjourned.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN TURF CLUB (PROPERTY) PRIVATE.

Second Reading.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Metropolitan-Suburban) [64] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to rectify an anomaly in the law. The Western Australian Turf Club operates under a private Act, and for many years it has held property, including its building at the bottom of Howard-street. Recently the club decided to purchase two racecourses, and the question arose as to the right of the Registrar of Titles to issue a title under the Transfer of Land Act, as it was thought by some people that the Western Australian Turf Club had no authority under its Act to hold land, notwithstanding that past Commissioners of Titles and past Registrars of Titles have issued titles to the club for land which it has purchased not only in Howard-street, but also in other parts of the State. In order to overcome any possibility of error, it was deemed advisable by the solicitors to the club to secure a private

Bill, and this is the measure in question. It has been passed by another place, where all the formalities relating to private Bills have been complied with. I commend the Bill to members. All that is sought by the measure is that the chairman of the club may be registered as the proprietor of land which the club has already negotiated to purchase and of any other land which the club may consider it necessary to purchase for the extension of its courses or its business premises. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.7 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 30th November, 1944.

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

QUESTIONS (5).

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE.

As to Calling Applications for Office.

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

(1) Does the W.A. Police Force compare favourably with other State Police Forces?

(2) When was the last public application called to fill the position of Commissioner of Police?